

Crossian Connect

SISTERS OF THE CROSS OF CHAVANOD

Issue No. 4/2022



Editorial Board:

- ▶ Sr. Judy Gomez
- ▶ Sr. Elsy John
- ▶ Sr. Jiji Mathew

In this issue ...

- ▶ Message from General Councillor ... 1
- ▶ From the Editor's Desk ... 2
- ▶ Land Flowing with Milk and Honey ... 3
- ▶ Joyful Service to the Hearing Impaired ... 4
- ▶ 500th Anniversary of St. Ignatius' Cannonball Injury ... 6
- ▶ The Pandemic - New Vistas to Explore ... 7
- ▶ Community Life of our Sisters in the Mission of Garhi ... 9
- ▶ Born to Serve with Love ... 11
- ▶ An Experience of "Barachiel" ... 13
- ▶ My Community Life in this Pandemic ... 15
- ▶ Call to Empower and Mobilize the Youth ... 16
- ▶ 50 Golden Years ... 17
- ▶ I sing a song of praise to the Lord! ... 19
- ▶ Journeying with the Lord ... 19
- ▶ My Heart Overflows with Joy and Gratitude ... 20
- ▶ Our Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic in Sri Lanka ... 21
- ▶ My Mission Experience in Congo ... 23

My Dear Sisters,

Greetings of love and peace!

Pope Francis has formally inaugurated and initiated three year Synod on Synodality with the sublime theme: For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission. In his opening address he appealed to the entire church to reflect on the theme that is decisive for its life and mission and he envisioned the synodal process as an exercise of mutual listening, conducted at all levels of the church and involving the entire people of God. The core of the synodal experience is to listen to God through listening to one another, inspired by the word of God. This demands a sustained effort to listen, to learn from and to respect one another; to seek a common ground. This journey together, reveals the nature of the church as the pilgrim and missionary people of God.

The aim of the synod is to inspire people to dream about the church we are called to be, to make people's hope flourish, to stimulate trust, to build bridges, to enlighten minds, to warm up the hearts and restore strength for our common mission. Overcoming the virus of self-sufficiency, let us co-responsibly journey together with humility and sincerity in heart, readiness for dialogue, openness to conversion and inclusiveness in approach. Let it not be a one time exercise but eventually a way of life to realize the Kingdom of God here on earth.

We live in uncertain, anxious and even fear-filled time: the Covid-19 pandemic persists as a serious and unprecedented blow to human health care, damaging economies and plunging families and communities into suffering and sorrow. The climate change has accelerated ecological crisis giving the world a new normal of fires, floods and storms of epic proportions.

I wish and hope that the sharing of our experiences of life and mission in our communities and milieu will inspire, motivate and challenge greater mission consciousness in our sisters. On behalf of the General team, I congratulate and appreciate the contributors for this issue.

World Day for Consecrated Life is celebrated on February 2, 2022. In 1997, Pope Saint John Paul II instituted a day of prayer for all women and men in consecrated life and this celebration is attached to the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord on 2nd February. Let us pray for those who are consecrated to God by the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience. May they always reveal the love of Christ to those they encounter and continue to enrich the world by their dedicated lives of prayer and service.

May we continue to be inspired by our constant model Jesus Christ and dynamic model Mother Claudine Echernier and respond generously to God's gift of our vocation!



Sr. Rosalie Joseph
General Councillor



Sr. Elsy John
For the Communication Team

Very Dear Sisters,

Once again, we are here with our newsletter, the 4th issue of **Crossian Connect** which indeed connects all of us from North and South, East and West! After having read all the articles that are sent by our sisters for this issue, I pushed my chair back and sat relaxedly and to my surprise all that I had just read began to appear before my eyes as if in a TV channel; initially all in lightning speed and later in slow motion. Had I become so overwhelmed by the sharing of our sisters? Yes, of course!

I saw the Sisters of the Cross fully active and alive in their Mission. All of them serving the poor, the less fortunate, the abandoned, the illiterate, the sick, the helpless, the hopeless and the downtrodden of the society, and those at the peripheries. I closed my eyes for a while moved by some of the heart rendering expressions and narrations of our sisters. In the silence of my heart the words of St. Paul echoed, 'Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to

another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines' (1 Cor 12:7-12).

Yes, all the services rendered by our sisters are one and the same. Our founders who placed us Under the Standard of the Cross to Make the Good God Known and Loved wanted the Sisters of the Cross to remain in the world but not of the world. Remaining true to the spirit and charism of our congregation, our sisters have been creative, brave, inspiring, challenging and joyful.

I know at the end of your reading of this **Crossian Connect** you will not only be inspired and enlightened but also exclaim in approval of every sister being fully human and fully alive in her mission. Where do they get the energy and the power from? What fans their passion? What gives perseverance in their vocation? What is the source of their joy? Answers to these queries are also found in these pages. So dear sisters, let us take some time out from our busy schedules to read, refresh and enthuse our minds.

2nd February is celebrated as the feast of the presentation of our Lord at the temple and purification of Mary. It's a day dedicated to all the consecrated persons. The words of Pope Francis on the 24th world day for consecrated life is so true; 'Dear consecrated brothers and sisters, you are simple men and women who caught sight of the treasure worth more than any worldly good. And so

you left behind precious things, such as possessions, such as making a family for yourselves. Why did you do this? Because you fell in love with Jesus, you saw everything in him, and enraptured by his gaze, you left the rest behind. Religious life is this vision. It means seeing what really matters in life. It means welcoming the Lord's gift with open arms, as Simeon did. This is what the eyes of consecrated men and women behold: the grace of God poured into their hands. The consecrated person is one who every day looks at himself or herself and says: "Everything is gift, all is grace". Dear brothers and sisters, we did not deserve religious life; it is a gift of love that we have received.' How meaningful and nourishing are these words of Pope in our life! We have well-chosen this day to bring out this 4th issue of **Crossian Connect** in appreciation of every Sister of the Cross who is consecrated. Dear sisters, each one of us is a gift and a grace! Let us cherish and relish this gift and grace!

Before I conclude this editorial, I on behalf of the team sincerely thank Sr. Elizabeth Mirinda and team for their continuous support and a special thanks to Sr. Daisy Thankiah for her able guidance. I express my gratitude to each one of you who has contributed to this newsletter. And of course, my team members especially Sr. Judy Gomez and Sr. Jiji Mathew for minute planning and completion of the work precisely.

Thank you, readers, for taking your time out to go through these pages. Please do mail us if you have any suggestions and comments to improve **Crossian Connect**.



LAND FLOWING WITH MILK AND HONEY

Sr. Sarita Vaz
Province of Pune

“I will lead you to a land flowing with milk and honey” (Ex 3:17).

Our journey on this earth is to move towards the land flowing with milk and honey. We keep this journey dynamic as we have God our Father who not only leads but goes before us and through us to a land flowing with milk and honey. Permit me to share with you my humble encounters of God's Promised Land at Cipla. “The land” is not the geographical area but “a way of being”, while “Milk and Honey” refer to “Kingdom values”.

Cipla:

The Cipla Palliative Care Centre (CSR: Corporate Social Responsibility group) provides active holistic care to the cancer patients as well as to the caregivers and their entire families.

The Sisters of the Cross have been working at Cipla Palliative Care, Pune, right from the time of its inception. Sr. Lorraine Miranda and late Sr. Veronica Pinto were sent to the UK in the year 1996 to have their first hands-on experience in palliative care. Many of our sister nurses have contributed their services and have the joy of reaching out to the poor and needy.

In the year 2013, we moved out of Cipla as we found it difficult to cope with the demands of the then management. Very soon CSR realized the necessity to have the sisters back. They continuously placed their requests to our authorities. The provincial and team along with the sister who had worked there went through a process of discernment and finally responded positively to their request. After several months of

waiting due to the pandemic, the much-awaited agreement was signed on August 10, 2021. Sr. Suchita is working as a nurse, on a three shifts schedule and I am appointed as a Matron.

Risking the Challenge:

To say 'Yes' to this renewed direction at Cipla was not an easy task. But, when God chooses and prepares a person, the world is simply amazed at His work. At this moment, beautiful imagery caught my imagination - A green pasture and a land flowing with milk and honey. Life at Cipla initially seemed green, as we walked through the pasture; we experienced small thorny bushes in the form of adjustments and acceptance. Sometimes, the rays of the hot sun made me question myself, “Am I going to survive in this condition?” In the short span of time since we joined; we realised it is a paschal experience which makes me recognize that we are the daughters of Mother Claudine placed by her under the Standard of the Cross. And “we move on for God is our hope and refuge, a timely help in time of need” (Ps 41:1), we journey on, not to the unknown end but to a land flowing with milk and honey in the form of joy, compassion and love experienced by the cancer patients before they return to their Creator.

Touching Lives:

We are on our heels right through, at times. The duty hours extend beyond our shifts often and an eight-hour duty turns to ten hours! Yet, when the love of Jesus is the guiding force, it is self-fulfilling; while the patients and their caregivers experience the merciful love of the Father which liberates

them. A few incidents are narrated below:

Being with cancer patients, talking to them, giving medicines on time, with joy assessing their personal hygiene, providing diversional therapy, being part of the MDT (Multi-disciplinary team) supporting the patients and caregivers psychologically mark our day. The night rounds that we take as matrons, moving from patient to patient, seeing that they are comfortable and wishing them “good night” bring us a unique joy, letting me remember the land flowing with milk and honey. As nurses, we are able to meet them in their very moments of pain and basic needs. What they see, is the marked difference in our approach to them. They say, 'you are different'. The purpose of our lives is to be happy and to make others happy. Here at CPC (Cipla Palliative Care), we have the unique privilege to prepare the patient to meet their Creator in peace. Very often we encourage the caregivers to play hymns as per their faith. This also helps patients to say goodbye gracefully.

“Thank you for the space you provided” are the words of a mother whose son was admitted. Her unstinted care even though she was 70 years was appreciated. Her son (46 yrs.) demanded her presence 24x7 and she did it with much alacrity. She had to be next to him, even at the cost of her health. Spending a little time listening to her made her ease her pain, she sobbed her heart out. Her son died after one and a half months of stay with us. When she was leaving, she said, “I will never forget you for the space you provided for

me". Is this not the pathway towards the land flowing with milk and honey? Indeed, it is.

A patient was in isolation on admission and Sr. Suchita was in that ward. She was in acute pain and had refused food for many days. After administering a painkiller, Sr. Suchita tried to make her feel at ease, spoke to her kindly. Something struck her, and she began to share about her family. Since she was struggling to eat, Sr. Suchita tried to feed her. She burst out crying, stating that her own sisters and relatives would not even come close to her. She could not understand how being a stranger Sr. Suchita could be close to her, touch her and even feed her. She remarked to Sr. Suchita, 'You are someone different.'

Once Sr. Suchita was alone and the ward was full. She happened to notice maggots on the floor. She could not make out where they came from. She checked one patient, then opened the dressing on the stomach, the wound was big. After cleaning and re-dressing, she saw another wound on

the trachea, which had been operated on. She found the maggots there, cleaned and saw that the patient was at ease. The patient could not speak but joined hands in gratitude and her husband who saw all that was amazed at his suffering wife's reaction; because it seems she always yelled in pain otherwise.

Countless are such experiences. What we believe is that the Lord is making His presence felt through us. Externally we do not have any sign to show that we are Christians, yet the people can feel the power and the grace of God in and through us. It is indeed a deep experience of God's presence and fullness. Words fail to describe the same.

Aligning Oneself with God's Purpose:

Prayer is to align oneself with the purposes of God. Every day we have morning prayer followed by an online Eucharistic celebration. Evening vespers is chanted after the dinner, and Rosary is recited while we walk in the corridors. Limited beings that we

are, this helps us to unite our lives with God and examine ourselves to know what He wants of us in the midst of this corporate world.

Every day our prayer is "Beloved Jesus, people here do not know you, but by our life may they experience you".

When you are grateful, fear disappears, and abundance appears. Bountiful is the experience God bestows on us and blesses us, through the support of our sisters from the Provincialate and Novitiate communities. At Cipla we are pure vegans; on Sundays when we come to the convent we are nourished well which reminds us of the land flowing with milk and honey.

My mind tells me that the journey we have taken is unknown, but my heart filled with hope assures us of the land flowing with milk and honey. In the words of our Mother Foundress Claudine Echernier, we joyfully say 'It is the good God who directs our path.'

JOYFUL SERVICE TO THE HEARING IMPAIRED

Sr. Sabina Mary Vahitha
Province of Trichy



The human spirit is one of ability, perseverance and courage that no disability can steal away. There are no disabled people but differently-abled people. They have no disability but have this ability.

Holy Cross Hr. Sec. School for the Hearing Impaired in Sathuvachari, Vellore nurtures the skills of special children with hearing impairment since its inception in 1982. The school had its beginning with only five students and today it has grown and serves 113 students. There is a great saying: "Real education fetches you

more than a job". It teaches you to live. It cannot be measured in any tangible way.

Understanding Hearing Loss:

Before knowing what service we render to the hearing impaired it is essential to know what normal hearing sensitivity is and what hearing loss is. Normal hearing sensitivity means the person has had no known pathology or history of infection or any kind of disorder and he or she can hear even the softest sound or whisper without any kind of significant difficulties.

Hearing impairment is an invisible disability, which cannot be identified by mere vision. Hearing impairment means any degree and type of auditory disorder, an extreme inability to discriminate conversational speech through the ear. The causes include heredity, infection, tumours, accidents and ageing.

Early identification of this group of people can help them with proper speech therapy, auditory training or cochlear implant that enables them to cope up with regular education. By



providing regular education they can be good citizens and lead their lives meaningfully.

Hearing loss is a partial or total inability to hear. In terms of hearing levels, generally 10db to 25db of hearing loss is considered as “normal hearing sensitivity level”. The implications of an auditory impairment vary from person to person and from one circumstance to another. Several terms are used to describe or to refer to persons who are experiencing hearing difficulty.

We have 15 special educators including a speech therapist who works for the betterment of our 113 students.

Our Focus:

There is ability in every disability. We have focused on the holistic development of the students. We provide speech therapy, auditory training, lip reading, conversation, picture composition, vocal production, loud reading to improve their speech, language and communication skills. Apart from education, dance, drama, drawing, facials, 'mehandi', 'rangoli' and sports skills are encouraged so as to make them feel that they are equal citizens of their society.

Academics:

Your present circumstances do not determine where you can go, they merely determine where you can start from. We have classes from Pre-KG to XII standard. We provide the Aural-Oral method in teaching. They can follow the classes through lip reading and by using hearing aids.

We follow the “Samacheer Kalvi” as it is taught in the regular schools of Tamil Nadu. The Government has exempted them from the second language and they are granted permission for an extra hour during the board examinations of 10th and 12th standards.

From 2017 onwards our meritorious students secure centum results in all the Board Exams of X, XI and XII and have obtained district ranks thus adding pride to our institution.

Primary Level:

In Pre-KG, auditory training and speech therapy is promoted through which the child can understand the sound and the language. Lip reading and discrimination of the sounds are being taught. A new method called MRM (Mother Reflective Method) is used through which the child is able to identify the speech sound and comprehend the real object. From class I to V we provide the regular syllabus along with speech correction and continue the auditory training.

Secondary Level:

At this level, regular syllabus and extra curricular activities are focused upon. Children are given opportunities to participate in the Local, District, State and National level competitions. Pre-Vocational training is provided to create an interest in arts and crafts so that they may learn to use their free time productively.

Sessions for Staff and Parents:

Orientation programmes are conducted regularly for the staff,

which helps them to update themselves for better teaching.

Thrice a year sessions are being conducted for the parents that they may understand their children better and enhance their communication with them.

Awareness Programme:

The hearing-impaired people can do anything that the hearing people can do except to hear. Awareness programmes are conducted by our students every year in the nearby regular schools and the villages to bring awareness to society.

Sports Day:

Disability need not be an obstacle to success. Our students participate in Sports Day of Holy Cross Matriculation Hr. Sec. School every year and give programmes.

They do exhibit their skills in sports like Kabaddi, Kho-Kho, Shuttlecock, Carom Board and Judo. Their ability in sports have made them participate in National level games and win medals of Gold, Silver and Bronze.



Thrice a year medical camp is being conducted in our campus. Doctors from the Government hospital and health officers come for a general health check-up.

By nurturing young minds and strengthening their values we strive to motivate our students to reach their

true potential and thus make them productive citizens of the world and worthy human beings and prove that they are not disabled but differently-abled. We are proud of our students and teachers who strive hard to achieve beyond expectations.

We thank the Almighty for bringing

together the right people at the right time, each endowed with strengths and talents united for a common cause.

We seek His blessings and guidance every step of our way in the years ahead.

500th ANNIVERSARY OF ST. IGNATIUS' CANNONBALL INJURY



Sr. Sharmain Fernando
Province of France

It is with deep gratitude, above all to God and my province, I take this unique opportunity to share my experience at Marseille, one of the cosmopolitan cities of France, from 29th October to 1st November 2021 as the Jesuits commemorated the 500th anniversary of St. Ignatius' cannonball injury, which revolved around the theme: Rowing into the deep with St. Ignatius. (*Au large Avec Ignace*)

We were three sisters from the Province of France to participate in this mega gathering. Srs. Bernadette Mundu, Maria Arockia Samy and I reached Marseille on Friday 29th October, caught up in torrential rain, which drenched us to the skin. Upon arrival at the hotel booked for us, we were warmly welcomed by the receptionist. Reliving my experience of this gathering is for me to revive the spiritual experience and the evangelical strength I lived during these three days.

More than seven thousand people, including priests, seminarians, religious, children, adolescents, adults both young and old, the differently-abled people who follow the spiritual heritage of St. Ignatius of Loyola gathered in the southern French port city. I would name it a family celebration: the Ignatian family. This event brought together

those who follow the spirituality of St. Ignatius: a spirituality that has global renown, and which is importantly characterised by the search for God in daily life, through reading and discernment.

It was an immense joy to know about the greatness of this family, particularly the Community of Christian Life (CVX), composed of 800 small groups of baptised people who constituted one of the largest contingents of the Marseille gathering. I was particularly touched by the tens of hundreds of volunteers, both young and old, who ventured into a long period of preparation for it.

I met a few friends of the Ignatian family from Paris, but for the most part, I encountered many unknown people who demonstrated their eagerness to both learn and know about the Sisters of the Cross of

Chavanod. I never felt alone or bereft. It was certainly a golden opportunity to share with these strangers why the Sisters of the Cross follow the Ignatian spirituality. It was also an occasion to speak about Fr. Mermier, the Servant of God, our Founder.

This gathering enabled me to discover and appreciate the signs of fraternity in this disrupted and constantly evolving world. I witnessed the numerous followers of Christ in a so-called de-Christianised country: love of God still reigns. He continues to inspire and call people from all walks of life, and the love of God is contagious. We never knew others, but there reigned fraternal love, sharing, solidarity, charity, selfless service, friendship and fellowship...: signs of God's Kingdom here on earth.

Among the highlights of the three



days gathering was the meditation in the Old Port (Vieux Port) on Saturday 30th October at 6 PM under the pouring rain that incessantly threatened the smooth running of the schedules of the day: innumerable were the hurdles from the side of the nature, but nothing curtailed the zeal to make the good God known and loved or to be a joyful witness. In the afternoon, we strolled in small groups through the streets of 17 different places of Marseille, discovering the world to announce Christ, as did St. Ignatius.

Sunday morning, the participants in small groups had the freedom of choosing a workshop among the thirteen proposals offered to the entire gathering. Dancing, singing, and enacting the scene of the Cannonball injury: the 500th anniversary of the meeting between Ignatius and the cannonball - Diony's voice Gospel concert which was treated with endless ovation after two hours of negro-spirituals and



traditional songs - was the highlight of Sunday evening followed by the vigil prayer that lasted till 12.30 AM.

On the third day of the “Au large Avec Ignace” gathering in Marseille, the participants celebrated All Saints Day together. The morning was devoted to a time of evaluation on the past three days, followed by the reading of a message from Fr. Arturo Sosa, Superior General of the Jesuits. Then everyone gathered to celebrate the Eucharist.

The success of “Au large Avec

Ignace” is the mystery of faith made visible in the dedication of hundreds of people who did not count their Hours to make it work. In the Gospel, Jesus does not feed a deformed crowd; He orders people to be seated before everyone is filled. With the cooperation and the collaboration of the people, Jesus fed the multitude. This event has taught how precious and vital is the presence of the lay people in our ministries.

How much more have I got to do to take them to God!



THE PANDEMIC – NEW VISTAS TO EXPLORE

Sr. Packia Selvi Chinnappan
Province of Tenali

“All great beginnings start in the dark when the moon greets you to a new day at midnight”.

- Shannon L. Alder

Covid has brought tremendous changes physically, psychologically, spiritually, emotionally and mentally in the lives of everyone in this world. The pandemic was tough to digest but growth can take place when we face challenges positively and the greatest innovations come from the most limiting barriers. If we do not face

hardships, we cannot make new and creative ways to make things happen. This is one of the advantages we could inherit as we are going through the pandemic.

Personal Experience:

Pope Francis exhorts people not to give up during these times. He reminds us to remember that God is greater than any problem that could arise. In the times of Pandemic, people stayed home, read books, listened, rested, exercised, made art, played games, learned new

ways of being, and a few remained still. A few others meditated and prayed, while a few got depressed and some met their shadows. Finally, people began to think and act differently.

As I was going through the pandemic, it was difficult to accept the reality. There was fear of life as there was no age limit for death. Negativity, sleepless nights, endless cry, hopelessness and faithlessness gripped me.

Many questions arose to self,

others, nature and God. But I could not get any satisfying answers to my questions. I was unable to do anything wholeheartedly and I could not cooperate with myself as I was engulfed with hopelessness. No positive thoughts could work. I had many 'WHYS' which pushed me to sadness.

Though I was hesitant to pray there was an inner voice urging me to present myself to the Ever-Present. That made me realize that nothing is permanent and God alone is Eternal.

The Word of God that inspired my mind was 'Lord to whom shall we go, you have the words of eternal life' (Jn 6:68-69). The reflections on this saying strengthened me to go to Him especially during times of difficulties, confusion, disappointments and crisis. I was convinced that He is ever ready to listen to me always.

As we heard about the news of infection of Covid-19 spreading from a distance, it was tolerable, but when it affected our communities, institutions, families and neighbours, it was indeed very hard to accept. Virus of sickness, loneliness, fear, darkness, sinfulness, insecurity and discomforts were looming large still. Though it was a great challenge set before us nothing could stop us from going out of ourselves because the power and the love of God were active and alive in us which always strengthens us.

Witnesses of self emptying love of Jesus:

It was a great inspiration to be cherished that our sisters who daringly volunteered to work in the hospitals to save the lives of the

suffering humanity. It was a concrete and convincing step taken to imitate Jesus crucified as our Mother Foundress always did in her life. This generous and selfless act of sisters was a turning point in my life to forget and die to myself to fulfil the promise of Jesus Christ, "I came to give life, life in abundance".

In times of crisis, the generosity of people flourished. Empathy was overflowing and humanness found its way to branch out far and wide.

Community Response:

The virus reminds us that the best way to take care of ourselves is by learning to care for and protect those who are close to us.

- Pope Francis

During the pandemic, we sent lots of positive vibes to the people, especially to the infected and the affected. During the chain adoration and Divine Mercy Chaplet, we used to call out their names and pray specially for them. We encouraged them not to lose hope and prepared them to accept reality. We enquired about their health over the phone too. We could spend more time in prayer personally and as a community. There were lots of personal sharing, faith sharing and God experiences shared in the community. We distributed provisions, masks and medicines to the infected families around this locality, with the help of Srs. Priyanthi, Tresa Kalapurayil and Shirley Frank. Nearly a hundred families benefited through our outreach programme. We also distributed masks to the Police personnel and Gram Panchayat workers. We cooked food and distributed to the infected patients.

With the help of ISI (Indian Social

Institute of Delhi), dry ration kits were distributed to nearly 100 Covid affected people. Generic medicine and medical kits were distributed to the front line health workers at Alirajpet.

When our staff were affected, we contacted them over the phone and enquired about their wellbeing. We bought provisions, food items, fruits, medicines and distributed them at their doorsteps. Sr. Sophia Clement assisted in medical needs and helped them with necessary things. We sent prayers and encouraging messages on WhatsApp and conversed with them through virtual mode.

In Sirigiripally, a nearby village, we came to know through one of our staff that the children of a particular family lost their parents due to Covid-19. We even tried to help with the education of their children. Whenever possible we visited them and provided them with what they needed. We also were in contact with them over the phone.

Through all these experiences, we were reminded of the Word of God saying, "Truly I tell you, whatsoever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, You did for me" (Mt 25:40).

We have a chance to do something extraordinary. As we head out of this pandemic we can change the world. Create a world of love. A world where we are kind to each other. A world where we are kind no matter what class, race, sexual orientation, what religion or lack of or what job we have. A world we don't judge those at the food bank because that may be us if things were just slightly different. Let love and kindness be our roadmap.

- Johnny Corn



COMMUNITY LIFE OF OUR SISTERS IN THE MISSION OF GARHI

**Sr. Philomina Joseph, Sr. Deep Kiran Tirkey and
Sr. Sadhna Kujur**

Province of Amravati

It gives us great joy to share with you our life in the Mission of Garhi. It is one of the interior villages, which is situated in the heart of the dense forest, a part of the Kannaha National Park. Three sisters namely Sr. Philomina Joseph, Sr. Deep Kiran Tirkey and Sr. Sadhna Kujur are involved in various life giving activities.



Activities in the Mission of Garhi Social Centre:

Over the past five years, Sisters of the Cross, Manav Vikas Kendra have exhibited great commitment in serving the poor and the marginalized families and communities, in upholding the human dignity of the disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and in promoting sustainable development of the weaker section

of the society. We are grateful to our Province of Amravati and benefactors for their financial support to build the capacity of women, men, young boys and girls, and children through various skill training as well as input sessions on various topics. During the year we could reach out to more than 200 women, 50 men, 10 boys, 40 young girls and 300 children through different skills training, through the formation of the Mahila Mandal groups, 4 students were given opportunity to study in higher classes, 40 young girls were trained in tailoring, 300 children were given coaching classes at 8 villages and children parliament training which is gaining popularity at the village level.

Training of Staff on Capacity Building, Career Guidance and Skill Development for Youth:

The staff of Divya Sadan Amravati had come to Garhi to motivate and train the young staff for the capacity building programme. Following the capacity building programme, seven project members from Garhi made a visit to Divya Sadan Social



Centre, Amravati to gain further experience. This visit helped them to understand the functioning of the project, the importance of self-learning and to widen their knowledge, ideas and views.

Women and girls are in poverty due to the lack of diverse education and skill, building opportunities, girls are often drop out of school to take over household activities. We hope to bridge this opportunity gap by providing skill development and vocational training programmes to help these young girls and women to become more employable to attain financial independence. We had organised a one-day career guidance programme for the youth and 45 of them participated in it.

Formation of Groups and Activities of Income Generation:



Unity is the best way for the growth of a society. Manav Vikas Social Centre has formed six new Self-Help Groups, and 16 old SHGs and three youth groups. Our staff help them to organise meetings and plan for various training programmes in



the centre level as well as the village level. We had visited the villages and studied the conditions of the families and helped them to improve economically. We have selected 20 families to give IGPs. We had arranged one day programme to make them aware and give ideas on how to come up in life and help families to take up various non-farm schemes such as rearing pigs, goats, back-yard poultry, setting up petty shops etc.

Support Class Programme in 8 Villages and Children's Parliament Training Programme:

We have 300 children for support class from eight villages. We have appointed teachers from the village itself. The motive behind starting the support class in different villages is that the children were neglected and dropped out of

school due to the Covid-19. We are trying to give basic education to make their foundation strong. We teach them yoga, games, cleanliness etc. We have children's parliament in 8 villages. Each parliament has its members to function in order.

Health Care Centre Health Check up at Dispensary and Training Programmes:

Nearly 160 patients have come to our health centre. There is a steady increase in the number of patients. We were happy to have had a training programme in the village called Sijora, which received a positive response. Around 35 women participated in this training. We had health training for pregnant women, where Sr. Philo explained and gave guidance on how to take



care of the child in the womb. After the meeting, medicine was distributed to the women. Training on health and hygiene for common diseases like malaria, anemia, waterborne diseases, skin problems and Covid prevention were also given.

Training on the Importance of Nutrition, Kitchen Garden and Herbal Medicines:

Around 50 people were present for this training programme. They were happy and surprised to know about the nutritional benefits of the vegetables and the value of the herbal garden. Sister Philo had collected at least 25 herbal plants to explain to them the importance and their use for different sicknesses. We had given seeds to 60 families for kitchen garden.

Pastoral Work

Here at Garhi, though all three sisters are busy with their apostolate, we take time to visit our catholic families and the families of other faith. We pray along with the family, listen to them and spent time with them. All the catholic families are far from each other therefore most of them cannot join the prayer meeting.

We feel contented and satisfied with the mission entrusted to us, yet our hearts are moved to do more as many are waiting for us in this mission. Thank you for being a part of our mission by reading our experiences.



BORN TO SERVE WITH LOVE

Sr. Irudaya Mary
Province of Madurai

I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me (Phil 4:13).

When you pray you are going closer to God. When you serve, God is in your midst. -Mother Teresa

I feel greatly honoured and blessed to serve the children with special needs and experience the tangible presence of the Lord.

Holy Cross Pearls Special School was started as an extension programme of Holy Cross Anglo Indian Higher Secondary School, Tuticorin. God himself put within our sisters a great burning desire to work for the welfare of the less privileged of our society. This School was founded on our Mother Foundress day 10th August in the year 2011. By God's grace, it has completed 10 years of dedicated service to the society especially for the differently abled students in and around Tuticorin.

We mainly concentrate on students with intellectual disability (Mental Retardation), Autism, Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder, Down Syndrome, Cerebral Palsy and Muscular dystrophy. The



children are categorized into different classes according to their age and level of performance. The primary objective is to ensure that they acquire skills in performing the activities of daily living such as brushing, toileting, grooming, dressing, eating etc.

The next concern is to develop their academic skills such as reading, writing, time, numbers and money according to each one's ability. Therapeutic interventions such as Physio, Speech, Sand, Dance and Yoga therapy etc. are made available to help out in holistic

development. The hidden talents are brought out by giving them repeated practices in order that they may exhibit them. The encouragement and appreciation they receive add to their interest in further learning and growth. We are happy that our students dance, sing, act and play like any other normal students. The focus on their abilities instead of the disabilities make a great difference in their growth and achievements.

United we stand, divided we fall. Yes, our work will be incomplete without the co-operation of our





co-workers and parents. The credit goes to the parents of our children who are pillars of support and have contributed their best for the growth of the school. They have won our hearts by their trust and gratitude. Their back up and co-operation serves as a catalyst encouraging us to do more and more for the children with special needs under our care.

Optimism is the faith that leads to achievements. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence.

- Helen Keller

During these ten years of our hard work, the list of achievements is quite long and note worthy. By God's Grace, 10 of our students wrote SSLC Board Exam and came out with excellent results and 9 of our students went to main stream

schooling after having improved their ability to communicate through our speech therapy.

We are proud to say that Ms. Vinnarasi bagged Silver medal in 100 meters running race in the special Olympic competition held at Los Angeles in the year 2015. She was the first special student from Tuticorin District to participate at the International Special Olympics.

Another special student Master Joseph Jepertson won the first place in Special Olympics in the National level preliminary round in Hand ball held at Trichy on 31st October 2021 and was selected to go for the next level at Agra in the month of December 2021. These athletes are not disabled they are super abled. Through Special Olympics I got a great opportunity to travel all over India. It was a good chance to get to know many who care for special children and learn from them. As a special educator, I have multiple occasions to work with many other professionals and with parents or guardians to meet students learning needs.

So many of our dreams at first seem impossible then they seem importable and then when we summon the will they soon "become inevitable"- Christopher Reeve. The school was recognized under the state Government in the year 2016 and by 2018 Salary Grant for three teachers was sanctioned.

Though it's a tough task, there is a unique passion to work with these special kids and help them to grow socially, emotionally and intellectually. All the children have special talents. I see Jesus in them and that is why I am able to excel in this mission. I praise and thank God for this great opportunity to be with these kids, which gives me immense joy and pleasure. "Start by doing what is necessary; then do what is possible and suddenly you are doing the impossible" said St. Francis of Assisi and this is my experience. I can proudly say that the small seed of Holy Cross Pearls Special School sown ten years ago has beautifully grown into a tree giving shade for so many differently abled children.





AN EXPERIENCE OF "BARACHIEL"

Sr. Rani Joe
Province of Angamaly

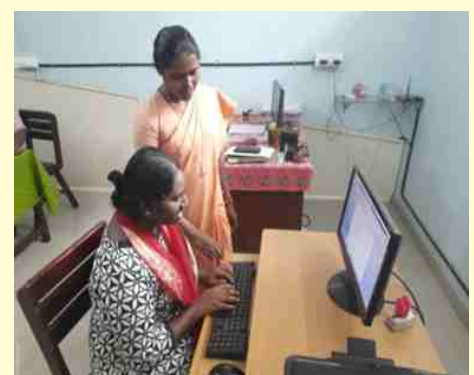
Serving as a physiotherapist in Batalgundu in late 1990's, a heaven sent opportunity was set before me to care for the mentally retarded children with physical challenges from lower socioeconomic background. Each time I touched one of them for therapy, my heart moved with great mercy and compassion and often there rung in the depth of my heart a bell which seized my attention for a moment. I believe it was the Lord's invitation to do something more for them. This desire was nurtured and fostered by the Divine intervention of the Lord and brought me to Mannackanadu to commence this mission to serve these angels I feel and experience them so, as they are innocent and blameless with no guile. The very attitude of Mother Claudine Echernier whose heart was moved for the ignorant and illiterate girls of her time was a poignant reminder to me and enhanced my aspiration to work for this less privileged group of our time. Founded in 2001 with 10 children, Holy Cross Special School aim at integrating the special children into the main stream of the society by providing quality education. We envision that every



child should have the opportunity to meet their potentials and develop the academic, creative, social, and spiritual skills that will enable them to be happy and prosperous. The focus areas of the institution include early identification, special education, vocational training and placement for children with learning disability and mental retardation giving special attention to the poor families.

There are trained professionals, skilled in areas of Physiotherapy, Child development, Vocational training, Arts and Sports, committed to provide necessary care and corrective intervention to the

mentally challenged children between the ages of 3 and 18 years. The institute over the years, has been able to provide necessary rehabilitation assistance to such children from our locality. We conduct programme for the parents, students and for their siblings. Training in activities of daily living, Computer training for adults, Dance, Arts and Sports Individual therapy, Speech therapy, Music therapy, Sensory therapy, Vocational training and Yoga therapy etc are part of our daily schedule. The school is recognized by the Department of Education and Social Welfare, Government of Kerala. The school has facilities to



pick up the children from remote pockets of 7 Gram Panchayaths.

A Success Story:

Aplonia, 20 years, won two bronze medals in Cycling (1K TT; 500 TT) at the Special Olympics World Summer Games 2019 Abu Dhabi UAE. When she was four years old her mother who is said to be mentally unstable wanted to kill this child. While travelling outside the city, she was caught red handed by her co-passengers and the child was handed over to an orphanage. The orphanage enrolled her in a boarding school. At the school she demonstrated behaviour problems. She would beat up the teacher and lock them inside the class rooms. It was not a surprise that in four years, she had been to four schools and finally she was referred to our school. It is here that we identified her incredible gift for Sports. She has been associated with Special Olympic Bharat for 5 years now. Engaging in Sports has steered her energy most meaningfully. Besides cycling Aplonia has participated in Volleyball, Handball and Badminton in Special Olympics. At present she is an employee and earning a steady income and settled in life. She got a lot of recognition from the society and received cash awards. Like Aplonia we have mainstreamed 15 special children from our school and they are the bread winners of their families. Through our continuous and tireless efforts,



we have sent four of our students for the World Summer Game conducted in the different part of the world.

“The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with heart” said Helen Keller. This quotation has become down to earth in my experience of working towards the all-round development and upliftment of these special children during the past 20 years. The sheer bliss, the Divine beauty satiating the soul can be acquired only by the touch of true love. I am evangelized by them and their families who take care of these children with great love despite the unending problems they live with. They do firmly believe that these children are a source of blessing to their families and we feel blessed to care for them. Yes, they give an experience of “Barachiel”.

Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine you did it for me (Mt 25:40). I bow before the Almighty with folded hands for putting into my heart the seed of this special vocation and to recognize and respond to it. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me (Ps 23:4). He has shepherded me holding my hand in times of trials due to lack of finance and support.

An estimated 93 million children worldwide live with disabilities. Like all children, children with disabilities have ambitions and dreams for their future. Denied of their right to learn, children with disabilities are often denied the chance to take part in their communities, the workforce and the decisions that most affect them. Inclusive education is the most



effective way to give all children a fair chance to go to school, learn and develop the skills they need to thrive. But progress comes slowly. Inclusive systems require changes at all levels of society. At the school level teachers must be trained, buildings must be refurbished and students must receive accessible learning materials. At the community level, stigma and discrimination must be tackled and individuals need to be educated on the benefit of inclusive education. At the national level, governments must align laws and policies with the convention on the rights of persons with disabilities and collect and analyze data to ensure children with effective services.

This is my dream for the future generations and I do commit my heart, soul and energy for the same that the Good Lord continues to lead me in the path He wants.



MY COMMUNITY LIFE IN THIS PANDEMIC

Sr. Pushpa John Cruz

Delegation of Latin America

My heart rejoices in the Lord for the great things he has done for me during this period of Covid 19. In spite of the great loss of my dear friends and people the Lord uses me as an instrument to bring peace in the hearts of many.

Since the year 2020 January, as I was all alone in the community I had to face several questions and concerns from many people. One of the most common was, "How do you live your community life alone?" I would smile and say that I belong to several communities and that they accompany me in this pandemic. By the by I was alone since my community member left to India for her vacations and right there started the Covid 19 and it was impossible for her return until October 2020 and then she was asked to accompany another sister who was also left alone in Lima.

1. Sumaq Kawsay (Beautiful Living) - Community:

This team with whom I work, attending offline and online to many people who seek accompaniment, listening, counseling and psychotherapy is an immediate community for me. Each member of the team is attentive to my well-being and I in turn am attentive to them. I remember when it was time to receive the vaccine they told me that I have to receive it on a Monday so that they can take care of me if I fall sick. Many times meals were shared with them. Important days we celebrate together. I felt the care and protection of this community.

2. School of Forgiveness and Reconciliation - Community:

It was another group that embarked on a process of forgiveness and reconciliation that I needed in this pandemic. There were meetings with a lot of listening and mutual accompaniment where we took care of our spiritual and psychological health. There were moments of intense listening and accompanying.

3. Making Art is Praying - Community:

This is another group which I belong to in this time of pandemic. It is a group of simple artists that we meet to express our intimacy with Jesus through art. It was once a month get together where each one present the art created during the month connecting with a Bible passage or any inspiration we got from our daily living. It is a very new and enriching experience. Each time we meet together we experience a sort of connectedness, helping each other to experience the Lord who accompanies us every moment. The Jesuit priest who started this group left us to the heavenly home, a few months back.

4. Emmaus - Community:

At the invitation of the Emmaus team, which had formed me in listening therapy few years back, I am part of a group who gets trained in grief therapy. While we did the training we also had to accompany others. I had both religious and lay persons whom I was accompanying as I was getting

trained in the grief therapy. I am nurturing the capacity to improve in active listening. Just as the sharing of the sisters in the community enriches us, we are enriched by listening and sharing of the participants' experiences.

5. Ancón and Los Olivos - Communities:

The sisters in Los Olivos and Ancón welcome me every time I take off from Juliaca to Lima. They facilitate my stay and we take time to share as a community of Sisters of the Cross. I enjoyed sharing moments of community prayer, the Holy Eucharist, the Rosary, work ... etc. Certainly I miss a sister with me to join in the journey of my life and mission.

6. Red Kawsay - Community:

This national organization of conference of religious of Peru, fighting against human trafficking, was another instance of community for me to strengthen the dedication to those most in need. The meetings and sharing of mission experiences were very encouraging and at the same time urging us to continue this mission in peripheries. During the pandemic situation the human trafficking was on the rise through the social media like internet, Whatsapp, face book...etc. I had many sessions and talks given on how to prevent from being victims of human trafficking, for students, parents, religious and other sectors. Everything was online

7. CRP - Conference of Religious of Peru - Community:

These inter-congregational meetings in continuing to build hope where there is no hope, does give me a sense being part of a larger community. I had chances to give online retreats to sisters, youth and women after which there is continuity in accompaniment. This pandemic never stopped me from being an active missionary by networking, offline and online work.

8. Women and Children in the Prison - Community:

Due to pandemic my listening therapies with them was not possible but receiving donations for clothing, kits and food materials and taking it to them and have some chit chat with them was a great consolation for them and a feeling of being close to the

marginalized for me. Of course I had few friends who facilitated to do the shopping, and by driving me to the prison.

9. LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) Group - Community:

Recently there was an invitation from the CRP to volunteer to accompany a group of LGBT. I grabbed the opportunity to be with three other religious to accompany a small group of persons with different sexual orientation. I had lots of apprehensions as I was not very sure how it's going to be. With a lot of uncertainty and doubts regarding my capacity to accompany them I joined the team, but the listening attitude helps me to continue accompanying this group. The group is formed by

different categories of persons, professionals and ex religious. Listening to them only increases my clarity in opting to accompany them.

So my experience of community life was different and special. Apart from all these groups, I could also form online communities by giving workshops, receiving training, giving programmes and courses on prevention of human trafficking. To those who questioned me about my community living all alone these are my answers. I do miss a companion on the road in the community, but I find the solution in these "communities" until God allows one from my Congregation. Now having a member in my community would be a luxury for me.

CALL TO EMPOWER AND MOBILIZE THE YOUTH

Sr. Gemma Kassopa
Province of East Africa



"In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples" (Evangelii Gaudium, 120). As missionary disciples it is the vocation of every Christian and much more of a religious to accompany youth and young adults on their journey. Youth are the most important and dynamic segment of the population in any country, church or parishes. Mother Claudine our Foundress responded rightly her call to care for the poor young girls. Having opted my life for the sake of the God's people and paying heed to the constant call of the Church I deeply realize my responsibility towards the youth I encounter. I am convinced that if I don't make a difference in the life of the young in my mission there is something that I leave undone.

During the past 20 years I am involved in the lives of the youth through Holy Cross training centre where we coach the youth in computer, food production and tailoring. I have ample opportunities to journey with them very closely. As Pope Francis said I do realize that my specific vocation to enter into the lives of the youth should be with a purpose that "the seeds that God has placed in each person - abilities,

initiative, and strengths" might germinate. First and foremost I allow myself to be lead by the Lord and deeply connected to Him that His grace may act in and through me as I get into their lives.

I listen to them with an open heart and never allow me to be prejudiced. Once they find a good friend in me they begin to unlock their spiritual, mental and emotional aspects of life.



A good number of youth are given into drugs, prostitution, stealing and are generally very lazy. Intense listening has proved to be an effective medicine to many of their problems. I help them to recognize, utilize, and enhance their strengths and skills and have positive outcomes in terms of acquiring good moral values, making a good family and earning their livelihood. The training centre thus serves not only as a place of instruction and coaching in some skills, but take them closer to the

Lord, transfer the values to the peer group and inspire many more to the centre as others too begin to identify the positive influence of their acquaintance with us.

In the year 2020, I experienced the Divine intervention of the Lord through the Don Bosco Network who invited me to join them in the Government Project with the youth. It was a God given opportunity for me to get into the lives of the youth, a learning experience to develop my knowledge and skill to deal with the

youth and much more to create in me a heart that moves out for them. My experience taught me that when one really serves God's people, God enhances them. And the more you depend on Him the more He shows mercy and support.

Young people have so many possibilities in this digital age which unites them as never before. Let us walk with them and help them to discern these possibilities and finding God in the depths of realities.

Jubilee Chimes

A Jubilee is a time for looking back and looking forward. The book of Leviticus depicts the spirit of Jubilee, as an occasion of grateful remembrance of the past events; of rejoicing for the graces received; of recognition of God's faithfulness. Dear friends, the journey of a religious is not simply a journey through a string of days and years. Rather they are journeys surrounded and intertwined with mystery and secret growth, fulfilling and demanding, risky and exciting, losses and gains, replete with joys and sorrows. What makes it perfect and a celebration is that in all journeys, the religious find their God who called and consecrated them was always with them, enabling to live the spirit of consecration and then they sing out the glories of the Lord. We have a few sisters who want to share their joy through this **Crossian Connect**.



Sr. Mary Josephine
Province of Kolkata

50 Golden Years



At the outset of my jubilee year, I thank God for my vocation to the Congregation of the Sisters of the Cross of Chavanod. It's the vision of our dear Mother Claudine "to make the good God known and loved" that gripped me and sustained me for the past 50 years.

I cherish my rich mission experiences and I would like to share the same with you. My memories run back to the age of seven - an incident that is so fresh and the first instance of God's call. While I was asleep someone woke me up and without any hesitation I folded my mat and pillow

and kept on my shoulder, went to my father, kissed him and said 'I am going to become a missionary'. Then I opened the door and got out of my house. My father who understood



what had happened to me quickly brought me back to the house and put me to sleep. In the morning my parents began to tease me saying we have a big missionary in our house.



From then on my thoughts lingered around how to become a missionary. There were tangible changes in my attitude. I began to make a lot of sacrifices; my desire to continue the mission of Jesus grew bigger, dreamed of going far away - climbing the hills and crossing the valleys to proclaim Jesus to the people who do not know Him.

God called me to be a consecrated person and I offered my whole life for the proclamation of the word of God. In 1979, I was transferred to Assam and in 1984 to Meghalaya and there I had the real opportunity to climb the mountains and cross the valleys and preach Jesus to the people. Jesus began to work through me and a lot of healing and deliverance from all evil forces took place and people were very happy to accept Jesus as their Lord and Master. Soon the number of people increased in the church. Thus my dream to be a missionary became a reality.

On 13th September, 1992 I came to Pandua (West Bengal) with great zeal and enthusiasm to begin my mission in the midst of Santal tribal community. It was my pleasure to render my services to the people of Pandua, since I knew their custom, culture and language, it was indeed very easy for me to mingle with the people. They soon accepted me as their own. They called me 'our sister' that made me feel very free to move with them. Of course there were only a handful of families. These catholic families were taken care by the catechists of Pandua and Kalna - a nearby Mission station. The sisters from Kalna and catechists came once a month on Sundays, explained the



Sunday readings and had their prayer meetings with the people. After my arrival I began my ministry and gradually the sisters from Kalna stopped coming. My eagerness to proclaim Jesus to the Santals grew bigger and bigger. I began to visit the people in the villages along with one of our Parishioners who accompanied me. I started to stay in the villages for a day or two, taking classes at night and visiting the families during the day and thus I came to know their situation and established relationship with them. Many people started to come to the church and the number of the faithful increased steadily. The Lord has done marvelous work! Many more people came to know Jesus and accepted Christ as their Lord and Master. The Good news of Jesus was spread far and wide and the Lord used the catechumens to become powerful evangelizers of His Gospel. We have at present more than 125 villages. I gratefully acknowledge all the Sisters, Fathers and Bishop who supported me in my work especially during Easter and Christmas.

Now we have regular classes and meetings held to discuss all matters of the faithful. Many activities and regular programmes like classes for the Catechumens, marriage class, Catechism for the children, Confirmation classes etc. are conducted for the faithful in the parish. The catechumens after having attended classes for three years regularly are asked to get permission from village leader and a no objection letter to receive baptism in the catholic church. If problems arise in the village, people get the help of the police to settle them. The parish priest is informed about everything and is in touch with them. Prior to adult baptisms three days' classes are arranged for them. Regular masses are arranged in different villages and the sisters accompany the priests to the villages. We take part in the Holy Mass and after the Holy Mass meet the people and enquire about their wellbeing.

On the eve of the Christmas we have a living crib procession through the main road with the permission of the Police officers who help us to maintain the law and order during this great procession. On 25th evening there is cultural programme for the people by the parish youth, boarding children and our formees. This is a very good methods of evangelization



as the life of Jesus is enacted through dance-dramas, songs and other programmes. During the Lenten season we have the Way of the Cross and Holy Mass in the villages and we help the people to get ready spiritually to celebrate Easter meaningfully.

Now I feel happy to see the improvement of the people because the number of families is increased in the church and they have grown in faith. The families are now economically better and give importance to education. Many of them have got good jobs and are in significant positions that encourage the younger generation as well as the parents to do all in their capacity to get proper education.

I am happy and privileged to serve the people here for the past 25 years. I experience immense joy and fulfillment of my consecrated life. I thank God for the gift of my vocation and I offer these 50 years of my dedicated life as a gift to my Lord and Master. I am most happy and contented to be a Sister of the Cross and I consider it as a privilege given to me by my Lord. May God alone be praised!



I sing a song of praise to the Lord!



Sr. Elsy Thattil
Province of Kolkata

I sing a song of praise to the Lord. My soul sings a melody of gratitude for the wonders and showers of blessings in my life. If I were alone, I would not have completed these fifty years of dedication. I see the magnanimity of my Creator who loves me dearly and is faithful to me all through my life.

Yes, gratitude unlocks fullness of life. It is a time of grace, a time of growth, a time of joy and a time of fulfillment. Little by little, year by year I have been brought closer to the one whom my soul sought. I have experienced God as a person caring for me. When in dark He was my light, when wounded He was my healer, in my discouragement He was a source of hope and courage and now He continues to envelope me with His love and blessings. A few gospel passages that have helped me in my life journey and they keep ringing in my ears - My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness (2 Cor 12:9). If we take

happiness from God's hand must be not take sorrow too (Job. 2:10). The words of Mother Claudine "We can be tossed about but not overturned"

I realized that my religious life is a journey through faith in accepting, assimilating, reflecting, reforming and transforming myself who called me out of nothingness into a wonderful light. At times I asked my Lord 'why do you love me so much' and the answer was 'You are precious in my eyes, and honoured and I love you' (Is 43:4). I felt the preciousness of my call to be with the beloved. When I turn the pages of my life, I am grateful to God for His fidelity and the companionship that kept me wading through the thick and thin clouds of my life. I do feel that God is so meticulous in providing me with all that I need and my only prayer is 'teach me Lord to live one day at a time'.

As I stand at the threshold of my jubilee year my heart overflows with

joy and gratitude to God and to all those who journeyed with me, my dear and near ones, my Provincials, Superiors, formators, teachers, my nurturing and nourishing communities that I have lived in and people I have interacted with. The joyful living of the paschal mystery and my deep love for the Eucharistic Lord are the source of my life. I had been faithful to my ministries wherever I was sent and passionate in whatever I have accomplished. I strongly believe that "The one who began the good work in me will bring to its completion in me" (Phil 1:6) with this conviction I have fulfilled God's plan during these past 50 years of my Consecrated Life.

I am grateful to God for His faithfulness and companionship which I cherished in my life. Countless are the blessings that I have received from God which strengthened me to live my committed life fully for His mission.



JOURNEYING WITH THE LORD



Sr. Parinal Fernando
Province of Guwahati

What thanks O Lord can I render Thee, for all the gifts Thou has showered on me, each day I will sing of your Praise and Glory.

My heart is overwhelmed with joy and gratitude to God who embraced and blanketed me in love and knitted me together with Him to be His own.

I can't imagine how 50 years have passed by since the Lord seduced me and bound me with His unconditional and all surpassing love. As He called Peter and Andrew and James and John He chose me from a fisherman's community and made me entirely His to spread His

love and compassion to all while impregnating me with His gifts beyond compare, to fulfil His Mission.

I was proud of my origin as a fisherman's daughter, because Jesus chose not the elite of the society of His time but the simple, uneducated

and uncouth fishermen to build the Church and spread His kingdom. As Jesus told Peter that He will make him fisher of men, he brought me from the sea shore was like that of St. Paul's missionary journey going from state to state learning different languages and adapting to various cultures of the people to reveal the merciful love of the Father in and through my healing ministry. Pope Francis says that a missionary or pastor should know the face and name of the faithful. Yes, the Lord blessed me with this Charism of remembering the face and name of people whom I met which was one of the many gifts God has bestowed on

me which brought me closer to the people whom I love and serve.

My life lived as a Sister of the Cross during the past fifty years was not a bed of roses but a weaving between God and me. I did not choose the colours of my life but He chose them for me and fabricated me, for He knew what would suit me best. I felt that I was a pattern in God's hand. I was able to see only the upper side but God saw the underside of this pattern. Sometime He weaved sorrows which were strange to me, still I trusted in His wise judgment and went ahead faithfully because I knew by experience that He knows

what is my strength and weakness and He will plan my life in His own benevolence. I joyfully hope that at last when my life ends, I shall abide with Him. Then I shall know why pain with joy entwined was woven in the fabric of my life that God designed. I cannot virtually count the blessings the Lord has showered on me but bow my head in surrender to the Lord in deep gratitude and amazement. Now to summarize the fifty years of my life, it was an assiduous process of learning on God and learning to love with the heart of Jesus my beloved.



MY HEART OVERFLOWS WITH JOY AND GRATITUDE

Sr. Anita Mathew

Province of Guwahati



What shall I render to the Lord for His blessing to me (Ps 116:12).

My heart overflows with joy and gratitude to my heavenly Father who called me and kept me close to Him. I can't imagine how sixty years have rolled out as a committed person for the Lord! As a religious my focus in life was the person of Jesus. I lived a contented and happy life, ever joyful in the service of God and His people. I have done all types of work befitting a woman as our Founders have advised us, "Except evil and sin."

At this moment God gives me a wonderful opportunity to count on His blessings and the marvels He worked through me and keeping me as a committed Sister of the Cross. When I went through challenges and painful situations, I didn't lose my faith and trust in Jesus instead they helped me to live my vocation totally.

My loving and God fearing parents brought me up in the love of God and love of neighbours. They allowed me to join the missionary Congregation and to continue the life I had chosen. They encouraged and supported me by their powerful prayers and they walked with me as pilgrims to go along with the Lord faithfully and carry my Cross.

As I celebrate the diamond year of my life I offer my gratitude to God Almighty, my Congregation, my formators, my superiors and my dear sisters young and old with whom I lived and have grown. Their life and love have touched me. My superiors trusted me and gave me freedom to execute the will of God in my life. Thus, I could freely move out to the poor and needy and listen to their miseries and struggles and assist them to alleviate their pain and lead a dignified life. The love of my sisters,

especially the aged and sick sisters, empowered me. They were very kind, gentle and most human in their approach which helped me to grow more in the love of God and love for the poor. Their faithfulness to prayer, forgiving spirit, positive outlook, their loyalty and love for the Congregation drew me close to God. My Congregation helped me to know thousands of people from south to North and East to West. They have enhanced my life with the fragrance of love and cheer in the past sixty years of my life as a religious. Many good people enthused my life when I stumbled with problems and misunderstanding. Some helped me and consoled me with life giving words and led me to the Lord. In all my struggles I realized that "I am not alone," and the one who called me is with me. This conviction has helped me to live my Divine call faithfully

and courageously and I have attained this special grace through my lived experiences.

I am fully aware that it is the Lord who called me to an international congregation and I love my community and my sisters with all heart and mind. Nothing prevented me from reaching out to the people wherever I lived, specially the poor and needy as my brothers and sisters. I realized that the light of my faith should shine out through my actions. My life examples should lead the people close to God. If this doesn't happen, my life is meaningless and a failure. Today as I look back, I wonder from where I get this strength and courage if not from the Lord!

The Lord is working through me to reach out to the poor, because I'm a consecrated person who carries

God's message to the people. I must be more generous in sharing the merciful love of Jesus to the needy. I am convinced of my call to reveal His merciful love through my love and concern. The light of my faith must shine out to others.

At present, though I am 83 years old no matter, young in heart I stand with the world of today. I consider the younger ones as my own sisters, love and appreciate them with all their potentialities, listen to their worries and aches with love and concern, teach them to look beyond and live the word of God at all circumstances. The word of God is more alive in me and I make use of the opportunities to share my insight with the younger ones. The more I share, better the insight I get. My heart is filled with love and gratitude to God, as I ponder

over God's bountiful love, the love and concern of my sisters in the communities. My dear sisters I have no words to express my love and gratitude to each one of you, the way you celebrated my Diamond Jubilee. My sisters have worked tirelessly for days together, spent sleepless nights in order to make the day a most solemn and memorable one for me. It was indeed a wonderful and unforgettable event in my life. I ponder over God's everlasting love from the scripture (Is 43:1 - 4). "Fear not for I have called you by name you are mine. When you pass through the deep waters you shall not drown, when you walk through fire you will not be burned, the hard trials that come will not hurt you because you are precious to me, fear not I Am with you."



OUR RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN SRI LANKA

Sr. Maureen Peiris
Province of Sri Lanka

We experience the Covid-19 Pandemic as a great challenge and are of the opinion that as a country we have not been successful in encountering these challenges. The poor, the middle class and even the rich are drastically affected by the present economic situation. Protests continue with teachers requesting for salary increment and farmers keep desperately requesting for carbonic fertilizer with the outlook of high yield of crops to boost their economy. The prizes of consumer items are continually on the increase while

travel restrictions still continue. victims of the Easter attack keep pleading for justice to be decreed and the education of the children is of grave concern owing to the lack of facilities in rural areas.

We, the Sisters of the Cross, in the province of Sri Lanka are also facing these challenges. Five of the sisters in our province were infected by this dreadful virus, but saved by the Providential Care of God and our sisters experienced God's mighty healing power. Our Pre-schools which are the main sources of income have been stalled

for almost over two years. Despite all these we still manage to continue to help the less fortunate with the aid we receive from our



benefactors. Our annual programmes and sessions of the Province have been conducted online through zoom. Visit of our Provincial Superior to the different communities have been carried out amidst these challenges.

We at Padiwatte continue our mission in spite of these risks in the Home for the Elders, in Pastoral work, Pre-Schools, Social Work, Prison ministry and the Formation House. These ministries have kept us busy in the midst of the Pandemic. The elders in our home need special attention and care. The sister-in-charge has taken the risk of accompanying them to the physicians and also to the private and government hospitals.

Obtaining provisions during the lock-down was quite a heavy task, but fortunately benefactors and



generous people came to our rescue. We appreciate the help rendered to us by the diocese for the up keeping of our elders. Some of these inmates don't understand our situation and make such demand placing us in difficult situations. However these situations have made us more sensitive and human. In addition to the above, we were able to organize the recital of the Holy Rosary in the month of May in every cottage invoking the intercessions of our blessed

Mother. Our Parish priest regularly joined us in these spiritual exercises. We also had the privilege of distributing hundred bags of dry rations to the poor which was donated to us by the Rotary Club, a social organization that helps the poor and needy in rural areas.

Our community consisting of seven dedicated sisters has been able to reach out to the victims of Covid-19. Our presence among them was greatly appreciated as we prayed with their families, and provided them with their requirements by the assistance of our Parish Priest. The patients who have recovered and are back home welcomed us with tear filled eyes and shared their experiences in the quarantine centres with heavy hearts.

We thank God for our pre-novices who were very active during this pandemic. Not only did they receive the customary theoretical knowledge, but they also received valuable practical knowledge. They helped us in our ministries in numerous ways, including packing food for the victims, helping our inmates in the home and actively participating in daily spiritual activities. They were unable to continue their exposure programmes due to Covid-19. We made arrangement to look after the elders while the staff were on holiday for almost 14 days due to travel restrictions. The pre-novices have gained valuable experience of assisting the sick with the help of the sister-in-charge.

We are part of the cosmos. Yes, we have a beautiful garden with fruit

trees all around the convent. During this pandemic most of us spent our time with nature, cultivating our own crops and encouraging our inmates to join in home gardening. The Sisters had a very active implementing of the season of creation by planting, cleaning and taking care of the natural resources.

We experienced God's providential care more than ever in our religious life during this pandemic. Our parishioners and lay associates were very concerned towards us, providing us with our daily needs. A generous family offered us a desktop with all the facilities which were sorely needed in our community for Zoom meetings and the online studies of our student



sisters. We spent quality time in prayer, praying for the sisters in all our provinces and people all over the world.

We feel that we have done only a little for the vulnerable people in our milieu due to the strict guidelines of the government and travel restrictions. We pray fervently that this pandemic situation would abate soon and the economic condition of our county may improve and the political stability would resume especially for the good of the future generation!



MY MISSION EXPERIENCE IN CONGO

Sr. Motcha Mary

Delegation of Congo-Cameroon

It was his passion to follow Jesus that made St. Peter to step out of the boat. It was his passion to serve God that made St. Paul to do missionary work in many countries. I too have a passion, and it is the passion for our Lord Jesus Christ, which led me to make myself available for His work and for humanity. I felt a special call to follow Him, to serve Him, and to serve human beings irrespective of caste, creed, colour, culture and nation.

Working with the people of another culture taught me to be adjustable, flexible, self-sacrificing and sharing. I got enriched by them and in return I enriched them with my talents, with my spiritual gifts of God, and with Indian spirituality and culture. Living with people from various nationalities helps me to be a matured religious. It assists me to discover my strength and weakness. It's true that community builds every individual and every



individual makes community. Individuals are very important pillars of the community.

Having accomplished six years of missionary journey in Cameroon, I was sent to an unfamiliar place in the Republic of Congo, at first to Makoua and then to EWO. These villages are

about 600km away from the city of Congo Brazzaville. I made a short study of the people and place in order to make my ministry easier and effective.

The climate is characterized by heavy precipitation, high temperature, humidity and heavy rainfall. The economy of Congo consists of agriculture, oil, support services, handicrafts and hunting. Most of the children go to school to be educated. People live in utter poverty here. The official languages are French, Kongo, and Lingala. Of course, each ethnic group has their own mother-tongue. Cultural Life - precolonial artistic expression emphasized ceremonial music, drama, sculpture and oral literature. Disease control is very difficult due to polluted water and lack of sanitations. The most common health problems are respiratory disease, malaria, tuberculosis, parasites, trypanosomiasis, yellow fever and HIV/AIDS.

I am engaged in the health ministry. Our day begins with the Lord and praying together. We focus on how to improve health condition of the population. We do our best to give holistic approach and foster nurturing environment for our patients. We provide quality and compassionate nursing care. We treat our patients, and employees with human dignity and respect. We organize formation course, to improve our health care towards the patients. We also take care of the spiritual well-being of our staff through recollection, regular meetings, Eucharistic celebration, etc. We are driven by the passion for Christ. We introduce innovative

technological solutions to improve health. We feel satisfied when we see our patients heal, healthy and happy. This gives us a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction in our profession. The weak, old and poor are treated with minimum cost and are bestowed with maximum care. Many poor patients are helped by Verma therapy and Foot Reflexology for their diseases.

We reach out to the remotest villages regularly. These villages do not have paved roads, running water, and electricity. Along with the medication, we organize programmes to fight out the diseases, general medical examination, medication, treatment and vaccination.

We also collaborate with the government and nearby district hospitals. Pre and post counselling session given to all the patients who are affected by the HIV/AIDS are much appreciated by the patients as they feel wanted, accepted, loved, cared and understood. They are happy with our service.

Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you (Deut31: 6). Yes, this was my experience with God and His people, and I am proud to be an instrument of God as a true Sister of the Cross to love and care His people in Congo. I thank God for His healing hand which I experienced each moment of my life and in the place where I am sent for the mission.