

Crossian Connect

SISTERS OF THE CROSS OF CHAVANOD

Issue No. 1/2020



SPARKLERS FROM THE SUPERIOR GENERAL SR. ELIZABETH MIRANDA

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My dear Sisters,

Greetings to each one of you!

General Chapter 2019 directs us to initiate a Congregational News Bulletin (Soft Copy) in order to share our apostolic experiences, new calls and challenges. (pg. 17 of G.C. 2019) So, **CROSSIAN CONNECT** is yet another attempt to strengthen the bonds of unity and solidarity among the Provinces and Delegations in the Congregation.



It is my sincere wish and hope that the sharing of our experiences, challenges, concerns and our response to the cries of suffering humanity through the News Bulletin will enthuse new vitality into our lives and infuse in us a spirit of collaboration and co-responsibility in living the Mission of the Congregation.

The Covid-19 Pandemic has posed challenges like never before and ones that require global cooperation, gigantic efforts for unified action that crosses boundaries and compassionate hearts in order to alleviate suffering caused not only by the disease but also the crumbling economy, loss of jobs, helpless migrants etc.

Nevertheless, it is the trials of life and moments of misery that bring out the best in us as we desire to forge stronger relationships with family, community, nature and above all with Christ. It has been our common experience that when we allow suffering and helplessness of people to touch our hearts, we feel moved and led to join hands with persons of goodwill, benevolent organizations as also to give of ourselves and what we have. An attitude of belonging and interdependence must spur us on to demonstrate in reality that the globe is one single and dependent community; thus, making human bonds stronger with each weak link that gets connected to each other in a profound sense of solidarity as the Sisters of the Cross.

Sustained by the energy of faith, may we remain united with each other, eager and willing to cross boundaries and go to the peripheries, ready to share the endless supply of love, compassion, goodness and graciousness that lies deep in our hearts and souls.

The launch of **CROSSIAN CONNECT** would not have been possible without the commitment of Sr. Judy Gomez and the Editorial Team of the same. I thank each of them and congratulate them for their tireless efforts.

CROSSIAN CONNECT is not the same as **INTERCOM** which is meant for wider circulation among friends, parents, relatives, well wishers and benefactors. While there will be two issues of **CROSSIAN CONNECT** every year **INTERCOM** will be published once in three years.

May God bless and enlighten each one through this endeavour.



EVERYDAY EXTRAORDINARY

Sr. Judy Gomez

Province of Trichy



The hues of life have become catastrophic. The certainties of yesterday have become dreams of today. A walk in the road, a firm hand shake, a consoling hug have become impossibilities. The instability of man and the dead certainty of God is the only reality of the day. Each individual has to encounter difficulties in life, which strengthens one, or distresses a few. It's up to the individual to fight it out wisely. In this time of uncertainty and confusion hazardous things happen around us. The fear of loneliness, stress of working from home, addiction to internet, irregular bedtime schedule, excessive multitasking of women, use of illicit drugs cause irreparable damage. We are currently immersed in emotional lopsidedness like anger, hatred, fear about the future which leads to theft, abuse and murder, anxiety about the health, education of the children, stress in paying fees, the instability in the job and the payment of salary.

In this gloomy scenario I am reminded of the incident which is relevant today. During the year 2018 twelve members of the Thai soccer team, aged eleven to sixteen, and their 25-year-old assistant coach entered the Tham Luang Nang Non cave after their football practice. Their expedition was planned for an hour. And once they entered the cave, it rained cats and dogs and so the place was flooded, trapping them inside the

cave. They could survive inside with little or no food and water for nine days and on 2nd July they were found by the rescue team. It was surprising to see all the thirteen of them huddled together to keep themselves warm in the cold. Chantawong, the coach tried to remain calm and stay positive so that the boys would not panic.

The coach who was earlier a Buddhist monk turned to prayer and meditation as time passed. To keep their spirits up, the team was given a fixed schedule where they were engaged constructively. They did meditation, developed positive attitude and tried to find fresh water that was dripping from a stalactite and dug into the cave's walls with rocks. In such a dreadful situation it would be difficult to survive even for three days. It was made possible due to the off shoot of meditation. We need to inculcate lessons from the above incident to develop clarity of thought and to be productive.

We are in the pandemic, terribly frightened over covid19. Death tolls increase due to the outspread of the virus and another through fear and panic of covid 19. People protect themselves by the intake of home remedies, some boost their immunity power by mudhra and acupressure, others involve in exercises, a few quarantines themselves safe in their home for the fear of the contagious virus.

Recent research proved that spiritual people are less prone to self-destructive behaviours and have less stress and a greater life satisfaction. Above all spirituality can promote a healthier physical life for us. spirituality has revealed to reduce depression, improve blood pressure, and boost the immune system. As Sisters of the Cross what is our response in such a critical situation? During this pandemic people look up to us for spiritual guidance apart from

academic excellence. Only when we are connected to the divine, we would be an integrated people of God. Let's introspect during this pandemic: Are we experiencing loneliness or solitude? How do we plan for ourselves? We need to channelise our creative energy where it would lead to self-expression and fulfilment of the potential within us. This is the right time for developing strong interpersonal relationship with our sisters in the community and people in need, meditation apart from regular time for prayer, physical activity in helping the community, keeping up the physical fitness through exercise and games. Ultimately if we are not spiritually oriented beings, we will be mere social workers. Only when we experience the divine within us, we will be able to share it with others. When we are spiritually strengthened, people will be attracted to us. As Crossians we stand upon the rock of all ages and we shall not be moved. With the Master at the helm, the seas may be rough, the waves huge, the clouds dark, but we rest assured because He holds us in the palm of His hand.

The Crossian Connect a maiden venture a congregational news bulletin is to promote new evangelical relatedness and interconnectedness. The Cross connects; may the Crossian connect unite us together and be a voice to reveal the merciful love of the Father to the humanity at large.

My special note of thanks to all the sisters who contributed for the first issue. I appreciate the collective enthusiasm, energy and creativity of Srs. Elsy John and Siji Matthew our editorial team for their collaborative work.

May we continue to make the Good God known and loved. Happy Mothers Foundress Day.



GOD IS AT WORK

Sr. Rosy Joseph
Province of Amravati



“The hidden well-spring of your soul must needs rise and run murmuring to the sea; And the treasure of your infinite depths would be revealed to your eyes. But let there be no scales to weigh your unknown treasure; And seek not the depths of your knowledge with staff or sound line.”
Kahlil Gibran.

Being fortunate to be born in a well-grounded Christian family, I already had a spiritual bend of mind. There was a strong urge to have a personal Encounter with the Divine. With the support of my family I ventured out for an inward journey which culminated in the entry into the Congregation of the Sisters of the Cross, Amravati. It was like a shift from the land to the sea. As I dived deeper, the storm arose in the sea. Like a little oyster, I was caught in the rising and falling of the waves, oscillating in the rain, lightening and thunder, finally back to the land. I returned home, never to return! Disheartened with the non co-operation of the Divine with me, in fact I thought that way, I was planning for an alternate way to pursue my dream to encounter the Divine. Perhaps, these infantile urges don't go away. New vistas were opening. My whole family journeyed with me, I should say, in my apparent mad pursuit of encountering the Divine.

'The Hound of Heaven', the Divine, kept track of me. Perhaps, He was

checking my seriousness, my faith. He came proposing for my return to the desired sea of life. The Moment of Encounter! I was back in Amravati, renewed and rejuvenated. My approach to life was never the same then. Life moved on.

Even now, the ocean always evokes comforting feelings. Whenever I am stressed, I would close my eyes and visit it, dive right in, feeling the cool caress of the divine. I am reminded of the story of 'The Oyster' who like me, had a great desire to encounter the Divine which I would like to share with you. Far, far away at the bottom of the ocean, lived an oyster. Of course, she was not alone, this was a pretty crowded oyster bank. But our little oyster felt out of place compared to the rest of the oysters. What's this life? Day dawns, night falls, life moves on! What life inside this hard, unattractive shell surrounded by vast expanse of water? Too many sounds around. A question about her identity too haunted her. The ocean was the only world the oyster knew, and as such were you to ask her to describe it, she would not have mentioned the water or the wetness, or the waves, or the water currents, much in the same way that you would not mention the air if you described your home. She envied the angels in her mother's bedtime stories, she longed to hear the whispering sound of the Divine!

That day she was told by her mother,

'You were often asked to come along for a long journey which you yourself wanted to embark on, then you give a chain of excuses- lack of time and right company. It is high time now! We must undertake an inward journey.'

Yes, the longest journey one can undertake is the inward journey. It's only when you make that inward journey, you can encounter the Divine, you can discover your identity, that you would really know what a treasure you are! You would discover the treasure within you! You would really begin to love yourself. So many of us hesitate to undertake this journey. So, when we look at ourselves we are so dissatisfied, so unhappy, lethargic, find no meaning in life. . . . When you make that inward journey, you realize that you are so much more than what anyone in the world can tell about you. As we journey along listen to the whisperings of the Divine.

You cannot change the ocean or the weather, no matter how hard you try, so it's you to learn how to sail in all conditions. The struggle you're in today, is developing strength you need for tomorrow. God has chosen you to make you a blessing to many. Hold on to God. Everything has a reason and a season.”

The journey continued ... the quest increased too. In her ear, the words

kept ringing. "Remember, you are extraordinary and different from others! Be unique in thinking and doing and presenting! Remain vigilant! Try to discover the gems and pearls within you! Discover your inner potentials and develop them to become more creative and inventive." She recalled growing up hearing about the parable of the hidden treasure and pearl of great value. Everything she heard revolved around her head. Finally, on an auspicious day she heard the gentle whisper of the Divine, 'The treasure is hidden within you. I am the one who found and hid; I am the merchant who sold all I had and purchased you, the pearl of greatest price.' 'Moment of Encounter!' Life

was never the same for her! She wept for joy! She said to herself, I am the pearl of the greatest price. The treasure is within me! She continued her inward journey alone, till one day she found the real pearl, the hidden treasure within her and gifted it to the world!

If only we know the treasure that is hidden within us, we will never give up on ourselves and on our dreams. We would dream big and not only that, no matter what challenges come our way, whatever, whatever... we would realize that HE who is within us, is greater than he who is in the world. Very often we hear those beautiful words, man judges with the external appearances but God sees

the heart. God has chosen us for excellence not for mediocrity, not for average. No matter who you are, no matter what your external circumstances, no matter what the world has to say about you, when you know the treasure is within, you become a treasure to the world, a blessing in itself. For, when we encounter God, we are seeking Him, in HIS own way.

It is only when we accept ourselves and we give others the space to be who they are, will we be at peace and be channels of peace too. Safe journey, discover the Divine within you. We have one life to live, so much to give ... so we live life to the full.



AXING THE UNMITIGATED ONSLAUGHT OF AN AFFLICTION

Srs. Doris Thomas Paikada and Sylvia Jesuraj
Province of Madurai



The Corona virus, this global pandemic, has thrown life out of gear, with its ferocity, with its overarching dismal presence. Its infernal intensity to traumatize human lives is dreadful and vengeful. It has left in its wake a huge trail of death and destruction. And a sizable part of the world population is in the throes of death.

It is in the nature of great tragedies to spring up in the human hearts oases of compassion and fellow feeling. The tears of the "invisibilized poor" woke us up with a jolt. The whole province rose to the occasion under the dynamic leadership of Sr. Fatima Kattar and her team. The collective

spirit of compassion inspired all the sisters to be oases of hope to the excluded and the starving. From day one, almost all the communities through chain adorations ceaselessly offered prayers for the world, invoking God's power to bring about healing and change. Many of the sisters made their full time online retreat. It had been a great experience



to walk along with thousands of Covid 19 victims and of the Corona warriors.

Due to lack of space we are sharing just the experience of some of our communities. In Madurai the temple city, many people live a hand to mouth existence. Sr. Santhi Michael, the bursar of Madurai Province along with the wholehearted support of the sisters of Provincialate community rapidly responded to this situation by anchoring on the two societies namely Congregation of the Sisters of the Cross of Chavanod and DEEPSE. We started our mission on the 2nd of April and it still continues. As we donated foodstuff to 180

transgenders of Madurai they felt recognized and accepted and this reaffirmed their faith in humanity. It was a grace to reach out to 63 families of physically handicapped, 257 tribal families and 41 nomad families with groceries and face masks in Kodaikanal. It was a great joy to share the relief material with 295 families of Sri Lankan refugees in the refugee camp and 150 families of the weaker sections (SC/ST) of the society. We had been at the service of widows, senior citizens, daily wage earners and auto rickshaw families. The mission still continues.



In the month of May we were engaged in alleviating the suffering of the hill tribals of Kodaikanal. Everything was done in coordination with the Madurai collectorate and the presence of the Thasildars and police Inspectors who lent a special affirmative feel.



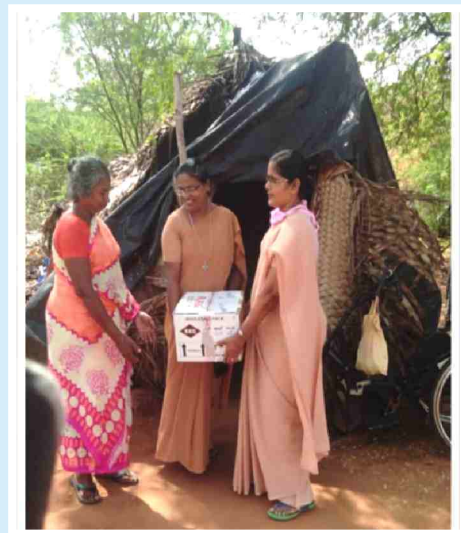
The Novitiate in Paravai Colony: COVID-19 awakened the novices and sisters to respond to the situation. They expressed their solidarity with our suffering brothers and sisters all over the world through prayers and adorations of the Blessed Sacrament

invoking the Lord for mercy. Due to a long time lockdown many are badly affected, lacking basic amenities of life. The daily labourers experience the pangs of hunger so intensely. We visited the families in the villages and finally we chose to render help to 33 families of the differently abled and daily wage earners. We provided rice, dhal, vegetables and oil. Their tear filled eyes expressed a deep sense of gratitude which motivated us to do even more.

The Claudine Ilam is a short stay home that caters to all kinds of battered women. At the outbreak of the pandemic COVID-19 the community pressed into action in serving the needy around the area especially the gypsies and widows. In bringing relief to their suffering we felt truly blessed.

The Batlagundu community is situated in Dindigul District surrounded by rural villages with people of agricultural background and Dalit families. As an immediate response, we supported 100 families of the daily wage earners, widows, marginalized, HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis patients, in and around the villages of Batlagundu.

The Leonard Hospital which is situated in the same campus was listed as one of the hospitals to provide service for COVID suspected patients. In response we opened fever clinic to screen the COVID suspected patients. We provide hand sanitizers to all those who enter our health facility, supply PPE for all our staff. We sanction paid leave for all our staff for two months and we have 24 hour emergency services for all types of patients including pregnant women. We also contributed food kit to 50 families of our patients affected by HIV/AIDS and TB besides giving aid



to the poor and widows from the neighbouring villages.

DEEPAM (Dynamic Education and Empowerment Promoting Agency for Marginalised) works for the empowerment of Dalit women, children and youth. We also focused on Dalit families of women headed - households, children and sanitary workers.

The hospital is in the front line creating awareness about self-protective measures including social distancing.

With the help of the local Gram Panchayats, they were engaged in monitoring the cleanliness of the villages and disinfecting the streets.

With health workers, they helped in identifying the infected patients in the villages.

Our relief work had three phases. In the first phase, 350 women headed households such as widows, deserted women, destitute women, and single mothers from 51 villages were helped out with the necessary provisions. In the second phase, 1075 children from 53 villages were provided with supplementary food. All these children are from the evening study centres of our service

villages. In the third phase, we concentrated on remote poverty stricken villages. So, 20 of our villages were selected. 264 families of sanitary workers and 210 women headed households from those villages were supported.



Most of these women were overwhelmed with joy and gratitude as they received relief material. For those of us involved in the process of distributing relief kit, it is a soul enriching experience. That we were able to wipe the tears and share the pain of the widows, destitute, deserted women, rural dalit children and sanitary workers was an intensely inspirational experience. The distribution is in progress.



M. Vadipatti is located in Dindigul-Theni bypass road. It is noted for its beautiful landscape and scenic beauty. It houses a community college, New Life Centre, (De-addiction Centre) besides a partially subsidized hostel accommodation for our students. As a quick response to COVID-19, we as a community planned to support the families of transgenders, HIV and TB patients in our neighbourhood. We shared rice,

dates, channa, eggs, grocery, masks and stationery items to 42 families of the transgenders and to HIV and TB patients. We deem it as a special grace and privilege to care for these who live a life of acute marginality.

Our sisters at Nagercoil collectively discerned to reach out to the suffering brethren on the periphery. The beneficiaries comprised of transgenders, widows, sick and aged, differently abled and special children and 40 families of the slums. Next, we helped 152 Tribal families of daily labourers with relief package. Sisters working in the College mobilized Rs. 1,80,000/- from the teaching faculty and support staff to help the financially weak and deserving students whose parents are either daily wage earners or migrants. Moreover, clubs such as Rotract, NSS, UBA, childline, departments and communities have reached out to the street children, migrants and daily wage earners.

The Common house of Formation as a community meticulously planned ways and means to help the hopeless victims of the Lockdown crisis. The community distributed 10 kg of relief material to 60 families of cleaners as well as the local poor of Kurusady. Later we fed the hungry distributing relief items to the masons, drivers, farmers and domestic workers of Thollavilai. The people were very happy to receive the aid. It was a hinge moment for all concerned.

Tuticorin-2 community is located in the heart of the city. We as a community plunged into action during the lockdown of COVID-19 in serving the people who were jobless. We distributed rice and groceries to 280 deserving families



of daily wagers in our locality. With the help of our Parish Priest and few volunteers from the Parish 30,000 eggs were given to the deserving people in Thoothukudi. We helped the parish and diocese with the money contributed by generous donors. The largeness of spirit and social sensitivity were so easily discernible on the side of the donors.

Communities like Thangachimadam, Ritapuram, Manamadurai, Karisalpatti, Bomminaickenpatti, Kodaikanal, Velayuthapuram, Mariathaipuram did not lag behind. As the social media echoed the silent cry of the migrants and poor constantly, we stepped out of our comfort zone and shared with the hungry. We were truly evangelized as we saw the poor sharing with the more needy. Now we have new contacts with front liners and as a team we reach out to the target group. Often times we were inspired by the quality of their involvement and Christ like sensitivity. Though what we did appears as a footnote against the overarching narrative of suffering, yet we are happy that our contribution has something of the quality of the widow's mite. And the mite of all the much acclaimed widows of the Gospel will certainly have an inspirational impact on all people. And their generosity will be a great relief to the poor and the discarded ones of society bawling with hunger and erasure.



JOY OF FEEDING THE HUNGRY IMMIGRANTS AT MAHER

Sr. Lucy Kurien
Province of Pune



On 25th March we noticed some people begging for food at our gate. We immediately cooked food and distributed it to people who were standing at our gate. We sent our social workers to study the situation as to why were they at our gate begging for food, what had gone wrong that brought them to our gate which was an unusual sight. Our social workers took the risk with all protective measures, to study the matter thoroughly.

The people who had come to our gate were migrant workers who were staying on the roadside. They had lost their jobs of sugarcane cutting and as day labourers on odd jobs. Our social workers also visited all the slums that Maher was involved with and studied the entire situation of the beggar's colony, tribal villages, brick-klin, migrant workers and slum dwellers.



Our social workers went visiting on four wheelers so that they were well protected against the dreaded virus and hot climate to some of the tribal villages who were staying in the interior of the villages to make a study of the various categories of people staying in different localities within a radius of 85 kilometers.

Maher Humanity Kitchen for Migrant Workers

The ongoing lockdown has adversely affected the lives of the most vulnerable communities across the country. The Migrant workers, dismissed by their employers, enjoying no protection, thrown out of their accommodation by their landlords, are in urgent need of food and getting back to their homes.

We feel that as human beings, it's our responsibility to help the most vulnerable amongst us in their time of need. As the migrant workers walk by along with their families who are hungry, stressed, exhausted, all that Maher can do for them is to offer them a warm meal before they proceed on their journey walking miles carrying their children.

The staff of Maher has been busy preparing cooked meals/ snacks for breakfast, lunch and dinner for the past 15 days, as we have been serving cooked meals to almost 400 to 600 a day people at different centers of Maher. It all depends on how much food we were able to cook. On some days it has been more. We distributed masks and sanitizers to those who needed them. It is heartbreaking and painful to see them. Kindness is a chain and helping others in need is indeed priceless.

Maher was happy we could reach out to 5000 and more families, i.e. more than 20000 people. We were able to provide cooked food to over 25000 people who were walking back home.



Every day we were serving cooked food from our three different centers. Now from the time the special buses have started to take the migrant workers to their home town, the number has been reduced. However there are still people walking on the street and Maher continues its mission.



I am also happy to inform you that some of the local people and foreign volunteers have generously come forward to extend a helping hand.

The usual work of Maher like looking after over 500 destitute women, 120 homeless men and 900 children at



various homes are ongoing irrespective of the lock down. Simultaneously there is a rise of new admissions of women and children due to domestic violence and unemployment etc. The effects of the lock downs are everywhere but our arms and hearts are left open wide to those in need.

Although there have been travel restrictions we made it a point to visit our sisters whenever possible. It brought us great joy to be able to attend the First Profession of our dear sister which was an added joy. Meeting and being with our sisters give us much of energy to go on.



WHO IS THE REAL HERO?

Sr. Deepali Bankar
New York, Province of Pune



Pope Francis says COVID-19 pandemic represents a chance for creativity and positive change, urging people to reconnect with the real world and reject throw away culture.

In an interview, the Pope discussed the aspects of the coronavirus ranging from, the Pope describing his life under isolation orders to praising "the saints who live next door" the people who keep working during a global health emergency.

"They are heroes: doctors, volunteers, religious sisters, priests, shop keepers all performing their duty so that society can continue functioning," the Pope said. Corona is the biggest pandemic the world has seen since the last three months. We have been quarantined, mostly stuck inside our homes. I am stressed and anxious; feeling nervous about this disease, also experiencing a deep concern for the children, families and friends. It's heart rending to see thousands of people dying every day. I am scared about what this is doing to the world, as everything is changing.

Things are no longer under one's control. We cannot go about doing things as we used to do prior to this pandemic.

I feel helpless, because we are not able to do anything. I try to spend time in prayer, reading and other activities but am not able to concentrate. The toughest time I was facing, was being in the house all of the time. As days and weeks passed by I asked myself, "What is my role as a missionary in USA?" I wanted to do something to reach out to the people, so I spoke to my Pastor Fr. Scott Seymour. He gave me the task of making rosaries for the sick at our hospital. People were happy to receive them and pray during this critical time.

St. Alexander's Church, where I work as the coordinator of Faith Formation, operates the soup kitchen where we feed more than 100 people every Thursday. Due to COVID -19 people were not able to come there to get their meal, so it was a great opportunity for me to be able to deliver the food to the home bound

and some other families. The trouble however was, that due to the pandemic their fears doubled and they had a difficult time accepting meals that were prepared by our volunteers. We explained to them that we are taking all the necessary precautions, so they could accept the meals. As the days passed more people began to feel the need for food.

While making deliveries it is very frightening and risky but at the end of the day I feel peaceful, grateful and a sense of fulfillment encompasses my being. Most of the families have shown their appreciation through phone calls, emails, greeting cards and so on.

These people are now waiting for me to arrive with their meal. Some just want to see me. So here we, as Sisters of the Cross, still Make the Good God Known and Loved in this critical situation. I feel God is leading me to these people and it makes my heart feel proud!

SERVICE AN EXPRESSION OF GRATITUDE TO CHRIST

Sr. Rosemary Kainga
Province of East Africa



Be still and know that I am God. (Ps 46: 10)

The day I watched the head lines about Corona Virus my blood began to shrink though I was steering at it far away, in China but started to pray for the world. On 16th March 2020 when the first case was reported in Kenya I began to look at it on my door step; my whole system shrank in fear of the uncertainties that surrounding us. My stomach was upset and at night I could dream having all the signs and symptoms of COVID 19, I began sneezing, headache, fever etc. I walked into the chapel and looked at the Cross and I remembered the words of St. Paul in Romans "If we live, we live for the Lord and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to God" (14:18). I surrendered my life and health to Jesus and I rested my case to him and I made sure that Jesus heard me whisper to Him that I was serving the sick for Him and animating the community, I requested Him to preserve my life for the sake of my community and all that was entrusted to me by my superiors. These words consoled me and I gave my fears to the Lord. I began looking at myself with Corona virus, locked in quarantine and so forth. The most stressing situation was to think once I get infected I will infect my sisters! But then I never lost hope in the Lord who made me a nurse to save life.

The temptation to lockdown the dispensary until further notice haunted me; I thought I was to do the right thing not to mingle with patients to avoid Corona virus. One day while seated for adoration I was looking at

Jesus and I heard Him telling me take courage we will work together, my sadness turned into joy and peace reigned in my heart. I spoke to myself and said that I am sent here on a mission and Jesus is my shield. With mixed feeling I went on attending to my patients. One Monday morning a man came for treatment and shared with me the harassment they get from government facilities, that they cannot go close to a nurse or doctor, they tend to avoid them to keep Corona out of them. Tears rolled down my cheeks. From that day onwards I became so courageous for I felt called to serve the sick as I have been doing and ignore issues about Corona. I take precautions not to get and infect others, and I ensure that all the patients who came to me are treated with dignity. We started sharing issues about COVID 19 and our fears with my community members. I had to become strong to strengthen them, watching news and praying for the world.

I longed to hear someone enquire my safety. When I received a call from my sisters asking me how I was fairing on consoled me. The attention and psychological support we gave to each other as nurses took away fear. The nurses who came in contact with the infected patients shared their feelings with us and that was a great support. Attending mass daily in our convent became source of strength to open the dispensary daily and attend to the patients. We began putting on masks and sanitizing our hands. Wearing the mask throughout the day was very uncomfortable and at night headache and tiredness became part of me.

These moments gave me chance not to complain but to be at the service of others as an expression of gratitude to Christ for giving me another chance to live my charism. I also discovered that in sacrificing oneself the blessings of God are streamlined to our families, for many good things happened at home and in the community. At present my fear is reduced but still praying for the grace to be able to go through the tough situation as we provide essential services. One among many lessons that I have learnt is that those working in the healing ministry need a lot of support to go through these difficult moments in order to be courageous. We are privileged to take care of others but we need others to take care of us. Every day as I step out of my bed I ask the Lord to spend the day with me and to immunize me. Actualizing how I will be feeling with Corona virus is no longer a nightmare but a struggle to put on mask and teach others to do the same. Some of the challenges experienced, buying of masks, gloves, sanitizers the prices are doubling every day. To purchase a gun thermometer to screen the patients is very expensive at 12,000 KSHS which the facility cannot afford. The income that comes is divided in paying the staff, buying medical supplies, drugs and meeting the other necessary expenses. In the midst of all these we have seen the hand of God guiding us. We are very grateful to Jesus who comes to our altar every day as we unite ourselves with the whole world to kick COVID19. Jesus is Lord now and forever we will triumph over the pandemic in His Name.



CELEBRATE THE TOUCH OF GOD

Sr. Jesusavari Antony
Province of Trichy



At the very outset my sentiments of gratitude are due to the Province for the singular opportunity which it offered me to write for the Journal of our Congregation. Humbled by this rare occasion, may I venture using God's grace for this work.

After due discretion, it is my wish to record on the path of my life and share God's activity along with and in me. The topic "Celebrate the touch of God" in a certain sense impelled me to gather a few specific moments during which I experienced the divine touch that caused a lasting impact on me. All of us would have come across the wall hangings "You have touched me and I have grown" and "God gives us the face and we chose the expression". It is indeed undeniable that God constantly touches me like a potter at the wheel and shapes me. My existence as a human being is God's own gift given to me and it is being made something beautiful and bountiful for HIM.

What has been is what will be and what has been done is what will be done; There is nothing new under the sun. Is there a thing of which it is said, "See, this is new"? It has already been, in the ages before us (Ecclesiastes 1: 9-10).

It is very true and it is my conviction that all my experiences however dear to me and empowering, all my expressions however uniquely new and beautiful, even the very thought and style already found their place in some writings. Yet, I cannot let go what is mine, the presence and activity of God in my life, the deep and valuable human relations in this

part of God's story, unmatched in history, unnoticed by human observations.

I cherish anew, the priceless pearls of the divine encounters that shaped and keep shaping me more Christ like, since God ever recreates His fabulous and unfathomable love for the world and humanity through me. It is my obligation to owe my appreciation to persons who had been the channels of God's graceful touch in my life.

It is my long-cherished conviction ever since I was young that I am special and unique. At the age of 15 I found joy and pride saying that I belong only to Jesus and no one can claim me. While waiting to know the congregation which I would join to fulfil my aspiration. In the year 1981 I came across more than 20 congregations, who welcomed me to join them. God touched me through the forgiveness and awesome acceptance which Mother Claudine showed to her father. If Claudine can, I too can make of my life unique and valuable in love and service. I decided to be a member of this group of sisters. I joined the congregation and soon illusions about religious life were gone. I came in touch with the hard realities and demands of living with people of different origin and background.

I can recall vividly the moments of joys and pains of life. The great moments like:

Sisters in harmony (Ps 133)

Abel with his brother Cain.

(Gen 4:2-7)

Young David with King Saul, (1

Sam 18 - 19)

Joseph in Potipher's House (Gen: 39: 3 -23)

Mordecai with Haman (book of Esther)

Daniel with King Darius Lions' den (Daniel 6)

Susanna (Daniel 13)

Two vital questions to God have always been on my mind viz. "Why me?" and "Why not me?" During moments God startled me with his unconditional love, I asked Him: "Why do you love me with so much love?" At times, His love was so real and deep, too much to contain in a simple human being like me, and at other times too painful to bear with.

Whenever I perceived that, I was protected from dangers while others suffered, I asked: "Why not me?" My questions never went unanswered. O Jacob, listen to the Lord who created you. O Israel, the one who formed you says, "Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine. I gave Egypt as a ransom for your freedom; I gave Ethiopia and Seba in your place. Others were given in exchange for you. I traded their lives for yours. Because you are precious to me. You are honoured, and I love you. - Is: 43: 1, 3b-4.

This is the answer that the Lord gave me for the question: "Why me". It is his eternal choice to love me. Who am I to question that Divine choice? Further when I recognized the Egypt, Ethiopia, Seba, persons and the nations... which God gave in exchange for my freedom and life, I knew I have no power over my life. He is in control. All I need is just to be

in His hands, the rest He will take care.

When my friend and companion Sr. Nithiya suffered the pains of cancer for two full years and rested in the Lord's arm peacefully I asked: "Why not me?" In a road accident, out of the four persons, I was the least hurt. I felt the pain of not being selected even to suffer minor injuries. But the Lord told me that He chose people for the mission of suffering.

His ways are incredibly strange and striking. When I felt worthless he affirmed that I was precious; when I realized my frailty he braced my strength; when I was timid and fearful He made me strong and bold. Whenever I said, "I can't" he encouraged me that I am far more competent.

Sometimes I felt too unworthy for His love and sought to get away from Him. Misunderstandings, misgivings, improper judgments, and imputing wrong motif and intentions to good works had been devastating experiences in my life. But whenever I was down cast, the Lord was my defender. I heard Him whisper through Hosea again.

"Oh, how can I give you up, Israel? How can I let you go? My heart is torn within me, and my compassion overflows." (Hos 11: 8)

With His strong protective arms around me, nothing could hurt me or destroy me. Every experience both positive and negative added a feather to my cap. The Lord has performed miracle after miracle in my life. Through the years, I have evolved in every sphere of my life. At times I wonder at the manner I have changed in my ideas, view of life etc.

Whatever grace I desired to have, He poured it abundantly into my life. I have never fasted and prayed for any

special favour from God. All I needed was just to tell Him, "Jesus I want this". In 1980 my mother was diagnosed with cancer. That time was too tough for my family. All I did was I went to our parish church at 7.30 PM, sat in a corner, looked at Jesus in the tabernacle and said with tears: "Jesus I want my mother". She is still with us fully alive. In December 1997, I made again such a simple prayer for a priest who was in death bed, and he is still alive and serving the Catholic Church. In 2019 once again I desired for the life and well-being of one of our staff who suffered fatal head injury, in less than four months' time he came back to school, and joined duty. Numerous are the miracles both small and great which the Lord continues to perform in my life.

To us, life is a great miracle. God was and is very sensitive to even the slightest desire of mine. One of the promises that he made:

"When you pass through waters, I will be with you; And when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; The flames will not set you ablaze." (Is 43: 2)

And He has been true to His promise: "My grace is sufficient for you; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." (2 Cor.12:9)

I hardly ever stayed in want. His grace had always been sustaining me. My life was always blessed with good people around me. I seldom felt jealous of anyone more talented than me. My life was always rich enough. I appreciatively remember our sisters, strangers, friends and people who journey with me as co-passengers in this grace-filled life.

As an end note, I would like to say "I have just brought out a few colours of my rainbow. I strongly believe that

every human being, more so every individual religious specially, called and cared, broken and shared, cared and sustained by God, is blessed with a life full of moments of love, surprises and miracles. The life of a religious is the center of God's activity, God's power in creative work. Let us just stay with God and watch Him perform. Let us enjoy and make our lives a melodious song and beautiful dance. For, whoever wishes to sing will find a song, whoever wishes to dance will find a step.

Do a little homework.

1. Find some quiet moments with God and ask Him to show you, the Egypt, Ethiopia, Seba, nations and people He readily gave up for love of you.
2. Find the flames, flood and rivers through which God allowed you to pass through unharmed.
3. Identify those whom you have pushed to the periphery of your life; reach out to them; bring them into your life and love them. It is the only way to experience the unconditional love of God.
4. Believe that you are loved, and you have a mission to fulfill. Believe in your uniqueness, capacity and worth. Be grateful and celebrate the trust God has in you.

Recounting of God's activity in one's life is empowering. To put the experience of God into words is very difficult. We will never find adequate and appropriate words. Once we put down in words, its depth becomes too shallow to be either personal or divine. Limited human attempts to express that boundless love, is that of the work of the little child who appeared on the seashore to St. Augustine, who put his efforts to contain the ocean in a single small hole.

Celebrate the touch of God in your life and live your life anew every day.



MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Sr. Lourdes

Province of Trichy



The profession of Rehabilitation and special education of the differently abled is founded on noble purposes and provides rewards that seem to equip educate and empower the special children of God for a better quality of life.

Unless someone cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. Rehabilitationists are a part of the few who do care. They care about social injustices committed every day, across the globe-behind closed doors and out in the open. They are the ones who care enough to believe they can make the world a better place by including the differently abled into the mainstream.

“It is not enough to be compassionate; you must act” says Dalai Lama

Action begins with a desire. Naturally, heartfelt compassion leads to action. The vulnerable and disadvantaged in this world need more than pity-they need to see love operate selflessly and sacrificially. Thus realizing this call of the



Lord Almighty, The Institute of Rehabilitation Science and Special Education was started in 1983 as a fruitful blossoming of the triangular partnership of three noble minded institutions. i.e. Congregation of the Sisters of the Cross of Chavanod, Bharathidasan University and Christoffel Blinden Mission, West Germany, to alleviate the dearth of trained Rehabilitation Workers. Three eminent academicians from USA - Dr. Jeanne Kenmore, Dr. Christine Carlson and Dr. Pameela Amber, with the support of Christoffel Blinden Mission from Germany have contributed by sharing their knowledge and expertise in the initial stages of inception. The College envisioned the noble mission of educating and training students to help, support, train and empower persons with special needs in order to have a more fruitful life in an inclusive society. The Institute of Rehabilitation Science offers Diploma, Undergraduate, Post Graduate, Doctoral Degree and Need Based Courses in Rehabilitation Science and Special Education, Audiology and Speech Language Pathology, Psychology and Diploma in Special Education, to build a cadre of professionals who will work with all categories of people with special needs. Ever since its inception (1983), the Institute has strengthened its knowledge base by networking with many local, national, international agencies and using the expertise and

resources in various forms to build a strong professional network. The department has a strong professional tie-up with the Rehabilitation Council of India and has been recognized by the council as the only institute in the whole of the country to be specialized in offering multi-category training in the area of disability. To add to its professional tie ups the institute also collaborates extensively with all the national institutes spread across the country. The institute has signed MOU with 6 international Organization and 14 other organization working for persons with disabilities



“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much”. In the words of Helen Keller, we are all created equal but each of us are unique with our own individuality that makes us different. Yet together, the differences form a harmony singing a well-orchestrated melody. The beauty is in the harmony.

Ever since its inception the department has earned the rare distinction of keeping in trend with evolving courses and need based

training programmes related to disability rehabilitation. Starting with the undergraduate course (B.R.SC) the department initiated the Masters level programme (M.R.SC) in the same discipline with specializations in Visual Impairment and Hearing Impairment. Further-more the management and the committed band of faculty have left no stone unturned and have constantly strived to keep pace with the growing need and demand to come up with Diploma Courses, need based training programmes, short term course, seminars, conferences and workshops on all emerging areas of disability.

The specializations of Mental Retardation, Orthopedically Handicapped, Multiple Disabilities, Learning Disability, Autism and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder have all been included, and this has enabled the department to groom and train a cadre of professionals with sound theoretical knowledge and practical hands on exposure in all these emerging areas of disability. The academic milestones reached over the years stands as a testimony of the institute's effort to meet to global standards in the area of disability training and rehabilitation. Of late the initiation of the Bachelors Course in Audiology and Speech Language Pathology has proved to be another feather to its cap. The faculty and the management has



constantly taken efforts to update the syllabus to meet local needs and global standards and opportunities are availed to all students of rehabilitation science and audiology through frequent seminars, conferences and workshops with eminent international speakers and national professionals and field functionaries as resource persons. Concurrent field placements and internships in local, regional, national and international institutions have enabled the students to harness the required knowledge and skills to keep abreast with the growing needs and demands. The students of both Rehabilitation Science and Audiology have occupied vantage positions and the placement statistics reveals the high demand for them. Most of the students who enter its portals are well placed and they serve in different capacities as project administrators, consultants, professors, programme managers, therapists, audiologists, speech trainers, special educators, vocational counselors and Community Based Rehabilitation heads both inland and across the seas and have earned reputation for their professional knowledge and expertise. Research has also been an inevitable part of the departmental activity and the department has the unique distinction of having a record number of nearly 50 Ph. D scholars pursuing active research under the resourceful faculty all of whom have been certified to be research supervisors by the parent university. A number of research projects funded by institutes of national eminence like the University Grants Commission (UGC), Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) and international funding organizations like Rehabilitation Council of India



(RCI) and United Christian Board have also been bagged and completed successfully with impetus on social relevance.

The happiest people are those who lose themselves in the service of others. As we lose ourselves in the service of others, we discover our own lives and our own happiness. Besides the regular myriad of academic programmes, the department also focuses on a broad range of extension services to add more valour and strength to the quantum of rehabilitation services for persons with special needs and also enable the student community to get hands on experience while involved in the process of education and training. The varied extension services of the department include **Rainbow Therapeutic Unit** which focuses on early identification, assessment and need based stimulation, physical, occupational, audiological and speech therapy services for persons with special needs.

Holy Cross Blossoms Opportunity School for Special Children and the NEST (Need based Education Service and Training) for the Autistic Children were two model special institutions established by us the Sisters of the Cross under the patronage of the department of Rehabilitation Science to provide need based assessment training and special education for the special needs

children as a non-residential programme. The two institutions also serve as a model school for the budding rehab graduates wherein they get hands on practical training in skill development, behavioural training, assessment and educational and vocational empowerment of the special need children. Besides these the trainees also are involved in parent counselling, sibling support programmes and other community awareness programmes through these two schools. The two schools also serve as a training ground for students from different institutions and offer placement and field-based training for them. Apart from need based educational and vocational training the two schools also has intensified therapeutic activities like sensory integration therapy music therapy, play therapy, sand therapy and yoga therapy that induces a great learning ambience for our fresh graduates in therapeutic inter-vention. Thus, in short these two extension services of the department are indeed two resourceful centres that add to supplementing affordable and accessible rehabilitation services for the (CWSN) Children With Special Needs and thereby promote a better quality of life for them. At present there are 150 children who are trained by our sisters and special teachers.

Rehab Wings is a voluntary forum where both UG, PG and diploma students get enrolled to reach out to the unreached out of the class hours to usher in holistic development to their fellow brethren with varying disabilities in accordance to their need.



Edu Tech Lab houses softwares for the students with special needs and is engaged in preparing talking books and Braille resources for the visually impaired learners. It also has a broad range of supportive and assistive technology for the low visioned and voice based softwares. Another remarkable feature is the resourceful TLM for the intellectually challenged and the learning disabled.

Echo is an annual newsletter of the Institute. In house activities, outreach programmes, achievements of the institute, future plans and programmes are the main features of the newsletter

Buddy Club is one to one support programme in which the buddies (students) from the club meet the little buddies (Special Children) as and when they have time to offer help and support in their natural home environment. Socialization skills are specially targeted to ensure a better quality of life for the young buddies.

Be the Change - Project Volunteering is where the general public, interested in rendering volunteer service to persons with special needs particularly in the Holy Cross Blossoms Opportunity School and the Rainbow Early Intervention Programme volunteer to work for a noble cause.

Job Placement Cell is the employment cell, ever since its initiation continues with its yeomen service of networking and placing students of UG, PG and DIPLOMA students in lucrative jobs on request from its user agencies and NGOs locally, nationally and internationally. Students work at administrative and managerial level and as academicians, researchers, teachers, co-ordinators, field workers and have earned good reputation for their sincerity and commitment.

Thai Suvai is an in-house kitchen that offers to be a training unit for the adolescent persons with special needs in preparing traditional home foods and millet based healthy recipes. The simple small quantum preparations are marketed within the institution and offer to be remunerative incentive for them.

Education should be for one's life and for the life of others. Thus with these words as the success mantra the Institute of Rehabilitation Science and Special Education has always focused on holistic approach to education and envisages empowering a band of competent and committed professionals who will contribute their best to promote a better quality of life for the differently abled.

“Not all of us can do great things, but we can do small things with great love”. These words of St. Mother Teresa have been the watch words that drive in us the re-habians to serve with the eyes of compassion, a heart of warmth and hands of love to reach out and touch the lives of the unreached and thus be the change we wish to see in this world.



FIVE LOAVES AND TWO FISHES

Sr. Philo Kottam

Delegation of Latin America



We the sisters of the Cross of Chavanod, established our presence in Colombia in January 1996 and from 1999 onward, we set roots in Mosquera. Finally in 2015, Mosquera became a community with three sisters; presently we are two, Molly and Philo along with Lucia, the volunteer from Peru who came to support us in the mission during the month of February. We three took the challenge of facing the present reality by serving the under-privileged, the excluded, the displaced and the emigrants from the neighbouring country, Venezuela who are the inhabitants of our Barrio.

Porvenir Rio is a popular barrio with a fluctuating population between eight and nine thousand people, consisting of primarily daily income drawing people. This Barrio is situated just at the out skirts of Bogota, the capital city of Colombia. Most of the people are rag pickers, recycling men and women who find their daily bread hunting through the discarded of the city! Others who do odd jobs to meet the end, coolie workers, most of the single mothers who work very early in the morning, in the houses of the rich leaving the kids alone and returning home very late.

Through the Foundation, our cultural center create a peaceful and joyous atmosphere and space to promote integral growth and development of single mothers, children, youth, and as a community in general on set of this vulnerable scenario. In the same way we conduct orientation courses and empowerment sessions for

women for a better living. We serve healthy breakfast for more than 150 children before they go to school at 5 am! All of our good service and mission came to a standstill at the outbreak of the pandemic.

As we all know, the outburst of coronavirus pandemic has brought countries throughout the world to a standstill. As the outbreak of this virus was very strong in Colombia too, the Government suddenly announced the lockdown on the 16th of March. As per the government instructions, all schools, colleges, universities, institutions, commercial centers, malls and even our churches all over Colombia were to be closed. Citizens were ordered to stay home until a new order from the Government was to be issued to reopen everything.

As the spreading of this corona was very fast, the death toll mounted, infection rate increased and business were shut down. Many lost their jobs. The physical, emotional and economic impact on the people was immense. Day in and day out people only heard about the great calamity this virus was causing throughout the nations. This brought a lot of uncertainty and desperation to all. In the midst of this dire situation, we had to change our way of life and cling to our deep connectedness towards God who walks by our side, to value our family and value our society. More than anything we were called towards solidarity, re-conciliation, inclusion, creativity in prayer and community activities, listen to others and oneself with heart and mind to bring changes

to the negative energy of the word corona.

What does the word Corona brings to our mind? We are fearful, anxious and there is a great panic to come in contact with other human being! Today, this is the most often used word in the world. Our internal dialogue is all about the Corona. Our external dialogue is all about the Corona. Be it the Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, the news, our friends and our family, everywhere you turn, you only hear about Corona. Now science proves that each word has a frequency, each word has energy. It sends impulses to the brain and we produce corresponding chemicals. And that's how the alchemy of our body changes and we start to feel happy, sad, disturbed or panic. Now can we imagine, what we are doing to our body on a daily basis these days?

So we started to change the energy and frequency of the word Corona by talking about the positive element like the generosity and humanity of people all around. We started to feel and share the vibrant presence of our Lord, the God experience with each other in our community. We created more frequency of coming together, we felt the need to listen to each other and share among us as we felt the need to pray more often as a community.

As the explosive infection was spreading rapidly, the situation in the country was that people started to lose their jobs and had no money to buy anything for the family, no food to eat,

not able to go out and get something so the people became desperate and got sick mentally and physically. Their livelihood was interrupted. They found it impossible to meet their basic needs. The government made lot of promises to help the people with food and other materials but it often remained as promises! As days passed, the need of the people was increasing; the hunger and thirst equally were increasing.

As we heard the cry and the suffering of the people in our Barrio and the world at large, we realized that we had to do something, we need to take courage, trust in the Lord, we can't let our people die of hunger and asked the Lord to help us and show us the way. We started to talk to our friends and benefactors about our concern. In awesome wonder, the generosity of the people and the mercy of the Lord

flowed into our Barrio through our foundation, our eyes could not believe the quantity of food packages, the provisions in tons reached our door from different sources. Yes, once we were ready to risk our life for the poor, the universe itself opened the door of abundance. We then learned to dispense them in a methodical and regular basis with all the paraphernalia necessary for the protection proposed by the health organization.

What really touched our hearts were for the most part when the people came to receive the food hamper; their eyes were brimming with tears. They were filled with joy and gratitude that made the whole experience worthwhile. Words cannot express our emotions and our gratitude for all we received from the Lord.

During this time of crisis, we have seen the Lord's hand in many ways and He has walked with us and protected us with His Mercy and Kindness. As Jesus multiplied 5 loaves of bread and 2 fishes He multiplied food for the people in our foundation. We could not have taken such an immense and risky initiative without the Lord's help and the generosity of the benefactors.

People have been appreciating us for what we have done and some even told that they take their hat off as they saw us doing this mission with lot of enthusiasm. So, we too do the same with our Lord, because He has taken care of us and protected us from all kinds of dangers. A big thanks to Lord and to the people of God.



REACHING OUT TO THE PERIPHERIES

Sr. Thangam Fernandopulle
Province of Sri Lanka



From the very recent past we hear the word "Periphery" frequently, and I know that it carries a significant truth to consider vigorously as consecrated religious.

The definition of the word Periphery in the dictionary is the outer edge of an area / the margin / a boarder often where the less privileged part of a group settles. So reaching out to the periphery is to be in touch with the people in a situated area, to know, study, reflect, about their life situations, and embark in responding to their needs, aspirations, burning issues, and raise them up from where

they are giving them hope to go ahead.

Jesus reaching out to the Periphery

Jesus' incarnation itself was an impoverish act. "Though He was in the form of God, He did not cling to His divinity but emptied Himself and became one like us" (Philippians 2:7). Son of God entered human history, as the poorest of the poor, helpless, homeless, Child born in a manger. Jesus sets aside His wealth of heaven and pitched His tent in this sinful world. He was born in Bethlehem in the periphery and lived in Nazareth in

the periphery with his parents: "Jesus grew in wisdom, stature and with favour with God and men" (Luke: 2/52). This was Jesus' time of preparation to accomplish the Father's Will. As Son of Man, He worked on His own interior disposition, attitudes, mind-set to embrace the fallen humanity. He knew well that He was sent to combat this sinful world where violation of human rights, dignity, injustice, power, wealth, had become idols.

A Call to reach out to the Periphery

We are called, consecrated and sent to

make the Good God known and loved. We have pledged to be credible witnesses of Christ to the world. Our Formative period qualified us to be captivated by the Spirit for a deep experience with the Lord and to put on the attitudes of Jesus. This experiential knowledge shaped us to change our interior dispositions, attitudes and mind-set to reach out to the poor and needy like Jesus. We need to reflect on what Jesus, said, did and lived in His life. Looking at Jesus' approach, we are to continue the mission of Love.

We see in the life of Jesus, how He reached out to the periphery, and contacted the lepers the untouchable, tax collectors, sinners, the poor, the lost and the least in the society. It was disgusting to all, who saw Jesus reaching out to these isolated abandoned groups. Our inspiration in embracing this way of life was to be like Christ in a deeper way. We need to take a serious stand now, if we want to reach out to the periphery. We accept the fact that we have deviated from our initial response of our yes to the Lord leaving our own families by opting for religious life. Many of us have come from lower middle class families and soon we adapt to an upgraded life style that is alien and strange to us. This way of life paved the path for a comfortable and easy way of living where some experience psychological security. What we see today is that majority of us like to settle in our comfort zone. I regret to say that many of us have forgotten our roots from where we have come, and as a consequence our simplicity of life and gentleness that we have inherited from home gradually dwindled.

In spite of our indifferences to the realities in the periphery, we as communities have contributed our a little to be in solidarity with our brothers and sisters. Our simple community set-up, external life

witness, and the internal disposition of the sisters opened a favourable environment to feel at home with everyone. Our Day Care Centers, work for the fisher folk, education of the poor, and hostels for the needy children were done for the margins of the society responding to their dire needs. Jesus took quality time to spend in the periphery, revealing God's mercy and compassion. In all our places of work the poor are present in diverse forms. Some of our communities and some individual sisters have launched out to the periphery giving quality time.

There were times where we voluntarily responded to the emergency calls that surfaced at different times; for the victims of pre and post war, consequences of tsunami and bomb explosion. This was mainly for a period of time where we left our comfort zone and reached out to the periphery. Once we return to our comfort zone of security we were reluctant to be involved in the hardships, anxieties and struggles of our people. We do admit our inability to feel their pulse as we were unfamiliar to the reality. Is it our own alienation from the reality that hinders us in reaching out to the periphery? What can we do and how we go about? Yes, let us embrace both "What" and "How" of Jesus' Mission of Love.

Jesus calls us to leave our comfort zones aside and to pitch our tent in the periphery. What is it that challenges and hinders us in reaching out to the margins? We see and feel for our brothers and sisters who are rejected, unwanted, despised and abandoned by everyone, so the need to let go of our comfort zone. This is not something new to us, we have heard this often, but we lack courage to get rid of our upgraded living that we have accustomed to now. More than our doing our being with them,

sharing, in their life situations by becoming mothers, sisters, and friends is a challenging task as we are used to be a step higher or superior to them in our dealings. Our call is to be available for them with Jesus' love, mercy and compassion.

Pope Francis states that "if we're going to find Jesus in our world today, we must do what he did; we must go to the periphery. We must take time to be with the poor. That's where we will discover Jesus most of all among the poor and the most desperate poor of our world today".

Mother Claudine our Foundress started our Congregation with the same spirit as she was, a very humble, simple and poor lady who followed the footsteps of Jesus our radical leader. She was a courageous, valiant woman who was deeply in communion with the Lord and her one and only longing and yearning was to make the Good God known and loved, especially among the most ignorant and the poor.

In the life of Mother Teresa we see her bringing God's mercy and compassion to the poorest of the poor among the slums of Kolkota. She went to the poor, the lost, the abandoned, and the discard. It was her deep intimate union with the Lord that created a space within, to respond to the cries of the margins.

Let us reflect on the lives of the above three hallowed persons who were blessings in the hands of our God, to be channels of love, mercy and compassion.

Our external appearance, lifestyle and our quality of life have to fit into their way of living. A vibrant spirituality springs forth in us if we truly put on the attitudes of Jesus. This will obviously be our source to see Jesus' face in the lives of our suffering, abandoned and poor brothers and sisters.



THE IMPRINTS OF MY MISSIONARY LIFE

Sr. Greta Iscard - ECUADOR

Delegation of Latin America



My life in Latin America began with two months of Spanish class in Lima, Peru the year 1997. Then I was sent together with Srs. Fatima and Lily Alex at the launch of a new community in Madrid, Colombia in 1998. Being new and having little knowledge of the people, place and language, nothing much I could do. I literally felt like a child.

One of my main tasks was to answer the knock at the door and respond to the children who come seeking help with their homework, especially that of religion. The question “What am I doing?” tormented me in the beginning years of my religious life. It took me four long years to get a clear vision of my mission and come to terms with myself. Thanks to the Holy Spirit who is at work in each of us. It was spelt out in one single word LOVE through an open dialogue with Jesus, similar to that of the disciples of Emmaus. Quick came the answer to my question- “Here in Madrid you are doing nothing but the Lord is doing something in you”. This thought “I am doing nothing but the Lord is doing something in me” was the source of my strength and joy. This great revelation, the experience of God persisted all through my missionary journey in Latin America.

This year once again, while life moved on, life's activities were brought to a standstill not only for me but for the entire world. Here a nationwide LOCK DOWN was declared by the end of January. After

24 hours of travel from Lima, Peru I was detained at the Ecuadorian Immigration Centre. I was refused entry for lack of a Visa to Ecuador. My Peruvian Immigration Card was not considered sufficient for the fact that I held an Indian passport. So I had to stay back while Srs. Anne Mary and Jessy proceeded to Guayaquil with my luggage. With a small backpack I proceeded to the nearest town, Tumbes. I was in an unknown land among unknown people but I was soon to experience the providential care of God and the goodness of people.

I went straight to the church, which in these countries is always located in the town square together with the municipal offices. Being a Thursday there was Eucharistic Adoration followed by Holy Mass at 6:00 pm which was a blessing and my greatest joy was to see the Basilica fully packed. After the adoration I went to the sacristy to explain my situation to the priest and ask him to help me find an accommodation. I had hardly done so when I received a call from an Indian Loreto sister in Lima assuring me that she would make some arrangements. After Mass she called me back asking me to proceed to the neighbouring town, Corrales, where a lady called Juanita would be waiting for me in front of the church. After making arrangements with the transport office in Tumbes to inform Srs. Anne Mary and Jessy not to wait for me in Guayaquil but to proceed to Portoviejo I preceded to Corrales. I

reached there around 9 pm refreshed myself and had supper in the lady's house and then she took me to the house of another lady, Narciza, where I was to stay.

Since I had the necessary documents from the Episcopal Bishop of Ecuador I hoped to work out the Visa in a day or two and leave by Wednesday to the latest. On Friday having worked out the needed Police Antecedent document I presented my solicitude to the council on Monday. But it was rejected because my name was wrongly spelt in the Bishop's letter. This little error left me stranded there for three whole weeks. Neither Narciza nor I had expected it. It was indeed an embarrassing situation at the end of each day to think that I still have no definite answer to when I would leave. It took two whole weeks for a fresh post (HDL) to arrive from Portoviejo with the letters of the Episcopal Bishop and that of the Bishop of Portoviejo and the Congregation superior. The endless waiting with nothing to do and the difficulty in processing the virtual solicitude was at times frustrating, but for the greater part thanks to the grace of God I was calm and confident that the Lord knows what is the best for me. I believed that He will work out things in His own time and space.

Having reached my destination, Portoviejo on February 23rd I was told that the lockdown has been

extended. At first, I was against the lockdown thinking that it was the last trick of the malignant one to cut man off from all spiritual consolations. But now I am glad, be it the trick of the malignant one to destroy man or God's saving plan, God never fails! In the apparent standstill God's saving power has been at work. It gives me immense joy to see the positive attitude with which a grand majority of human kind has faced the situation and the positive effects of it in nature, in the creative art of man in various fields, in global oneness and solidarity, in the greater and newer expressions of faith in the Divine.

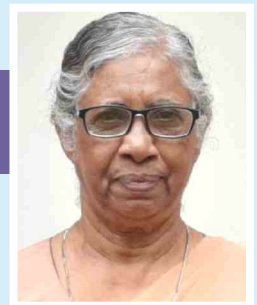
Here, living within the parish campus, we have been doubly blessed with the daily live participation in all the regular services of the parish, which was transmitted through Facebook for the filigrees. In the month of May after the Holy Mass and Rosary in the parish house another Rosary was conducted from our terrace in coordination with another family for the people of this area. Our parish priest and the seminarian had carried the big statue of our Lady all the way from the church and installed it on our terrace. On various days, communion was taken to the families

and people who desired it. Though I couldn't do much the interest and effort taken by our parish priest to keep changing the decorations and arrangements according to the liturgical season coupled with his patience, tolerance and readiness to reach out to the people based on the spirituality of St. Francis de Sales: "All for love and nothing without it" is in itself a source of strength and joy to me, while the interest and participation of the people are gratifying. And I can affirm that God is always at work in us.



GOD'S ECONOMY NEVER FAILS!

Sr. Betsy Devasia
Province of Guwahati



All of a sudden, I viewed the T.V channels flashing the news of PM Modi announcing a complete lockdown from the midnight of 24th March 2020 in India- a nation which has a population equivalent to 17.7 % of the world population! I was shocked to hear this unusual announcement.

As per the latest Labour Force Survey, 2.5 crore people are in vulnerable jobs across India. People were not given any time or space for movements within the country. In such an alarming situation what would happen to people stranded in their workplaces, hospitals, migrated areas? Over 94% of India's working

population is part of the unorganized sector. Half of India's working population falls under unemployed group. The world witnessed a huge economic shock due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The plight of the poor is needless to mention as we could see it on the TV. Who among us would not be moved with kindness and compassion looking at the panicky of the migrants who are trudging miles to be back home, having lost their daily wages? Ofcourse to mitigate the economic crisis of the low income families living in the urban shanty towns have been distributed with dry food kits and other essential items by the GOs and the NGOs. But I knew it would reach nowhere.

I was inspired to witness so many Sisters and Priests with their staff on the street with essential commodities to alleviate the miseries of the people. A lot of fund was raised by the benevolent people in the neighbourhood in view of supporting those people who could not earn their livelihood due to the lockdown. All of a sudden construction work, farming, fishing, hand looming and everything else came to a halt. Owners of the companies, factories, fisheries, constructors, land lords, all disappeared leaving the labourers to battle with their own fate. I began to question myself "What could WDC do in such a pandemic situation?"

Women Development Centre (WDC), Social work wing of the Sisters of the Cross of Chavanod, province of Guwahati always responded positively and effectively to the natural calamities in the past. Towards the Covid-19 our first initiative was to make masks and within a week we distributed about 600 in our neighbourhood.



In the first wave along with another NGO and our neighbours of good will came together and explained the difficulties of daily labourers, domestic workers etc. One of them said 'when we are here our people should not go hungry'. So, there was a good feeling and all contributed generously and a gentleman was given the responsibility to make sure that sufficient money will be collected. Meanwhile we got necessary permission from the District Administration to distribute dry food grains like rice, dal, soya beans, potatoes, onion, hand sanitizer, mustard oil and dettol soap



to 850 people in and around Joypur Kharguli.

So, the poor and vulnerable in Kharguli, Joypur hills and plains were supported by us first. It was a great initiative and when the people in the villages came to know, the poor approached us every now and then who returned with a smile on their faces.

The second attempt of WDC was to think of the widows. We helped 80 widows in our neighbourhood, around 150 widows in Ambagaon and another 200 of them in Harmutty. They were a neglected group and we had the joy of bringing smiles on their faces by our care towards them with dry food kits, sanitizers, masks etc.



During this time, we approached **ARISE Foundation** to help temporary workers in the tea garden. Tea garden is one of our major area of service and we knew that their managers are obliged to help the permanent workers and even if the government came forward, they could help only those who have ration card. Most of those temporary workers who have no ID or ration card needed support. Realizing the great need we supplied dry food grains and sanitary items in Siajuli tea garden for 550 families of daily wage earners and the most vulnerable.

WDC turned its attention to the



Persons With Disability (PWD) at Bijni. Through our effort 304 PWD's received Rs. 6000/- each from the state social work departments. In this effort Mr. Nimisius Islary has done an outstanding humanitarian work. Besides this, we helped 50 deserving disabled with food kits. While our work was in progress there was a heavy storm which blew off many roofs. We supported 3 very poor families of the disabled children to get their houses repaired with the estimate of Rs. 40,000/-

Misereor Germany came up with a package to support 1200 Tea garden families with dry food grains and sanitary protections. Though the DC of Jorhat was happy to give permission, but to get the paper signed was a risk and great challenge. Everything is under lockdown and movements were impossible even to reach the DC and we could not make inter district travels. Here our targets were poor widows and school going children aged between 5 and 15 and a few vulnerable old and handicapped people. I acknowledge of the commitment of two of our staff who dared to walk in the rain for about 2



hours and waited in the office the whole day for a signature from the office of the SDO. By 6 pm they got back home with much happiness as they could buy and distribute the materials for our people in Tea Garden.

We helped 430 people in Jorhat district with dry food grains. It was a great relief for the district administration too. These kind gestures of our sisters in Mariani was much appreciated. Dry food to 430 quarantine people were supplied. The District Administration had requested our sisters to help them stitch 1000 masks and we are on the process.

Caritas India came up with a timely help in Lakhimpur and Dhemaji districts, in our Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) project area for poor farmers and most vulnerable people. We could help 1068 very deserving people with dry food kits. Most of these people do not have a ration card which gives an identity to get any Government support. The staff of WDC were generous and committed with their field work.



To support the artisans in this moment of crises, a movement called Creative Dignity was started by collective stakeholders to provide immediate relief to the crafts community. As informed, under the campaign, 200 Million Artisans in the Handmade Sector can avail some

assistance. WDC is an Implementing Agency of SFURTI through Export Promotion Council of Handicraft (EPCH) and Artisans of Gorchiga Handloom Cluster at Nowboicha Block in Lakhimpur District which is supported under SFURTI Project in association with Indian Institute of Entrepreneurs (IIE) under Ministry of Textile Govt. of India. The Gorchiga Handloom Cluster with 550 artisans would get 800 kgs of cotton yarn to support them towards their livelihood during this lock down due to COVID 19.

As a great humanitarian service we accommodated 8 construction workers and 7 students who were stranded due to the lockdown. In the same way, around Guwahati, 104 domestic workers who were deprived of their works in families, 28 widows and 27 auto drivers who could not earn their livelihood were helped and supported by this esteemed Institution.

Besides WDC's effort, the Provincialate community came up with charitable service for the senior citizens, sick, slum dwellers, rickshaw pullers and auto drivers who had been neglected by the NGOs. Srs. Prema and Laisa reached out to the transgender group with timely help. Around 100 disabled children's families of Mercy Home were helped with dry food kits.

With the support of Chalice we were able to help 189 poor students with Rs. 1000/- to ease their pain. Holy Cross School and Hostel at Itanagar reached out to 40 families on the peripheries of the Capital with dry food grains and sanitizers. Sisters handed over 200 masks to the SP, Itanagar who appreciated the thoughtfulness of the sisters.



Our sisters at Twithompui in collaboration with other Hostels and individuals rose to the occasion and helped the poor and miserable in their surrounding regions with food kits.

As a Province we were able to extend our solidarity to 5200 families, 26000 persons in all. God acted through the Province. We thank God for His mercy towards His people.

I marvel at God's Economy which never fail because inspite of the lockdown, remaining in my office, I was able to feel and sense the sufferings of many vulnerable people and God gave me the comfort and consolation by His timely assistance with finance and human resources. I sincerely thank Sr. Annie, our provincial who boosted my spirit to reach out to the needy in this crucial period of the era. I am grateful to WDC community who stood with me, with all support and encouragement. My special thanks to Sisters at Ambagaon, Harmutty, Bijni, Changsari, and Mariani communities who were available, ready and willing to reach out to those in agony, leaving their comfort zone.



THE JOY OF THE LORD IS MY STRENGTH

Sr. Pushpanjali Singh

Province of Kolkata



In the backdrop of the nationwide lockdown following Coronavirus global pandemic normal life across the globe virtually has come to a standstill. Nevertheless, the whole of humanity is desperate in a lookout to catch a glimpse of hope to limp back to normal life. Eagerly peeping through our windows, we want to see the return of the hassle and bustle of daily life in our surroundings.

“Learn to live with Coronavirus” I not being an exception to this experience, find myself out there at Marhauili St. John's School premises during every leisure time. Each time I see the flowers blossoming in the garden, hear the birds chirping uninterruptedly, feel the cool breeze blowing from tree to tree, plant to plant reveals me the bliss of God.

From my windows as I watch the seminarians play in the ground, I watch how the ball is being kicked, thrown, bounced, and even held in the hand or even hugged, I find the players to be very alert and attentive. Whenever a player holds the ball I observe that he is full of energy, liveliness, and enthusiasm. As I see them playing I tend to see myself as the ball in the playground of God, in which the ball symbolizes

my life. When a ball is used in a game it gives joy to the players and the spectators as well. As the player plays, he bounces the ball, hits, kicks, throws, holds, catches, hugs as he likes. But once the game is over he takes it carefully in his hands and keeps it safely in a corner. The next day the master checks and inflates it with air if necessary and continues to use it for his pleasure.

Sometime or other, I too have experienced the life-giving hits, energizing kicks, inspiring bounces through different events and situations in my life. I often felt that the ball is my life and it is in the hands of God who uses me in His playground. As the master inflates the ball with air, so do God my master infuses me with life, love, and His Spirit through events, situations, friends, books, and spiritual activities. He provides me with many opportunities to participate in the Holy sacraments, reading the Word of God, recollections, retreats, seminars, spiritual guidance, personal prayers, and review of life. These fill me with love, life, self-awareness, confidence, forgiveness, understanding which spring forth joy in witnessing Christ in day to day life.

With St. Paul, I say for Christ's sake “When I am weak then I am strong.” Despite my shortcoming, fragility, wreck, vulnerability, misunderstandings, backbiting, and slander, God loves me. I accept the appointment through transfer in faith, clear consciousness without complaint, and disagreement, with humility and trust in the providence of God. When I allow myself to be in the hands of God through my authorities, I hear His voice saying, “My grace is sufficient for you.” This verse strengthens me to live for Him joyfully. In total surrender, obedience in faith, complete dependence on God my master, I live in faith and share and bear witness of God's love, joy, and peace especially with whom I work, live, and come in contact with. The joy of the Lord is my strength I am grateful for the struggles because without that I would have stumbled on my path. I boldly repeat that happiness is not the absence of sadness but the presence of God.

The Lord loves a cheerful giver. The grace of God enables me to bear joyful witness to Christ. I learn valuable lessons despite challenges; therefore I would say I am a ball in the hands of God in His playground.



LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

Sr. Rubia Kittu

Province of Tenali



"You begin by serving your own needs. You journey by serving the needs of others. You end by serving the needs of the whole. That's when the journey is complete" - Wallace Huey

The journey of the Sisters of the Cross at Nellore began with the need of taking God to the under privileged in the society namely the physically challenged, people infected and affected with HIV and AIDS. This search to serve has crossed a long span of 41 years and it makes us experience the real paschal joy which has been contagious among the beneficiaries amidst their life's struggle and hardships. The journey has its own way out to reach the reality and the Sisters of the Cross could see the light of Christ in the life of oneself and in the others.



Nellore is situated on the high way of Andhra Pradesh. It has the railway facility that connects both the Northern as well as Southern States of India. River Penna is the main water source which provides water for drinking and cultivation purposes. The ability of this place however takes the rich people to their destination but the poor are left out on the margins and they are inclined to many illness and stigma of the society.



The Children and the adults, who are infected with HIV and AIDS, especially those who live in utter poverty, face situations of hopelessness at every walk of life. Poverty and unemployment are the major problems faced by the poor of this region. They are ready to shoulder any amount of hard labouring in the midst of survival crisis, even when forced into prostitution. As the result they are infected with HIV/AIDS. This situation leads to high mortality rate. All the more the children become orphans and left uncared on the streets. This situation further leads to high rate of drop out from schools and further pushing them to face severe physiological and psychological problems. Most of these children are abused sexually, assaulted physically and isolated socially. They grow with severe physiological and psychological defects and develop destructive attitude which makes them be labeled as anti social elements in the future.

These are our target people, who come to us with a grieving countenance but we embrace them with compassion by listening to their painful stories, accept them as they are and understand what they are really in need of. We realize the uniqueness and the dignity of every

human person irrespective of his/her incurable illness and we focus on making them realize that they are equal in dignity to the rest of the society and make sure that they are not left unloved or uncared for.



We keep Jesus and our Foundress Mother Claudine Echernier as models, for, they responded to their context and remain as role models to us. We are called to reveal the merciful love of God through our services, presence and ministries to the most dis-advantaged persons on this earth. We are called to love the unloved, care for the uncared. For the physician is for the sick. Not for the healthy.

In our mission, we serve around 1200 persons who are living with HIV/AIDS, children with disability, youth, adults and the elders through community based rehabilitation programme and provide institutional based care for 50 children who are from economically poor and morally weak background. We are 5 sisters



who are involved in these ministries and have 10 trained staff to assist us. We strive to fan the ashes of hope in these people through educational trainings, awareness programmes, motivational workshops and seminars, nutritional and medical

support, vocational training programmes, encouraging savings, adult education, counselling, promoting income generating activities, women empowerment, rehabilitation services for the children with special needs. We are grateful to the generosity and support of many well-wishers, without whose assistance, all our efforts would have harvested lesser fruits.

We make the people realize their strengths and abilities in order to live in this fragmented society, which labels, discriminates and judges them wrongly. In turn they are being

enlightened and empowered to face the challenges bravely. As we serve and journey with the most deserving humanity, we are being challenged to meet their every need. Often, we are disturbed with their family situations and the response of the society towards these vulnerable people. Even in helpless situations God's grace is made perfect as we see our people facing their future with hope and faith in oneself and in God. This becomes our reward from the Master and source of strength for us. This journey will progress with new vigor as joyful witnesses of Christ mission.



TOUCHING THE INFINITE

Sr. Perpetua

Province of Angamaly



“With heaven my throne and earth my footstool what house could you build me, what place could you make for my rest? All of this was made by my hand and all of this is mine.” (Is 66/1-2)

“Nature is the Art of God” Says Ralph Waldo Emerson. Nature reveals the beauty, the goodness and the Power of God. Nature evolves in silence and solitude, enthusing one to listen to the voice of the Spirit within. It is in solitude and silence our venerable Foundress Mother Claudine Echernier gained wisdom and knowledge, courage and strength. (FA Vol 1 page 67 para 5)

Nature inspires that “Just to Be” is at times better than “Doing a lot”, through its different seasons of spring and winter and night and day. It is a reminder of God to “Be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10).

The lessons of unconditional love and forgiveness are very evident in the nature. “For He makes His sun rise on



evil and good, and He sends rain on righteous and unrighteous” (Mt 5:45). It is a challenge before us to be just in our dealings.

Amidst upsurging calamities and disturbances within, the nature maintains its serenity and calmness beckoning us to remain composed and tranquil when perturbed and troubled.

To be interdependent and interconnected is an impending need of the hour. The trees receive oxygen, store carbon, stabilize the soil and give life to the universe. The healing and nourishing effect of the nature is beyond our comprehension. “Nothing can exist by itself alone. It has to depend on every other thing. That is called inter-being. There is no being; there is only inter-being.” says Thich Nhat Hanh. This fact is crystal clear in the nature.

The divinity of God is omnipresent and all pervading. This in depth awareness urged Pope Francis to consider earth as common home and calls the entire Humanity to nurture and care for it.

Having had the privilege of being born and nurtured in an agricultural family, enveloped and enriched by the splendid beauty all around, breathing the pure air of the countryside, I developed a keen interest and admiration for the nature. A small blade of grass with its different shades, a tiny little flower on a plant with its fragrance and beauty elevates my mind to my creator. The wild flowers in the forest are more elegant than the plants and flowers I take care. The Lord is the Divine Gardener and it is my delight to be in the garden of God and I take efforts to bring up a garden wherever I am. I am so privileged to have a Foundress, who is a lover of nature, who dedicated herself to the roughest work in the farm house. Her inspiring words “She who does not work, is not worthy to command others” enthuse me. “I love this work very much it reminds me about my poor heart, where there are always useless plants to uproot” (FA 1 Pg: 326 para 3)

Our Venerable Founder on buying the farm appeared to tell the Sisters of the Cross, you will go to work in the fields; you will tend the cattle, in order to bring back by your example the many countrymen deserting the country side to avoid working on land and teach them that nothing is more beneficial to the soul and to the body than work and bracing air in the countryside (F.A.Vol I pg 109) The advice of our Late Superior General Mother Yvonne Laval, resonates in me often “For a consecrated person everything is sacred whether it is weeding, sweeping, dusting and even waiting for a bus.”

The lockdown period was an opportunity to get closer to the nature,



cleaning the surroundings, preparing the ground, taking time to plant saplings and setting the flower garden. These are creative ways of enjoying the presence of the Divine in nature which lead us to Be Claudine in today's context. “Yet, we have so disconnected ourselves from nature. Everyone's talent and involvement are needed to re-dress the damage caused by human abuse of God's creation. If we scan the regions of our planet, we immediately see that humanity has disappointed God's expectation” (Laudato Si 14, 61). It is alarming to see how each one personally and as a community is distancing from nature closing the ears to the cry of earth. The consequences of our negligence in caring for our mother earth is apparent in the form of Covid-19 Pandemic, natural calamities like flood and cyclone. Certainly it is a gentle reminder from the creator, of our failure to safeguard the nature. The nobility of nature is unconditional giving, the Divine quality of the prodigal father reminds us the Word of God “Freely have you received, freely give”(Mt 5:45). Let us be prodigal mothers as consecrated women absorbing the quality of mother earth.

Nature is the greatest medicine cabinet with its triple effect bringing healing and wholeness to the body, mind and spirit. The utilization of the herbal plants is on the increase even in this tech-savvy era. In every religion in the world nature is rightly revered. To imbibe the spirituality of the nature, one needs to be eco-conscious and contemplative. Undertake projects like planting and sustaining trees, organic farming, rain water harvesting, plastic free campus and use of nonconventional energy like solar and biogas (GC 2019 page 13). Communion with nature enhances spiritual vigor, evokes positive attitudes and thus reenergizes one to live life to the full with gratitude and joy.

Hence nature is my best guide to encounter the Divine in me, others and the daily events. The world is a Joyful Mystery to be contemplated with gladness and praise, as St. Francis sees nature as a magnificent book in which God speaks to us. I conclude with the words of Pope Francis “Praise be to you my Lord through our mother earth, who sustains, governs, and who produces various fruits with coloured flowers and herbs” (Laudato si 1).



A JOYFUL WITNESS OF CHRIST AT THE HOSPITAL DURING COVID-19

Sr. Jane Devasahayam
Province of France



I am with you until the end of the world
(Matthew 28:18-20).

The Novel Corona Virus pandemic has truly affected all of us across the globe but one of the hardest hit communities has been healthcare frontline workers. While most of us at home are scared and consumed by all the Covid-19 news around us, I don't try to look at the pandemic with clear objectivity, as a nursing staff member I was at the service of the sick in the hospital at Saint Julien, Annemasse -France. It was a chance to serve the humanity with love and devotion and it doubled the meaning of Lord's passion during the season of Lent.

A suffering often passed over in silence

It is stressful to go out and be present in the work spot, skipping meals, strenuous shifts, never-ending working hours increased the risk of burnout, and it became part and parcel of life style during this pandemic and added pressure to life. The nature of the caregiver is to take care of the patients even to the extend of forgetting oneself. This was my case too.

I saw some of my colleagues becoming prey to this deadly virus and many of them were positive and suspected with the virus as there were nonstop

incoming of severely ill patients every day. Unexpected several deaths brought sadness and fear among us but nothing deterred me. I dared to go ahead. I consider myself lucky to be surrounded by my sisters and friends who do not fail to encourage and support me each day above all I received God's grace and mercy.

There were days when I was physically exhausted but I couldn't recall anything except the love of God for humanity. It strengthened me and gave me joy to serve Him in the sick. I was sure that difficulty would not last forever and this too shall pass. Whenever my spirit drooped, I was energized by the Word of God and the Pope's Mass. I felt comforted in my faith and was confident to face the situation.

Some anecdotes

I volunteered to work in the Covid-19 service. I easily approached patients unlike my colleagues who hesitated. One of the great difficulties was wearing a PPE mask for 12 hours and it demanded a lot of sacrifices. The body not being used to its heavy environment find difficult to move around, it was a mental and physical suffering. My constant reminder was to "protect yourself and protect others, you have to adopt to wear the mask and

familiarize yourself with it."

This crisis also gave me the opportunity to make discoveries. The traffic was disrupted due to traffic control. I happened to be late for work. To avoid such a thing, I looked for other itineraries in order to gain time.

Reality at the hospital

When we read the newspapers we got the feeling that only terrible things happen at the hospital but in reality we find an incredible mutual support filled with empathy and compassion among the hospital staff.

We have this very strong feeling "that we are all on board of a same boat". During the duty when our patients become Covid negative and fine, it really lifted our spirits and motivated us to do to work and serve better our patients and our nation. The work of our staff in the hospital is very impressive and I am happy that I was part of this challenging mission.

All this nurtures me in the vocation of being at the service of the sick in this critical period and gives me hope as far as the future is concerned. I believe this osmosis between nursing members will help to defeat this Covid-19 disease. In the world you have to suffer but courage, I am the winner of the world!



Rev. Mother Foundress
Pray for us!

WISHING YOU ALL A VERY HAPPY FEAST

- Crossian Connect Team