

INTERCOM 2023



**SISTERS OF THE CROSS
OF CHAVANOD**



Christ Jesus,
who though he was in the form of God
did not count equality with God
a thing to be grasped,
but emptied himself,
taking the form of a servant,
being born in the likeness of men.

And being found in human form
he humbled himself,
and became obedient unto death,
even death on a Cross.

Therefore God has highly exalted him
and bestowed on him the name
which is above every name.

That at the name of Jesus
every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

And every tongue confess that
JESUS CHRIST IS LORD,
to the Glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2 : 6-11

**"We believe
that Jesus Christ calls us
in a special way
to give Him our hearts
and all our time
to work for His Glory and
for the salvation of
the neighbour."**

Mother Claudine Echernier
Foundress



My Dear Sisters, Friends, Lay Collaborators, Well Wishers and Benefactors,

It gives me great happiness to connect with you through INTERCOM. The Intercom has woven us together into understanding our response as Sisters of the Cross to venture into new peripheries opening the doors to a world that stands in need of healing and compassion.

We are rattled by the volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity in every aspect of our common life and society today. Recently we have witnessed some powerful nations destabilizing governments they either dislike ideologically or with the intention of establishing their supremacy. The war between Ukraine and Russia leaves us aghast as the end result is only unprecedented devastation of human life, environmental degradation, poverty causing endless human suffering, and a shattered economy. Does the world have a solution to problems such as these? Ideological wars and destabilizing their own governments by certain vested groups makes politics murkier day by day leaving the civil society to fend for itself.

One might be brainwashed into thinking by the media that the Pandemic has finally ended. In reality, it has worsened the state

of the human mind and lulled us to retract from believing in values of human life, relationships and concern for nature. Children and youth are the most affected with technology taking the better of them. The problems are so complex that it might take years to get back where we had left.

The socio-economic conditions in many parts of the world have taken a back foot, leaving huge chunks of the society in poverty with hardly any government intervention to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor, the haves and the have-nots.

On the one hand, great achievements in technology are lauded as parameters of progress and growth while human and ecological conditions plummet to greater depths of decay.

In such situations it is indeed heartening to see the Sisters of the Cross responding to the signs of the times through our presence and service in sixteen countries, in response to the calls of the church and the Directives of the General Chapter 2019 as we strive to reach out to the peripheries, thus bringing a glimmer of hope and sanity.



Sr. Elizabeth Miranda
Superior General

Greater Eco-consciousness among sisters and stakeholders has led to ecological conversion and Eco-spirituality. Sustained efforts are being made to spread this awareness through all our ministries.

Life becomes even more meaningful when it is spent in the service of the poor and the needy. The Biblical Prophets touched every aspect of human life reiterating the bond we need to have with our creator as the sap that sustains us.

Can we become prophets for our world today? Every silent step taken to rid the world of pain, suffering, want and degradation is a loud cry before the throne of God. This is possible when hearts and minds are in communion because we are a Synodal people.

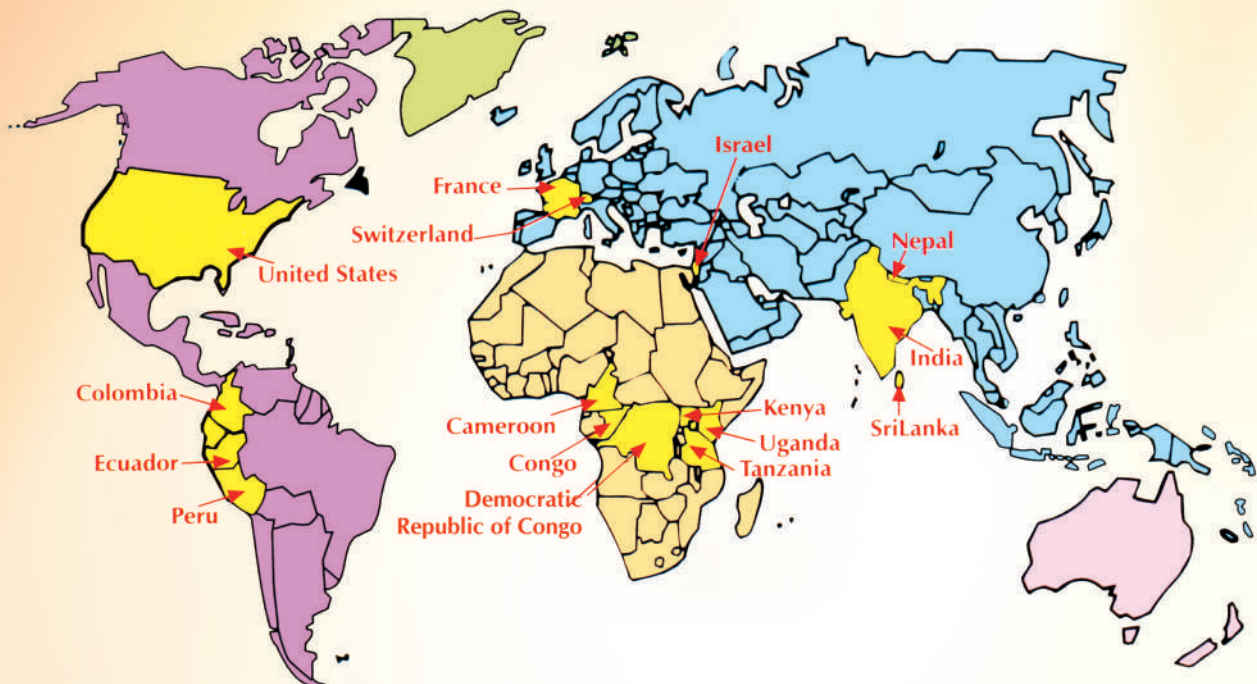
The countries where the Sisters of the Cross of Chavanod are present



With an apostolic availability, we keep in mind that mission consciousness permeates all our ministries. "In communion with Christ, in His abasement and total self-giving for the life of the world" (ROL 3), we strive to become Joyful Witnesses of Christ's Mission in the footsteps of Mother Claudine.

General Chapter 2019

France.....	1838	Cameroon.....	1987
Switzerland.....	1862	Peru.....	1989
India.....	1886	Colombia.....	1998
Sri Lanka.....	1951	Kenya.....	2000
Congo.....	1958	USA.....	2002
Tanzania.....	1979	Uganda.....	2006
Nepal	1985	Ecuador.....	2006
Israel.....	1986	Democratic Republic of Congo.....	2022





THE JOY OF THE LORD IS YOUR STRENGTH

The world is facing unprecedented crisis on all fronts, which affects humanity at large. It experienced non-stop conflict over the last decade, hampering its ability to respond to global challenges. Vladimir Putin unleashed the biggest war in Europe since the World War II with the justification that modern, western-leaning Ukraine was a constant threat. The humanitarian situation inside Ukraine, is pathetic and the refugees have fled to neighbouring countries. Displaced families, and in particular women and children, are disproportionately affected by the crises, which is more than a series of unfortunate events. China has currently reported the highest daily count of new local Covid cases in six months as outbreaks widened, pushing policymakers to walk an even finer line between holding the virus at bay while keeping a lid on social and economic issues. China's borders remain largely shut. There is a record of high inflation, prices of commodity, power shortages, fuel crisis and the economic collapse in Sri Lanka. With all this in the world and many more in our families and communities, we are called to be joyful witness of Christ in a world of chaos. Is it possible? Sometimes it seems impossible. But we learn from the life pages of church leaders, saints, and holy men and women that joyful life is viable amidst this situation. St. Francis of Assisi was invited by God to lead the church through a life of simplicity, poverty and

dedication to the Crucified Lord in such an ambience.

One day St. Francis was on a long journey with Friar Leo in the winter and it was so cold that their bodies shivered and ached. He asked St. Francis about perfect joy. To Friar Leo's query he answered, "If we arrive at our host's house soaked by the rain, frozen, muddy, and afflicted with hunger, knock on the door and the doorkeeper says, "Who are you? I don't know you!" And he closes the door on our faces forcing us to stay all night long, freezing to death. If this mistreatment is endured without disquieting ourselves and without murmuring and accusing the door keeper believing that God is in control that is perfect joy. To bear injustices patiently and with cheerfulness, ruminating on the sufferings of Christ for us. "O Friar Leo", he continued "write it down that this is perfect joy!"

Pope Francis expanded on the same concept in a 2018 homily: "Joy does not mean living from laugh to laugh. No, it's not that. Joy is not entertainment. No, it's not that. It is something else. Christian joy is peace, peace that is deeply rooted, peace in the heart, the peace that only God can give." This is Christian joy.

Mother Claudine Echernier was an example of perfect joy. She accepted everything as the will of God, even when faced with many challenges like taking care of her



Sr. Judy Gomez
Co-ordinator of
Communication Commission

five siblings when her mother died, resolving a crisis between teaching and working sisters and when she was physically ill. As ardent daughters of Mother Claudine we are called to live the special Charism our Mother Claudine left us with and to participate in the paschal mystery joyfully. We are called not to be verbal critics but vital critics accepting the negatives in one's life and joyfully surrendering to the Master's will. Along with Job we must have the spiritual Charism to say 'Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him;' Let us acknowledge and accept Habakkuk 3:17 which says 'Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Saviour.' Whatever be the ambience we will not be moved because God is our strength and we will joyfully witness Christ. Our feet will be like hind's feet because God is our strength and with Him we will joyfully proclaim our mission to all people.



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TOWARDS AN INTEGRAL HEALING

"Treat the person, not just the disease" - William Osler

I'm Sr. Vasantha Alphonse, a gynecologist practicing at Leonard hospital, Batlagundu and Thangachimadam in Tamil Nadu, India. As a follower of Jesus who healed the sick, I feel privileged to be a part of His healing ministry and restore well-being and dignity to the countless people who come seeking my help. I firmly believe in William Osler's philosophy that "the good physician treats the disease; the great physician treats the patient who has the disease". The great physician understands the patient and the circumstances surrounding the patient's suffering. This is what I try to do. As I accompany the sick with a compassionate heart and with the expertise I have gained through my studies and experience, I become aware that every woman who walks into my consulting room has a story behind her physical and emotional pain especially the great pain of being a barren woman. I listen to her story that describes her family,

her home culture, her personal beliefs and the social environment that she belongs to. My heart longs to heal her emotional pain and give her hope. Today I am convinced that my patients who long to have a baby, need something more than allopathy medicine. I explain to them the need to use alternative medicines and holistic and spiritual approaches to have their longing fulfilled.

Bach flower medicine facilitates emotional healing by addressing the basic emotions like fear, loneliness, sadness, despair, anger and impatience, and this creates trust in themselves and in God. Nama Jaba, for example, repeated recitation of hope-filled prayer like "Thank you, Jesus, for blessing me with a healthy baby" gives hope and brings about change in the lives of people.

Nirmala was a married woman of twenty seven years. She was



Srs. Vasantha, Jenifer Sahayarani & Gracy
Province of Madurai

unable to conceive for six years. Her husband's medical evaluation was normal but polycystic ovarian disorder was detected in her. This was the cause of her inability to conceive. For six months, she was treated for PCOD and infertility and it was of no use. She was exceedingly concerned and impatient to conceive. In the following month after enquiring about her emotional status, as a complement to Western treatments, flower remedies were given (specifically, the impatiens bach flower) and she was introduced to Nama Jaba to help her deal with





her emotional issues. She became pregnant after thirty days. Our joy knew no bounds. Convinced of this alternative approach, I teach most of the women who come to me for infertility treatment, the Nama Jaba, and offer Bach flower medicine along with allopathy medicine. As a result, many women have conceived and given birth to children. I am happy to see that there is a significant difference in the number of women who have conceived when these alternative methods are combined with the traditional treatment.

I have realized that when I treat the person and not the illness alone, I bring wholeness and healing to the lives of people, and in this way I continue the healing mission of Jesus.

I'm Sr. Jenifer Joseph, a homeopathy doctor, practicing in Ritapuram, Kanyakumari district, Tamil Nadu. Health is not merely the absence of disease and its manifestations but the complete physical, mental, emotional and psychological well-being. Homeopathy is that holistic system which deals with the person as a whole, delving deep into every aspect of the individual. The body, mind and emotions are not independent and distinct but are fully integrated in health, disease and mode of treatment.

My heart overflows with gratitude for His mighty works in me. I, as a fresher having completed my studies, have stepped into the ministry of healing. I thank God for implanting in me the spirit of

sacrifice and dedication and the seed of love for the suffering. There is a kind of inner joy, satisfaction and fulfillment in life as I try to bring a smile on the face of the suffering by way of listening to them with my heart, just being with them and healing them through this holistic approach. The physician-patient relationship improves through meaningful rapport which helps me understand the individual in all the aspects. Understanding the individual holistically is necessary for the patient to attain wholeness in health.

Earlier I came across, Pavithra a twenty five year old lady from Ritapuram. She complained of constant nausea, vomiting and loss of appetite for about eight months. She was taken to various hospitals by her parents. She had gone through all kinds of tests but the findings of the investigations were normal and she was given medication. Days were rolling into months and the condition worsened and there was no improvement. One day, she was directed to me and I approached her gently with much warmth. She felt comfortable with me and shared all her deep down desires, feelings and life's struggles. After spending an hour with her, I prescribed the medicine. She improved gradually and now she is healthy and happy in life. More than the medicine I prescribed, it was the communication between Pavithra and me that helped her combat her nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, etc. Every physical condition has mental and emotional components to it, and when these components are addressed, the outcome is

good. I have experienced this so many times that when I listen to people's unspoken feelings behind their words, it heals them. I learn from Pope Francis to listen with my heart. When we listen to the stories behind every person, we bring forth in them the power to forgive, liberate and transform. This heals them. Yes, a holistic approach has lots of benefits in the lives of people.

We sisters, Gracy Antony and Sahayarani Viyagappan are in the Holistic Centre located at Holy Cross College, Nagercoil, Tamil Nadu. We experience daily miracles of healing which we want to share with you. This holistic centre is the fruit of the Provincial Chapter in 2018. Consequently, we set out to seek alternative ways of healing. One such is Foot Reflexology. It is a scientific method of stimulating reflexes of the foot that correspond to each gland, organ and the different parts of the body. The pressure applied is claimed to pass through the nerves to dissipate energy blocks. We complement this therapy with other therapies like Dorn Therapy, which is a way of correcting misalignments in the spinal column and joints, and detoxification (Naturopathy).

The invasion of the toxins and waste products into the immune system of the human body pulls down the normal functioning of our organs even more rapidly today. There is an urgent need to revive this immune system which is the vital force of our body. This is a great challenge for all of us who are engaged in medical field.



We are also deeply convinced that God's power is ultimately supreme. His Divine Energy (macro energy) fills the space with endless inexhaustible stored up powers, penetrates the sun, moon, stars, plants of the earth, animals and human beings - the masterpiece of His creation and fills them with vital powers and flows through them in a continual circulation. This Divine power (Vital force) flowing in us is expressed in the life-giving words of God, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Genesis 1:26). This image and likeness of God is energy, the energy to create, the energy to heal, the energy to give life and the energy to work towards well-being. Our call to heal is to experience this divine energy flowing in and through us to others, thus restoring wholeness and wellbeing. When we unleash this power, miracles happen.

Mrs. Amutha aged forty four, a known diabetic, was under medication. She had no sensation on both her feet. Even when there was a cut or a wound in the foot, she couldn't feel the pain. When hot water was poured on the leg, she could not feel the heat. She took treatment from one or more doctors. But there was no improvement at all. Finally, she heard about our center and came to us. With one sitting for foot reflexology, she could experience the full sensation in the feet and was so happy to share with us this good news. Added to this experience, she expresses that she is energized with each sitting and is becoming strong enough to do the household work. She brings many others to our center for foot reflexology. There are many who came with leg pain and now are relieved of their pain and are able to do their everyday work.

Today, there is a great demand for alternative therapy among the people here. It is amazing to hear from persons who come for Foot Reflexology that they experience a state of general well being along with the relief of their physical complaints. The treatment consumes a lot of energy and time but when done with paschal joy and love, it becomes so easy and fulfilling. As we do the foot reflexology, we listen to the personal stories of our patients. Listening is an act of love; it is a conscious effort to tune in completely into what the patient is saying. This act of love is healing too. Those who approach us, come with faith and hope. It is the faith of the people that enables them to experience holistic healing. Our future vision is to extend this healing through homeopathy treatment, yoga and meditation, and counselling in our holistic center.



TIME OF CRISIS AND A TIME OF PROMISE

“We do not act rightly because we have virtue or excellence, but we rather have those because we have acted rightly” - Aristotle

“**G**od has promised to be with us also in times of crisis” says Tveit. St. Paul authenticates this truth as he writes, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). Every crisis is a privilege and a blessing; Covid-19 has made it very evident. After having lived through the years 2020 and 2021 none of us can say that this period was a waste of time.

This crisis has proved the downright significance of relationships. Each one responded quickly to the other and the trust in the other has intensified. The only thing that can move faster than this virus is the velocity of trust. During these years our walking, praying and working together has brought us nearer and dearer. Fear is an aspect that got into many of us during this period. The fear of virus, fear of the pandemic and the fear of unforeseen and

unprecedented havocs in the future summon and lead us into greater trust in the Almighty.

It is a point of time to acknowledge our trust in God, our shepherd, who shows His favour to us through Jesus Christ, who says, “I am the Good Shepherd; I know mine, and mine know me” (John 10:14). When we are called to face crisis inconceivable and puzzling we have to remind ourselves, that like in times before God’s promise is the same: “I will be with you till the end of the days of this world” (Matthew 28:20).

Many doors were opened during this period of Corona. The online programmes created a gateway for international connection. There was a kind of pooling together and putting together. As a congregation we could do much more. The sense of one family is augmented by being in touch with the sisters from other provinces. Some of us became



Sr. Pushpa John Cruz
Delegation of Latin America

experts in online programmes and in reaching out to many through social media. Some of us started learning how to do our mission through social media far better than before. The promises of God became more tangible in our daily life and mission. Our attachments to religious and spiritual practices turned out to be carrying great weight and the spirit of our consecrated life evolved more meaningful.

The missionaries are there with those who suffer, even more with those who suffer from the impact of the global crisis. This is the propitious moment for the mission. Today we are called to announce and bring the love of God above all where there is suffering, indigence and despair. Prayer is the fundamental basis of the mission since with it we intercede. The dialogue with the Lord, can better discern what he asks of us at this specific moment in history. Live life affectively and effectively since everything from the little or much that we possess can contribute to





help and support the territory of the mission. Not only materially, but we can give ourselves, our gifts, our Charism received by putting them in the service of the mission.

We as consecrated and dedicated to Jesus can never be slaves of loneliness. This I say with the experience of being alone in the community during the period of Covid, 2021 and 2022. In our communities in Peru some of us had this experience of being alone. But as for me being alone was a time of crisis and a time of promise. There was the challenge of being responsible for our acts, for our spiritual, social and personal life. I remember the strength with which I overcame the trauma of the demise of our sisters. I missed someone by my side as a community member, sister and friend with whom I could have shared my sorrow of losing my

dear ones. But I felt very intensely that my sole companion Jesus was very close to me than ever before. Several nights of aloneness reminded me the phrase 'Alone with none but thee my Lord.' It was an opportunity to value the community living and value the community prayers. The crisis also paved the way to widen our mission activities, taking care of the migrants, accompanying the group of LGBT, attention to the needy through listening, counselling and psychotherapies.

We have taken this opportunity to write a new chapter in the book of our life, which does not take us back to where we were before the crisis, but builds more equitable structures for the future. Over all I can say this is a time of crisis which promises many blessings.





A JOURNEY WITH MIGRANT DOMESTIC WORKERS

“Speak the Truth in a million voiceless voices”- St. Catherine of Siena.

As bearers of the Charism of the joyful participation in the Mystery of the Risen Christ and a missionary mandate of revealing to all the merciful love of the Father and the liberating power of the Paschal Mystery, it was a challenging endeavour, for us the Sisters of the Cross of Chavanod, the Province of Amravati, to dare to launch out and extend our services to NDWM (National Domestic Workers Movement), in Delhi. I am happy to share with you all, our experience during the conduct of this new ministry.

Ten years ago, ILO (International Labour Organization) adopted convention 189, declared domestic work as decent work for Domestic workers. This ground-breaking event was the culmination of the efforts of all those who passionately believed in the idea that domestic workers too should enjoy the full rights, protection and dignity afforded to all labourers. However,

after this initial shot in the arm, only 35 countries around the globe have ratified it over the last decade. Our hopes that the government of India would honour this convention, by ratifying it, have been sadly denied. Yet C189 has made a dent in the consciousness of the world and our country and assured us that our struggle is not a hopeless dream.

It is a non - governmental organization, founded in 1985 for ensuring the rights and welfare of domestic workers, children in domestic work and migrant domestic workers. The Movement works with 80,000 domestic workers in 16 states in India. In Delhi we have 2500 workers registered under this Movement. Its founder is Sr. Jeanne Devos, ICM.

We the Sisters of the Province of Amravati entered into this ministry in the year 2021. It is a privilege for me to serve as a State Coordinator for NDWM, Delhi. The main focus of the ministry is:



Sr. Anushia Fernandes
Province of Amravati

- ❖ To build awareness among the domestic workers that domestic work is decent work and domestic workers are dignified workers.
- ❖ To promote and protect the rights and justice of domestic workers.
- ❖ To empower domestic workers for effective leadership.
- ❖ Advocacy and Lobbying with State and Central Government.

Burning issues attended to:

- ❖ Comprehensive National and State Legislation for domestic workers.
- ❖ Adoption of the draft National Policy for domestic workers and Ratification of the ILO C-189.

Greatest challenge of our ministry:

Registration of domestic workers with Domestic Worker Social Security Welfare Boards and acquiring minimum wages for them still remains a big challenge for us. We strive to create awareness through posters, street theatre, pamphlets, signature





campaigns, public meetings, press conference, time to time facilitating Government schemes, skill development, legal aid service, crises intervention, counselling rescue and rehabilitation.

Maya Angelou says 'All great achievements require time', truly, journeying with migrant domestic workers, giving voice to their cry, upholding their dignity, in the midst of the uncertainties of the Pandemic, was a gigantic task and a mammoth challenge but the inspirational call of our General Chapter 2019 'Joyful witnesses of Christ's mission' and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit made it possible as the Holy Spirit energizes us with grace from above and strength from within making true the verse : 'For with God everything is possible' (Matthew 19:16-26).

The terror of hunger and death during the two years of Pandemic, were testing times for the domestic workers pushing their limits of endurance, but our hope rests in drawing their attention, to the Creator God, who feeds the birds of the air, cares for the lilies of the field and does not crush the dimly burning wick. Our efforts were nonstop as we provided rations and essential commodities to 2200 domestic workers and 150 medical kits were distributed as preventive and immunity boosting measures. We reached out with the online training and small group training with safety precautions that enabled us to continue the education of workers. Skill training was imparted to 1750 workers to equip them with part-time employment Skills. The Self-Employment generation

programme enabled 55 workers to set up small businesses, to supplement their income.

Radiating the joy of Christ in action is what takes the poor closer to God. My experience during this one year of interaction with various groups of domestic workers has helped me to realize that the worst pain that human beings can experience is to have nobody to listen to them and to uphold their dignity. Who can help them? Could we offer the willing hands to serve, hearts to love and ears to listen? This was always a soul searching question to me. I was helpless during the pandemic when I could not see them face to face, and so could not reach out to their needs. For these domestic migrants the doors were closed due to the pandemic norms, keeping them socially distant from the society. Despite these odds, we were able to reach them out in need through telephonic conversations. It was indeed a heart-wrenching phase for such people.

I thank God for having chosen me to spread His merciful love

for the struggling humanity and to motivate them to enhance their dreams. I feel privileged to bear their cause and I humbly pray that the compassion and mercy of God may overflow through all of us to our beneficiaries. It's God's Providence that in the peak time of pandemic He allowed us to take up this cause. As said earlier it was indeed a paschal mystery not only for me personally but for my community who as one body could overcome the struggles encountered in our noble mission. It is a blessing for my community and me to work with the migrant domestic workers. After my work with the migrants I keep updating my sisters in the community who are with me and move forward with their prayers and blessings. My daily experience of love for my mission keeps me deeply rooted in Christ.

May God continue to inspire us, the Sisters of the Cross of Chavanod to move beyond all barriers to live our Charism. "For all that is, I glorify God. For all that will be - Amen" (Romans 11:36).





LIFE IS A THANKSGIVING

Along with Jean Pierre Servel, I want to repeat these words to tell the Lord my gratitude.

“O Lord, how can I not recognise the blessings you have bestowed upon me. Every day I will celebrate your greatness, Alleluia!” Yes, life is a thanksgiving that deserves to be celebrated daily, not only with songs and dances but also through our attitude of welcome, service, listening and commitment to every human.

The Catholic dispensary “Jésus le bon Pateur” in Oyom Abang, which I have been in charge for the past three years, is located in the Oyom Abang neighbourhood in a suburb of Yaoundé, Cameroon. It was opened in 1993 to provide community health care.

Today, the dispensary has 20 staff with a capacity of 20 beds. The outpatient department receives an average of 300 to 350 patients per month for recurrent pathologies, including malaria, anaemia, respiratory infections, sexually transmitted infections, water-borne diseases and malnutrition. The maternity ward opened two years ago, and has already recorded 465 deliveries; 150 babies are vaccinated each month. The proximity of the sisters with the people and their commitment to the care of patients make the dispensary increasingly popular and appreciated by all. Many carry good memories of the

human and social character that the sisters continue to bring to the people. The people trust and respect us. These attitudes are signs of thanksgiving in our daily lives, and ways of seeing God’s hand in the service we render.

Every day in the hospital, we witness the suffering of a society crushed by pain and hardship; a loving, non-judgmental look and compassionate presence are the sole means by which we can give life back to our patients, in addition to the many forms of assistance we can give them. More and more, we are observing certain behaviours that are not very encouraging. In the maternity ward, for example, we notice that many pregnant women set up strategies and means according to their schedule



Sr. Marie Louise Manga
Delegation of Congo Cameroon

to follow their pregnancy by doing recommended check-ups. On the other hand, others do not have the opportunity to do so for several reasons: ignorance, negligence, and lack of financial means, thus leading to many obstetrical complications at the end of their pregnancy. This way of handling their pregnancy does not bring the expected results for the hospital health team and even the team supervising reproductive health





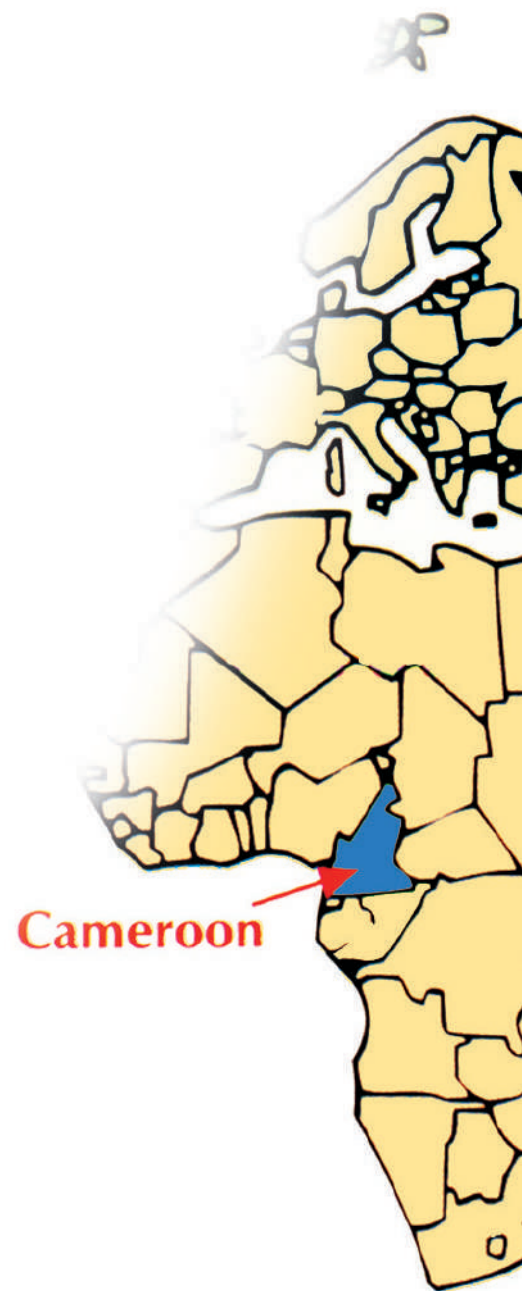
activities nationally. As health personnel, I feel that the health of pregnant women remains a significant problem for us. How do we bring life back to those who are desperate? How do we protect the lives of the babies they carry? This has been our constant concern. However, we try to provide a creative response to protect the life and growth of the foetus by reaching out to the women concerned and to bring them back on the right path through health education sessions, awareness during immunisation sessions and home visits.

As regards community health, a team is responsible for reaching the community, meeting families, and educating them on several themes, depending on where the team lives and works. In most

cases, the recurring themes revolve around personal and environmental hygiene, encouraging pregnant women to start their prenatal visits, and ensuring the babies immunisation schedule of the breastfeeding women.

New proposal for the patients:

From the perspective of revitalising the purpose for which the clinic was created, “to provide community health care,” we feel the need to propose activities for the next few days to our patients and the people around us that will enable them to adopt healthy behaviours. Apart from education, we will set up a physiotherapy department to organise sports, massage and reflexology activities. This is how we thank God, who created us for Him and wants us to work for Him.





LIVING SYNODALITY IN OUR COMMUNITIES AND MINISTRIES

“Religious life ought to promote growth in the Church by way of attraction. The Church must be attractive. Wake up the world! Be witnesses of a different way of doing things, of acting, of living! It is possible to live differently in this world.” - Pope Francis

Synodality in Community Life: Living and functioning together in the name of the Lord is an indispensable component and co-responsibility in our mission. In our communities, we cherish communion; it means togetherness, mutual understanding, union of mind and heart; love and concern for each other and the freedom to express oneself. Holiness of life and walking together, trigger us to face the challenges and overlook other's weaknesses and limitations which include differences of opinions and lack of sensitivity. Participation in spiritual activities brings joy, satisfaction, commitment and loyalty. Our religious communities are hospitable and we welcome all the people into the circle of our love to proclaim the goodness of the Lord.

We focus on Christ's values with dedication in accomplishing the mission of the Church, especially to stand with those in periphery.

Synodality in Social Ministry:

Responding to the call to be joyful witnesses of Christ (GC 2019) and understanding the spirit of Synodality, the Sisters of the Cross are actively engaged in the ministry of social work to uphold the dignity of those in periphery. Experiencing the ever abiding presence of the Lord, we listen

deeply to one another, especially those who are marginalized and alienated by the society and thus fulfil the call to Synodality. The Holy Cross Care Centre, a home for the differently abled women at Edakkattukayattam, Kerala is one such attempt to share God's love, care and joy to the least in the society.

Our collaboration with CHALICE International, Canada, through Sponsorship Programme is another means to live the Synodality in a more tangible way, in this 21st century as envisaged by Pope Francis. The members from different religion, caste, and social backgrounds come together and we consider all of them under one umbrella of Christian love and charity. At present we have 1352 children in this programme from very poor families and they are helped to lead a dignified life in the society.



Sr. Rani Joseph
Province of Angamaly

Various activities are undertaken by the Province for women empowerment and community development including promotion of self-help groups, residential home and placement, support for battered and trafficked women and children, formal education of differently abled children, support to migrants, counselling and guidance to children, youth, women and broken families, support to prisoners and their families and care etc. We work in collaboration with a few national and international agencies like CHALICE, Canada; Miriam Dean Fund, UK; Conrad N. Hilton Fund for Sisters, California; Central and State Governments, Dioceses, Religious Congregations and individuals like Dr. Stuart Brown.





Synodality in the Ministry of Education:

“No one is a mere extra”, said Pope Francis on 18th September 2021 to the Diocese of Rome. It’s a maxim, very apt for the ministry of education. Synodality in the education field reflects the Trinitarian communion that walks forward to pursue a common mission. It’s a call to recognize the dignity of every student, every parent, staff and stakeholder because everyone has a part to play. The call to participate in the Synod 2023 challenges every educationalist to introspect the traditional attitude to teach and become signs of God’s kingdom who serve one another. The spirit and message of Synodality summon us to shake off the top-down institutional leadership attitudes and live dynamically, joyfully walking together in the spirit of Jesus. The staff and students are set off to be in solidarity with those affected by Covid-19 and other natural calamities contributing their mite. In our ministry of education, we focus on uplifting the weak, fragile, poor, marginalized and differently abled to help them face the world with confidence. Keeping abreast with the changing scenario we equip and update ourselves to realize the New Education Policy.

Synodality in the Ministry of Healing:

This era of Synodality calls for our attention to bring forth comprehensive healing in communion with God and one another, being close to the infirm and considering it as the continuation of Jesus’ own ministry of revealing the merciful love of the Father and the liberating power of the Paschal Mystery.



We reach out to the weak and ailing through a wide-range approach of preventive, promotive and curative care. The hospital charges are cost effective and could be borne by the poor patients. The rich who come mainly focusing on the care provided are also taken care of. No disparity is shown in the type and manner of care given to rich and poor. Equal attention is given at all levels to the patients from diverse faith, religion, caste and creed.

A great majority of the staff is from lower middle-class families and a fair salary scale is maintained with all the possible benefits. The innovative and creative ideas of doctors and staff are always welcomed and incorporated in our planning and execution for the betterment of healing mission. Both home based and hospital based

quality palliative care is provided to the patients with the help of a project and it is provided mainly for the economically backward classes. We also reach out to the migrants and destitute through a local CRI. Despite the lack of amenities, we rise to respond to the need of the hour caring for Covid patients.

Through our presence and various ministries in both the States of Kerala and Karnataka, we treasure the experience of walking together and journeying together with our target population and all the collaborators with a single-minded purpose to bring forth ‘life in abundance’ (John 10:10). Through the process of Synodality, a Christo-centric way of life, we hope to live the Kingdom values and have more inclusive, participative, accountable and transparent ministry at all levels.





OUR MOTHER HOUSE, NAMED MONTICULE, WITH ITS NEW MAKEOVER



Sr. Marie-Thérèse P.
Province of France

The general appearance of the Mother House from 1970 to 2007
On the left: the Mother House with the chapel
On the right of the 人 shaped building : the Generalate (on the right) and the reception of the Grand Pré
The brown house in front is Bethanie



Current appearance: the chapel, Monticule building transformed into 14 flats, the Maison du Grand Pré U-Shaped building on the right: Old age home Ehpad Claudine Echernier since 2009

Makeover of the Renovated Mother-House (the left side appearance of the building)

Four balconies including the flat occupied by the Monticule community at the end of the first floor

Garbage Room

Iron fence limiting access to the monument of the Virgin Mary; This area is reserved for the activities of the Maison du Grand Pré





The two balconies of the facade

On the right: the chapel door

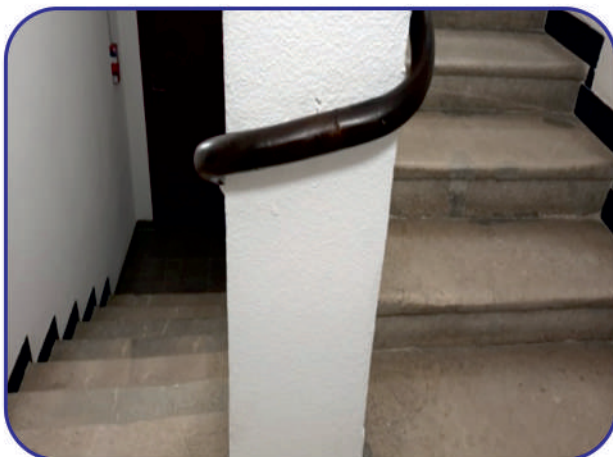
Front of the building On the left: the entrance door in its original position



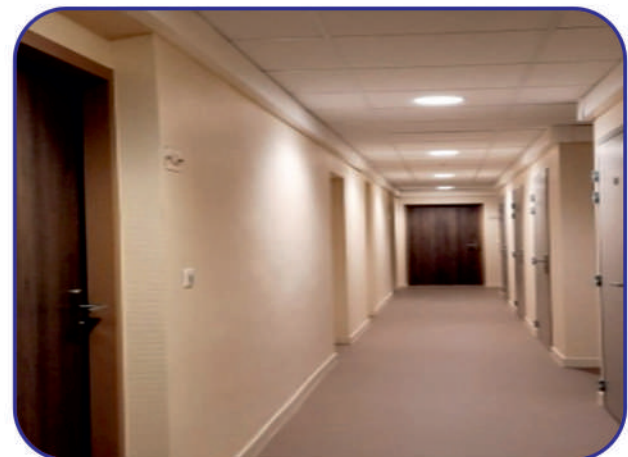
At the entrance: the new letter box



Outside: Plaque affixed on the right of the entrance



The original staircase is now denied access on all the floors



Corridor on the first floor: flats 102 & 104 are at the disposal of the Monticule community



On the left:
the oratory

On the right: the secretary's office
for the sisters living in EHPAD



New outdoor car park built where the former
vegetable garden was, opposite the entrance



Entrance to the underground car park

Monticule Community - Mission

The 'A' wing of the Convent, our foundation place named the Monticule since time immemorial, has been transformed into 14 flats, two of which are occupied by the community. From the beginning of this renovation, we knew that the Bethany community would move to the first floor. The mission of this new community is to welcome the sisters who will need to convalesce, rest or visit for a few days, and also welcome the members of the Sisters' families or friends.

Sr. Odile Bertrand was the first person and the first sister to benefit from this Province project. After a serious health problem, she arrived at the Monticule community on 6 November 2020. We thank Sr. Odile for all that she has done

for us by her courageous presence during these long months of convalescence. With her we thank the Lord for her healing.

The other twelve flats have been allocated by SOLIHA (Solidarité Habitat) to people or families with modest salary in search of social housing. We have discreet but good relations, even if it is sometimes restrained to saying hello. These small reciprocal gestures show respect, friendship, listening and solidarity.

The flats have been rented since August 2020. In April 2021, we had to face the rapid and unexpected death of a resident. We sent a letter of condolence to his wife and family. The residents present at the time thanked us for the initiative and wrote to us to express their

sympathy. We also prayed with the wife of the deceased. When faced with a bereavement, sympathy and prayer knows no bounds.

Sr. Ines De Souza, in charge of the sisters residing at the Ehpac Claudine Echernier now replaced by Sr Sadhana, is the vital link and a dynamic presence among them. Sisters Maria Arockiasamy and Lucy Mathew work in the reception and home management department of the Maison du Grand Pré. Sister Marie-Thérèse, does her best to deal with all the ordinary problems of life. Each one contributes to the community life. In this place of our Foundation, we feel a spiritual atmosphere, where our venerated Foundress and so many sisters have lived.



FUTURE OF YOUNG WOMEN IN OUR SOCIETY

We, the sisters of the Vouela community, are actively involved in the social cause for development, such as imparting empowering experiences to young girls/young women and helping them become responsible women in their families and society.

The community of Vouela and the centre are on the same campus. Before the war, this house was the noviciate of the Delegation of Congo Cameroon. The 1997 political war which broke out in Congo was the reason for shifting the noviciate to Cameroun, leaving the house closed for seven years.

abject poverty. It was the need of the time that we reopened the tailoring centre. Today, we carry out this ministry with a generous heart showing great dedication to the cause. We try to see the face of Christ in every young woman who comes to us, and we reach out to them with love and care, thus promoting confidence and trust.

Twenty years have gone by since the end of the war, and we can still experience the severe repercussions of the war. It includes poverty leading to poor education, school dropouts, early marriages, early childbearing, etc. This reality has touched us, and like our



Sr. Lawrencia Albert Swai
Delegation of
Congo Cameroon

in their working place too. We have witnessed their hard work. Some of them have their own atelier.

With the effect of coronavirus, this year, the number of girls has increased in our Claudine Social Professional Centre. The stark reality is that it is tough to refuse or limit the number of young girls who are already mothers coming to us with hope. Deeply moved by this situation, we receive them despite limited resources.

We are on the verge of multiplying our activities, such as, tailoring, hairdressing, and catering. We have developed a comprehensive moral education programme involving sexuality, housekeeping, child caring, health education etc. We provide them with a holistic formation to be torch bearers of their time and become self-reliant. We accept girls from all walks of life, happy in the knowledge that they would have acquired many skills from our centre before they depart from us.

The desire to serve God and the openness to adapt to the signs of the times have motivated us to launch into the unknown. With our myriad efforts, we continue to work to uplift women in our society.



When a quiet calm settled over the country in 2006, two sisters were sent to reinstate the community. The years of war had ruined the house. After quite a deal of renovation, the sisters reflected on the new apostolate to be assumed.

Some people returned to face the intolerable situation particularly for young girls. Many were rendered homeless and could not continue their studies due to over-age and

Mother Foundress, in the wink of the eye we had to remedy or better the situation. Therefore, we, the Sisters of the Cross, summoned the courage to launch this apostolate in 2006. Since then, the centre has constantly been toiling for them. Every year, the girls are happy to complete their training programme. We keep in contact with them to check on their progress. Sometimes, we visit them



CREATING SOCIAL CHANGE TO THE ALTERING ENVIRONMENT

Social change refers to the transformation of culture, behaviour, social institutions, and social structure over time. Societies change just as people do. We are living in a milieu where change takes place on the spur of the moment. Modern technology has occupied a great part of our lives having positive and negative impact. The change we see in people are often very apparent, as they have a growth spurt during adolescence, lose

Sisters of the Cross, Province of East Africa feel the need to promote social change in this altering environment and be a ray of light to create a society of conscientious persons.

The milieu in which we live and carry out various apostolic activities differ in such dimensions as size, technology, economy, equality, geography and gender roles. Traditional mode of belief is fading due to modernization in all facets of



Sr. Priscah Muthoni Mbuko
Province of East Africa

young children living in town for work. It's a contemptible state as the youth of today are comfort seekers. We take initiative in all our institutions to make the youth realize their duty in taking care of their elderly parents. In some families there are young and old who are addicted to drugs and alcohol and local brew. We create a space to have a social conversation with them and do the follow up to ensure that they take care of their health.



weight on a diet, buy new clothes, or get a new hairstyle. In the situation in which we live today, there is openness for individual freedom and autonomy. As societies grow, they become more impersonal, and lose their traditions and sense of community, their norms become weaker and individuals become free to think and behave in novel ways. We the

life. It means a deteriorating or even ending of the traditions that defined the society providing it a sense of distinctiveness. On the other hand, it allows the society to be more creative and to abandon old ways that may no longer be appropriate.

Visiting the families on Sundays, we come across many aged parents left alone at home and their

In some parishes our sisters take Holy Communion to the old and the sick in the families. Faith formation is given to the children and the youth through catechism in the parishes and in our institutions especially in boarding schools. Sisters prepared the students for the sacraments.

During family visits, the people readily share their joys

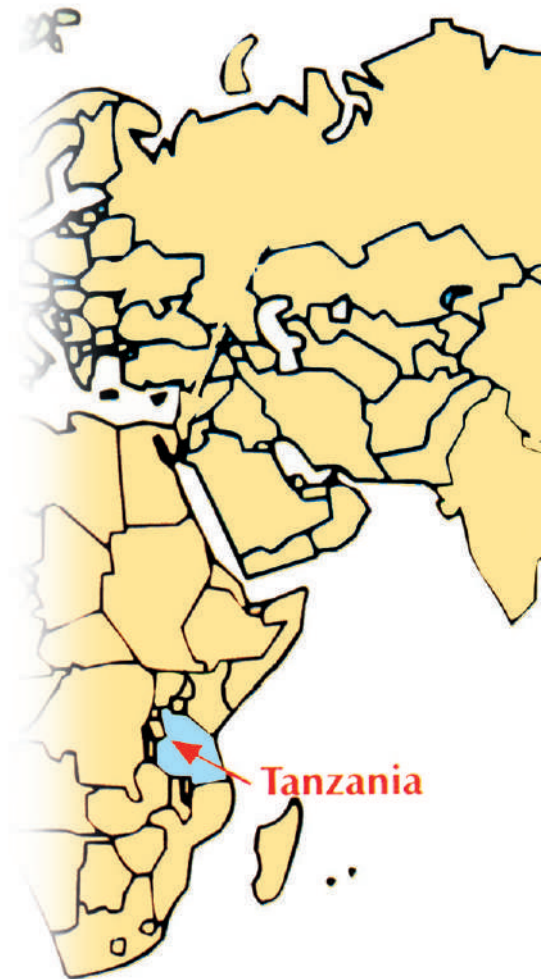


and sorrows with us. We remain a ray of hope to them as we listen to their painful stories. Many women are burdened with the household tasks of bringing up their children while their husbands indulge in drinking and fail in their duties. We come across many children committing suicide in such broken families. Sisters educate children of these families and some of them fare well in life and become responsible in their families. These changes give us happiness and hope.

Our sisters at Msimbazi community in the Archdiocese of Dar Es Salaam have the privilege to teach religion in government secondary schools. Their presence in these schools have brought transformation in the life of these young students and we believe that they will

illumine the society and make a difference in the world. In our province we have a social training centre for poor girls in Morogoro who are trained to be self-sufficient. As some of them are housemaids, after finishing their work at their master's house in the wee hours of the morning, they come to our centre to learn some skills. They learn to save what they get and help their families.

It is the responsibility of each one of us to create social change wherever we are placed. Positive social change can be accomplished in large and small ways. Social change can be as simple as a smile, open a door, plant a tree, or support a socially conscious club. Regardless of the size of the gesture, big social change impacts are possible.





STEWARDS OF GOD'S CREATION

"You are called to care for creation not only as responsible citizens, but also as followers of Christ"

- Pope Francis

Creation today is crying out as never before labouring to be set free (Romans 8:22). Today's environmental crisis is impacting in a particular way on the poor and vulnerable. The journey of the Sisters of the Cross at POWER, Social Work Centre, Viralimalai, Pudukkottai District, began with the need of taking God to the under privileged in the society, namely women and children and to safeguard the environment as well. This journey has crossed over 27 years, giving us a rich experience and, unceasing joy, by being one among them. My involvement in protecting the Mother earth has been for the past nine years in 17 Panchayats and in 56 villages in and around Viralimalai.

The project areas, specially Viralimalai and Annavasal in Pudukkottai district have very limited natural resources. Agriculture is the main occupation of the people here. The area is drought prone and there is perennial problem of water for irrigation. The monsoon in the

region is erratic and undependable. Failure of monsoon is a recurring feature causing acute drought conditions and making agricultural operation impossible during the drought. The agricultural labourers are thrown out of employment and driven to the necessity of migrating to neighbouring urban areas like working in textile, garment industries, stone quarries, food processing units etc. The migration of the farmers affected the education of their children, and young girls are abused at workplace, the poor labourers are exploited and their rights are totally violated, and thus they lead a miserable life in bondage.

A very severe cyclonic storm GAJA had hit the Pudukkottai District on 16th November 2018 which intensified their misery and affected their living conditions. The damage caused by the cyclone was beyond imagination and it would take another twenty years to return to normal condition. At this juncture, our Center chose the farmers as the target group and applied for a project called



Sr. Jeyarani Periyannayagam
Province of Trichy

"Promotion of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Agro-Forest" for the emancipation of the marginalized farmers of Pudukkottai District, Tamil Nadu, India". Through this project we covered nearly seventeen panchayats and fifty six villages. Farmers acquired skills in dry land farming, rainwater harvesting and irrigation management. POWER carried out a series of campaigns in villages and key towns against Climate Change, Global Warming and Pollution through printing hand bills, holding placards and organizing rallies in selected villages.

We promoted Green Villages and the biodiversity of the local eco-system has been improved by planting tree saplings in common community lands, private and individual lands and horticulture was propagated. Children's Eco Clubs were formed and they were sensitized on environment and ecology related issues.

The distribution of revolving Fund was sanctioned to women for Agriculture and Livestock Development, and about 200





women farmers have benefited from the programme. An amount of Rs. 10,000/- was distributed to each woman for agricultural operations and procurement of livestock. The Indigenous Seeds Festival was organized to promote indigenous seeds and to encourage farmers who were about to lay their lands as waste due to lack of access to seeds. About 2,00,000 Palmyra Tree seeds have been planted and sown across 50 villages near roadsides, water bodies and the remaining seeds were being distributed to groups and individuals interested in planting Palmyra trees. The Mother Earth Nursery was raised at POWER and the farmers were able to get tree saplings, timber trees, flower plants, vegetable saplings, etc. Eight Minor Check Dams were constructed with the participation of the local communities and Check-dams enabled the farmers to make the best use of the rainwater and ground water resources. It is very useful and helpful in harvesting rainwater and distribution of water from the irrigation tanks.

The project has directly contributed immensely to the target

people and people have become sensitive to the environment and ecological issues. They have given prime importance to tree planting and conservation of biological resources, such as horticulture seed varieties, indigenous seeds like millet and vegetable seeds. Women have availed their capital from the project fund and reduced their dependency on moneylenders who exploit them and charge exorbitant rate of interest on their borrowings. Now they give importance to internal lending and savings. Livestock development through revolving fund has directly enhanced their economic status. Women have started acquiring livestock with the support of revolving fund and mutual support from the members of the groups. They also extended their support to others in the group by making their savings revolve around. The campaign activities helped the members and the public to learn and understand the global issues of climate change, global warming, etc.

We were happy to see that the bio-diversity as well as the green cover of the target area increased and it contributed to the stability of the local climate and monsoon. Integrated agriculture and livestock keep contributing to ecological balance and development. The self-respect of women in their families has increased and their financial contribution to the household income is recognized and respected. The women gradually take part in the decision making structure of the family, local community and the larger society. This expedition in protecting our common home has narrowed down the gap between the rich and the poor, men and women and people and environment.

Let us thank God for the wonderful handiwork which He has entrusted to our care, and to become protectors of creation, protectors of God's plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and the environment.



THE POWER OF NETWORKING IN THE SYNODAL CHURCH

From the missionary, religious and community experience, I feel encouraged to share the experiences, challenges and learning related to networking. We have done networking with various organizations in the church, society, religious communities, representatives of the public sectors, academia professionals, volunteers, benefactors and many others, who have enriched our community life and have allowed us to go farther than what we imagined or expected. Solidarity to achieve common purposes and to meet collective needs have great power.

In the early nineties I was a missionary in the South Andean Church of Peru, where the bishops and pastors of the different dioceses joined hands with each other, shepherded together, enlightened

by the Holy Spirit, always on the move, and united with the Andean and peasant people. A mission network with committed lay people, missionaries from different countries with varied charismas, professionals, men and women, children, people of God, helped me experience the church as a force and platform for solidarity. Here I learned the first steps of walking together in solidarity with the grass root community and with the pastor of the local church. At the same time I was blessed to network with the movements of child labourers in the field and on the street and then represent them at the United Nations (UN). Experiences of working with various organizations enriched my religious, missionary and ecclesial life. Today looking back, I believe with great clarity that everything has a meaning, everything is



Sr. Molly Jacob Kumblunkal
Delegation of Latin America

connected as we experience the synodal church initiated by Pope Francis.

Embracing the mission in Colombia with many questions, starting with a dream of working as a church, I approached the CRC in order to identify a religious community to work as a team in the mission. However, I was faced with a condition that favours individual work and focused actions of self-sufficiency even in community life that leads to isolation, exclusion of the other, achievement of logical results from certain and safe actions. Faced with the answer that communities are already organized in their own way and do not need anyone else to fulfill their mission, I felt a bit disappointed and sad; but the Holy Spirit gave me the grace, guidance and strength to continue the search with the hope of working together. Of course the Conference of Religious Colombia (CRC) and Latin American Confederation of Religious (CLAR) as leaders in the inter-congregational reality, invite all religious and communities to join together to carry out inter-congregational projects in the





existential peripheries of the human drama.

In the first few years I had the experience of working in schools as a teacher of middle-class children who had the possibility of paying fee for their studies. However, day after day, I was more and more moved by the situation of misery, poverty, injustice, violence and abandonment experienced by the children, young people and women of the Porvenir del Río neighbourhood, on the banks of the Bogotá River, where I also lived in a prefabricated house, in similar conditions to the inhabitants. There, we fulfilled their needs, listened to their pains and at the same time recognized their possibilities, their generosity, joy of the children at the slightest sign of affection and all these spoke to us of the Kingdom of God that needs to be reached out, grown and prospered in the peripheries.

For quite a few years we worked with others, based on common needs - the care of children, the proper use of time, reinforcing tasks and cultivating values. Gradually we felt the need for a better contribution to the society and a wider circle of beneficiaries and resulted in the establishment of the foundation La Cruz for a better community. In this foundation all the contributors, all participants of the solidarity have a common purpose of positive transformation of the community. Currently, around 500 families benefit through the cultural, sports, artistic, educational and humanitarian programmes



carried out by this foundation. The foundation networks with the municipality, other nearby NGOs, lay people, private companies, external and community volunteers, missionaries and professionals dedicated to the service for a better community.

Reviewing all the experiences, among the essential characteristics or values of networking, we could highlight and identify needs, interests and common and genuine purposes; trust oneself and others in shared projects; value friendship and relationships; motivate, inspire and promote the sense of cooperation, co-responsibility, interdependence, creativity and teamwork; encourage openness, mutual listening, valuing and recognizing oneself and others, influence community discernment, review and follow-up, initiate continuous learning; appreciate and take care of each other.

This implied facing the challenges of individualism, self-sufficiency, different rhythms; it implied patience, respect, short and long-term vision, recognized that alone we can go faster, but together we can go further! These and other challenges could only overcome through love for Christ and His Gospel.

With deep joy and gratitude to the Lord, recognizing His love and grace, today we celebrate a journey with the people, a process of great learning and an experience like yeast that has leavened the dough and like a mustard seed that has grown and given abundant fruit. Foundation La Cruz for a Better Community has become a model for the Diocese of the Pastoral Church and also among other community spaces promoted by the Mayor's Office and key social organizations.



FORMING A NATION OF HOPE

The heart of Jesus is full of compassion and love embracing both the sinner and the upright. It is from this foot of the Cross of Jesus that we are impelled to love and serve the people of God. The work of the mind is powerful because it has the ability to think, make judgments, take decisions, bring innovations and developments with the incredible growth of science and technology. God is the ultimate source of wisdom and knowledge, for unless our minds and hearts are trained or guided by God's wisdom, the innovations, discoveries and developments end up bringing harm to the society. The use of nuclear weapons and their production has brought both positive and negative impacts in the world. The Russia - Ukraine war calls on us to educate the mind and the heart of the young providing a holistic formation so as to create peaceful persons, families, societies and countries thus forming a nation of hope.

As Sisters of the Cross of Chavanod, Province of East Africa, namely in three countries; Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda, guided by the spirit and the Charism of our Founders, we continue the work of God in the milieu we are placed despite our differences of both culture and language. With united efforts under the banner of the Cross, we make the good God known and loved. We are delighted to share our apostolic life with the staff, the youth and children in our institutions across these three countries. We dedicate ourselves to impart holistic formation through integrated quality

education, empowering the youth with Christian values, academic and leadership skills and sense of loyalty to face the fast developing global scenario and become agents of social change. As a province, through our education institutions, we take vibrant part in the life of the youth who are energetic and enthusiastic to acquire knowledge. Our personal touch with the youth has enabled us discover their challenges, brokenness and past hurts which hold them back from shining in life most especially the students who are from broken families. Realizing our call to be joyful witnesses of Christ's mission and channels of healing and to bring optimism, we organize various programmes and classes that help them prevail over their past experiences. Such programmes include recovery programmes from the impact of prolonged lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which are preparation for sacraments, moral classes, and regular celebration of the Eucharist and the sacrament of reconciliation. These help them experience God's love and healing in their lives.

Keeping in mind the spirit of our Founders, with the same vision and mission, we have been able to form women leaders and responsible citizens with outstanding performance. Our education institutions also provide spiritual, moral and intellectual inputs aiming at shaping the integral development of persons, for a better society.

We do face difficulties in the process of imparting values to



Sr. Secilia Polycarp
Province of East Africa

our learners as some of them come from broken families where they have experienced pain and grief; hence it takes time for such students to accept themselves. The other challenge is the negative influence of the society where the learners live. There is also moral rot in society and parents have failed to be role models to their children. This was clearly experienced in some regions with the prolonged lockdown by the government due to Covid-19 left many young girls pregnant. This therefore alerts the parents' active role in the formation of their children while at home. Mother Teresa of Calcutta says "If you judge people you have no time to love them". God loved us to the extent of sending His only beloved Son so that we may have life in abundance. Therefore, we, the Sisters of the Cross, "Animated by the Spirit experience the saving love of Christ and share with everyone, above all, with the neediest, the same love, the same unconditional forgiveness" (cf. ROL 4:4). Our goal is to be joyful witnesses of Christ's mission and we are convinced that our deep union with God and seeking to accomplish His will, we will continue the mission in the society, making the good God known and loved.



MOTHER'S CHOICE

One beautiful Sunday afternoon, as I sat on our porch the cozy arms of nature stirred my spirit within. The Holy Spirit prompted these thoughts in my heart, on our Mother's Choice in bringing us to this supposedly well known yet a much unknown land.

Mother, by definition, is a woman who gives birth and bears the responsibility of physical and emotional care for her children. The Almighty God who is a Father and Mother, knows what's best for His children. His son Jesus who is our Brother, invites us to be siblings without any discrimination of creed, caste, colour, culture, religion, nationality. Mary who is the model of a mother and woman brought Jesus into the world; Mother Claudine brought the Congregation of the Sisters of the Cross into the world. Each of us is called to be a mother too.

The fertile land in France, the outstanding Alps and the breathtaking scenery stuns one's mind and hearts. Stunned by the magnificence and beauty, Claudine as a young girl was drawn to the love of God. She could feel His presence around. Her financial poverty made her superabundant in the treasures and sumptuousness of the Almighty. Zeal, trust, and dependence on Providence were evident in her life. As a mother watches over her suckling child, God watched over her.

Ignited by the Spirit of God and enveloped by His power, she delivered His word in many different ways. In union with the Trinitarian God, our Mother's soul was so well spun into a tapestry of Divine love, that her mind and heart sagaciously touched the needy.

Life is full of choices and these reflect one's character. A mother makes a choice to bring forth the



Sr. Jeevana Chellapan
Province of Pune

fruit of her womb. I truly admire and value how our Mother Claudine, made daily choices in order to give birth to this Congregation, by going through mental pangs, suffering, uncertainties, twists and turns, failures and ridicule. Her only focus was to cooperate with the plan of God, to become a co-creator to rise up and sustain with the grace of God. She thus revealed the merciful love of the Father and the liberating power of the Paschal Mystery to everyone at all times.

As we see in today's world especially in the United states, many women value abortion over the choice of life. Our presence here is mainly pastoral. We feel challenged to challenge the 'free' nature of the American society. Basically, through faith formation, pastoral involvement and hospital chaplaincy, we are able to give Jesus to the people. In the pastoral area, our places of ministry are far flung. Each of us reaches out to more than one parish and are fully immersed in its activities. We receive a lot of support from the Diocese in our ministries. Two sisters are involved in the medical work. Life in the medical field too is a challenge in the US and many abandon it on account of strict legal measures.





I muse on Mother Claudine touching the land of North America. What would she think of our lives today, if she visits our communities and the ministries? Would she be shocked, bewildered, saddened, or happy? Certainly, she would be proud of us, and would also challenge us, regarding how we are living up to the call of the Congregation, Church, and the signs of the time.

We are in three houses – Watertown, Cadyville and Sackets Harbor; in the New York state in the Diocese of Ogdensburg. These three places are really remote from the New York that the world sees. In fact, we are closer to the borders of Canada in the region called North Country. The North Country is the northernmost region of the U.S. state of New York, bordered by Lake Champlain to the east, the Adirondack Mountains and the Upper Capital District to the south, the Mohawk Valley region to the southwest, the Canadian border

to the north, and Lake Ontario and the Saint Lawrence Seaway to the west. A mostly rural area, the North Country includes seven counties. Fort Drum, a U.S. Army base, is also located in the North Country (Wikipedia). We have short summers and long spells of winter, with snow that can run a few feet and temperatures going lower than negative 30C. Clearing the snow before we get into our cars is an oft repeated routine. Our houses are comfy and keep us in shape as we go about doing our housework, taking turns for cooking along with the groceries shopping. Our meals are basically Indian and to get the grain and condiments, we need to travel for about an hour from Watertown and Sackets Harbor and three to four hours from Cadyville depending on the weather. Hence we buy all that our cars can carry for at least two to three months. Groceries are available nearby for Watertown and about ten minutes drive for Cadyville.

Watertown community was opened in December 2009. It is situated amidst the people, a town area. Our sisters are in the third house since we began. It is on the main road, where day and night traffic zooms is in full swing. During summer nights, the motorbikes' vroom pierces your ears. In 2020 our sisters were asked to move into the rectory, which was used as the residence for the priest as well as the church office. This rectory cannot accommodate more people, sisters accepted the choice made, even though it was difficult at that moment. The previous convent which is quite large is given to the International School students to help support the parish financially.

Cadyville, is a bedroom community because, we go to work in different places and return home in the evening. It was opened in September 2017. Most of the sisters, may not know which part of America we are in. Let me tell you the gist of it. The choice was made and accepted by us, to live in this lowly place, with no living people around, but of course, the dead buried in front of our house, we call them our warriors who protect us, day and night at the Cemetery. The distance from our Convent to our work place ranges from 10 to 45 minutes' drive one way. It took us time to accept the reality of the situation. We started to see the beauty in our surroundings, with turkeys, woodchucks, chipmunks, moose, reindeer, goose, fox, various birds, skunk, according to the seasons, and the gorgeous sun rise and sun set. So, the choice was perfect and we thank God for this solitude and solitary life, which enhances our mission in the areas of our ministry.



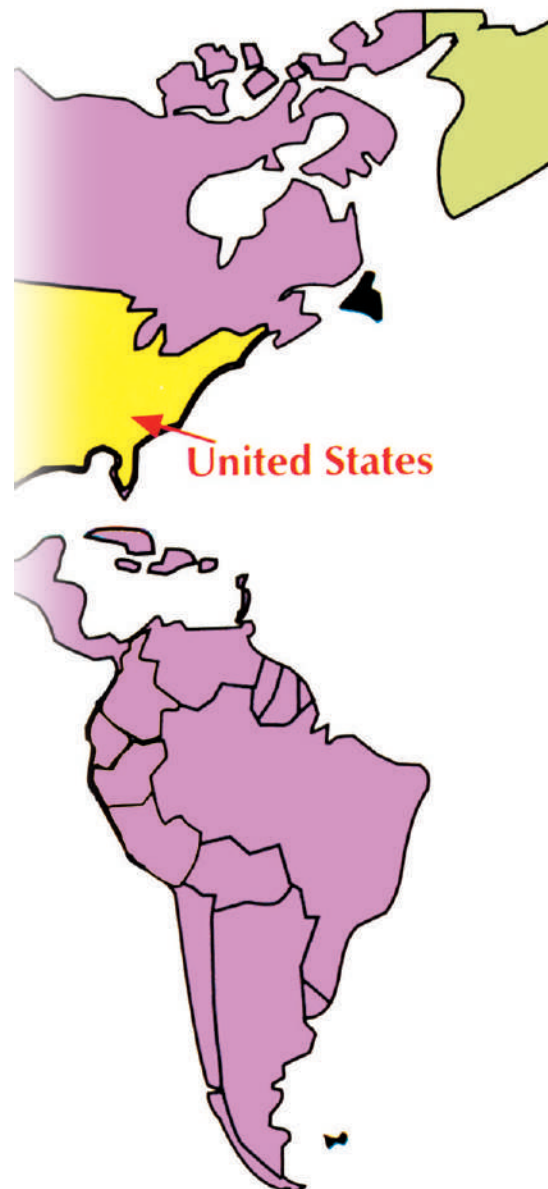


Sackets Harbor is a village in Jefferson County, New York, United States, on Lake Ontario. It is attached to the Watertown community. It started in December 2021. It is surrounded by people and a beautiful lake. Sisters live in the good size rectory, with all the necessities. Even though it was a difficult choice to make in the beginning, by the grace of God they accepted it. Sisters, go to work in Watertown Hospital and five different parishes. It takes around 15-20 minutes to reach their work places.

All three places are situated next to the Church; we always feel the positive vibes that protect us from all dangers especially at night time, in a community like Cadyville. The path has not been always easy, and the choices we made may not seem right, yet we are happy and joyful wherever we are, as Sisters of the Cross to go through the Kenotic experience and find the light at the

end of the tunnel. With grateful hearts we enjoy the blessings that we receive from God as we embrace the mission entrusted to us and follow the legacy left behind by Mother Claudine, Father Peter Mermier and all our sisters.

Following Mother Claudine let us make discernment a way of life in accordance with the Spirit, as spiritual mothers to the world. May we move from mountain to multitude, from withdrawal to involvement, from dumb silence to passionate service and from merely saying prayers to experiential people knowing to move from vertical to horizontal relationship. May the freshness of the Holy Spirit blow away unwanted, secondary, and non-essential elements from our lives and make us mystics and missionaries, messages and messengers, deeply God experienced and Prophetic witnesses in our times and in our context.





MOVING OUT TO THE PERIPHERY

Minjaponga, a remote village in the Ganjam District of Southern Odisha is surrounded by thick forests and ghats with only one single concrete road for public transportation. The people are socially backward and economically poor. In 2016, the Bishop of Berhampur, Rt. Rev. Sarat Chandra Nayak extended his invitation to Sr. Cessy Scaria, then Provincial of Province of Kolkata to establish a convent and work in collaboration with the Jesuit priests to whom the parish had been entrusted since 2001.

The pioneering Sisters Mukthi Lata Xalxo and Bimla Lakra

water source was found and a bore well was dug. It provides sufficient water for the sisters and the priests now.

As the years by passed, the Diocese of Berhampur provided two acres of land from the existing parish land for the stay and ministry of the sisters. The convent was built by the Province and blessed in 2019 by the bishop in the presence of Sr. Leema Rose our Provincial and her team.

General survey of the villages:

The sisters conducted a general survey of all the villages around the parish to establish personal contact and assess the urgent needs of the



Sr. Sicily John
Province of Kolkata

People often walk for hours to catch a bus and are socially neglected and politically weak.

Pastoral Ministry :

Since the priests had been visiting the villages for offering Mass during Advent, Lent and on Sundays, Sr. Bimla Lakra and others joined them and used this opportunity for strengthening their faith through catechism classes, preparing the children for first Holy Communion, confirmation, marriage preparation classes and so on. We are proud that one boy from our parish received first prize in the quiz competition about the Congregation conducted by the Province for all the Youth in the Province. There are common celebrations such as St. Monica's Day, Women's Day, Girl Child's Day and Father's Day. The people are happy to come together to the parish and celebrate. This year the topic 'Synodality' has brought lots of interaction between the whole parish, priests, sisters and lay people and helps to work together as one people. All these are occasions to relate with people and bring about unity and communion within the families and in the neighborhood. Sr. Bimla is totally committed to the pastoral ministry.



occupied one of the rooms of the small dispensary that existed, and spent much time in prayer and visiting the families. Life was difficult. There were lot of discomforts and problems due to water scarcity, lack of road facility and other means of communication. But their driving force was the call of Jesus, "I chose you and appointed you to go out and bear fruit" (Jn15:16). Later a

people. The mission here is to look after 13 Catholic Villages and an equal number of non-Catholic Villages in Gajapati and Kandhamal districts of Odisha. Nearly 95% of the people are poor, illiterate and belong to the scheduled tribe and scheduled caste. They do not have basic needs like schools, electricity, hospitals, drinking water, proper road and communication facilities.



Our parish was blessed with the apparition of Mother Mary to one of our parishners who could not walk. He was asked to climb a steep hill where she appeared to him, made him light a candle which she provided and drink from the stream over there. The next day his family and neighbours found him walking and jumping and praising God. Now a grotto is made and thousands of people flock there to pray especially on February 4th which is kept as the feast of "Pahadi Ma" (Mother of Mountain) as Mother Mary is addressed.

Claudine Health Centre:

Claudine Dispensary is the fruit of continuous prayer by Sr. Sicily John and the community members. "O my God! What can I do? This burden is too much for me!" Sr. Sicily cried out to the Lord, day and night when she saw the number of persons dying, bedridden, weak or exhausted. The Lord opened her eyes and she did not have to regret the path she had taken. Help came from various sources and she started her ministry with total trust in the Lord. The dispensary was christened as 'Claudine Health Centre' and she planned the following activities.

Reduce the incidence of maternal and neonatal mortality, and improve the nutritional and health status of children under five years of age.

Mobile clinics, counselling, referral cases, Health education for the youth, health camp in the villages, promoting herbal garden in the villages and visiting families. The people are getting better treatment with minimum charge.

In 2020-2021, around 3010 registered patients had been treated successfully. Due to lack of communication and financial problems most of the people in this area depend on our health centre. Health problems are getting reduced and people are healthier and happier.

We have a herbal garden attached to Claudine Health Center with variety of medicinal plants used for preparing herbal medicines and tonics. It is amazing to see how much faith the people have in it and they prefer them to allopathic medicines. Our centre has Reproductive Child Health (RCH) project among other programmes. Its aim is to identify pregnant women by different tests and directing them to government hospitals to avail themselves of the government projects, schemes and facilities. The RCH Project also concentrates on the low weight and low protein in children. They are provided freely with locally available and homemade Horlicks for their improvement in health and weight. Monthly follow up is in progress. Different committees are formed in 15 villages through the RCH Project. The committees regularly discuss the different Government Schemes and Projects and try to implement them. During our village visit for the past 2 years we gave much importance to visit the sick, especially those affected by Covid-19 and gave awareness classes about the disease and distributed thousands of face masks and food materials and medicines. When we came to know of many widows and old people who were neglected and living in loneliness

and depression we brought it to the awareness of others and they began to visit and take care of them and we too helped them by providing clothes and nutrition given by many generous persons. We have also distributed medical kits, provided by the CBCI Health Care with regular follow up done by volunteers. People are happy to avail themselves of these facilities and lead a healthy and better life.

People in this area suffer from various diseases due to poor living conditions, over work and lack of knowledge. Malaria and sickle cell anemia are the most common diseases of this place. We are happy to see them living with better health and strength.

Education:

Though there are seven Primary schools and one High School in the Parish area, the quality of education is very poor due to lack of teachers. Besides, the schools had been closed due to Covid-19 and so Sr. Kresenti Chhatia and other sisters took classes for all the neighbouring children and prepared them for the board exams. There is an urgent need to begin a school and hostel here. There is sufficient land but we are waiting for the opportune time.

The God of times makes things happen at His own pace. Relying on His plan and ignited by His words, "What you did to one of these least ones, you did it for me" (Mathew 25:40), we continue to reach out to those on the periphery and make His name known and loved.



OUR EXPERIENCE AT THE FOYER L'ACCUEIL

The institution "The Foyer l'Accueil" in Geneva for young women
Down the lanes of history...

1890 At the request of the Church of Geneva, the Sisters of the Cross took over the management of the "Home Sainte Blandine", in the rue des Granges. This Home aimed at providing and offering a family atmosphere to young girls caught in precarious existence who

stations not knowing where to go. This service was called "The Works at the Railway Stations".

1906: The "Home Sainte Blandine" moved to 24 rue de L'Arquebuse where, for 50 years, it had served as home to approximately thirty young girls, employees, servants and students each year.



Srs. Mary Joe, Marie Thérèse, Jessy Joseph & Calista
Province of France

1960: The association "The Catholic Home", created in 1957, decided to buy a plot of land for a more extensive and better-designed construction.

1965: The "Home de l'Arquebuse" became the Foyer l'Accueil at 8 rue Alcide Jentzer and was inaugurated on 20th October.

1990: The Foyer l'Accueil celebrated its 25th anniversary and 100 years of presence of the Sisters of the Cross in Geneva.

2015: On 11th December, the home joyfully celebrated its 50th anniversary bearing the theme "Past, present, future, for the greater Glory of God". Over the past ten years, we have gradually renovated the whole building to meet the ecological requirements and the expectations of young people of the 21st century.

Our project:

The Foyer l'Accueil's current project is in line with the initial work. We live in collaboration with the lay people working in the

house.

Marked by the influences of globalisation in a city that is becoming increasingly international, we want to offer simple, safe and pleasant accommodation accessible to young people of modest means, students, trainees or those taking up their first job. We welcome many trainees because they have difficulty finding short-term accommodation and, in most cases, unpaid. We wish to develop a fraternal life respecting different cultures, training programmes, and ways of believing or not believing. We seek to make the word "welcome" a lived reality among the young people and the team of staff that run the Foyer... Our primary concern is to encourage the human and spiritual growth of the youth and their present and future commitment to the world.

As of March 2022, the home accommodates 97 girls from 38 countries: from Europe (50), Africa (13), America (9), mainly South America, Asia and the Pacific



used to come from Switzerland or the neighbouring countries in search of work.

1892: The "Home Sainte Blandine", which witnessed a dynamic expansion, moved to larger premises at 28 rue Saint Léger. Besides providing accommodation, the Sisters offered numerous services: helping young girls looking for work and accommodation, welcoming, informing and guiding those who arrived at the Geneva railway



(25). Among them, 26 are below the age of 20, 37 are between the ages of 20 and 25 and 34 are over 25 years old. Students represent about 60%.

This blend of cultures, educational backgrounds and religions is experienced as a richness. The daily breakfast, the shared evening meals, and the Christmas party prepared by different teams bring out the talents of these youthful young girls. It creates an atmosphere of stimulating encounters. They help each other with their studies, exchange cooking recipes, go on outings together. Thus, a family and fraternal ambience is nurtured between them and the community that animates the Foyer. Some of them face great difficulties like finding a job to survive. We try to be attentive to these situations. Regarding the demands for accommodation, we consider the most urgent needs.

Of course, there are difficulties in this great living together: we frequently have to remind them of the exigencies of living together, respecting people's work and rest,

the cleanliness of the premises, the correct sorting of waste, and the care of equipment. Nevertheless, most residents are sensitive to our efforts to provide them with a pleasant living environment. They always have a word of thanks for the staff for the cleanliness of the premises and the quality of welcome. They are happy with the renovations and are proud of "their home".

Because of Covid-19, we had to interrupt the idea of forming a reflection group. Some residents regularly spend time in the chapel in the morning or evening. Some girls are practising Catholics and participate in the Eucharist celebrated every Tuesday evening; others are members of different churches outside.

Together with lay people, we ensure the smooth running of the house. Through our availability, listening, sense of welcome, and quality of work, we make this home a family place where the residents are happy to be home each evening, and the former residents like to return.

The community of the Foyer l'Accueil is composed of one French, two Indians and a Sri Lankan sister. We work together to improve the life of the home. Apart from the common prayers and spiritual activities of the community, we set aside time for personal prayer and the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament – our source of strength and spiritual nourishment. This enables us to find peace and harmony in the presence of the Lord.

From the beginning until now, the Providence and the Divine Presence of God has led us wonderfully. We thank God our Father for His blessings at every moment. We are grateful to all the sisters who left us a lasting legacy. Through their hard work, commitment, dedication, faith and total availability, they have contributed to making the home what it is today. We are here today because of them, and we joyfully and courageously continue the mission that commenced more than 100 years ago.





NEW VENTURE ON PROMOTING PEACE AND RECONCILIATION AMONG POST WAR VICTIMS

It is with great joy we meet our sisters and friends through this Intercom to share our attempts to rebuild Peace and Reconciliation, in Sri Lanka as it is one of the most beautiful countries on Earth. This pearl of the Indian Ocean is blessed with the natural resources that attracts and appeals to each and every one to enjoy a worthwhile rest and relaxation in this paradise isle. One of the specialties of this island is that the people of all four major religions Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Islam live harmoniously, promoting inter-religious faith and dialogue, greatly contributing to the unity in diversity.

Unfortunately, this beautiful island went through a very critical period in its history due to the Civil War which lasted almost for 30 long years. This war was between the government military and with a group of Tamil extremists, known as the LTTE - Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, who fought for a separate state of their own in Northern and Eastern areas of the island. During this war thousands

of young men both the military and the LTTE lost their lives, many became physically handicapped leaving their families desperately vulnerable. People from North and East had to flee from their own homes looking for a safer place and many were forced to stay in the refugee camps.

This ethnic war divided people as Sinhalese and Tamils, created hostility and violence disturbing the peaceful living of these two communities. Though the war was mainly in the Northern and Eastern parts of the country, the repercussion of it, was felt severely by the entire country, bringing lots of fear and chaos. At this crucial situation many religious congregations felt the need to become the instrument of peace and reconciliation to build our nation. We, the Sisters of the Cross did not have a convent in the war torn areas, so, initially we joined with other congregations and worked in the camps of Internally Displaced People (IDP). A few sisters of the province were set apart to continue this work of visiting and listening to the people in the IDP camps.



Sr. Jothy Kanapathy
Province of Sri Lanka

Regular visits were carried out by the sisters to express solidarity. Thousands of people were had traumatic experiences, full of hatred, wounded and affected physically and mentally. The painful memories - unheard, unhealed and unresolved experiences were deeply rooted in them. Many young men have been kept hostages by both the groups and many women became widows. Some of them still await desperately for the return of their husbands, brothers and sons who have disappeared during this war. Seeing this pitiful situation we discerned ways and means to get involved and relieve them of their pain and sorrow.

'A peace loving group' is another venture we made to build peace and reconciliation among the young girls. We chose a group of young girls from IDP camps who were poor and could not go to school for the last few years. They were brought to the other parts of the island to mingle and interact with Sinhala students in different schools. Our main concern for them were to heal their past wounds and to make them experience brotherly and sisterly love with other ethnic groups to become peace builders. To a certain extent it helped them to change their attitudes and behaviours towards peers





from other ethnic and religious communities. This has significantly affected their personal growth, in particular by improving their ability to resolve conflict among peers and by increasing their empathy towards other communities.

The long years of ammunition war came to its end in the year 2009. Thanks to all those who were really committed and gave their lives to end this war which brought immense cruelty and death. Amidst many challenges, we, the Sisters of the Cross were eager and determined to continue our efforts in promoting peace and reconciliation among post war victims.

To materialize this attempt we launched out a new venture of opening a house in the war torn areas. It was long and studious process that we took up to realize this great need. In 2017 responding to the invitation of the Bishop of the Diocese of Mannar we landed in a small house available at Silawathurai. This parish consists of five substations with 400 Catholic families, who belong to the fishing and farming community where people were resettled after the war. They were in great need of spiritual and psychological help to face life with all the challenges and hardships and above all in coping with the past hurts, painful and traumatic experiences of war and post war as well.

In this new venture, the difficulties and challenges were uncountable. The zeal to make the Good God Known and Loved was a burning desire which could go beyond all obstacles and inconveniences in committing to God's Mission of healing and reconciliation. We focused on

mainly providing counselling, career guidance for youth and women, imparting moral education for young girls and for young mothers. Through pastoral ministry we mainly helped the people to experience God's mercy and forgiveness and to reconcile with their past hurts and gradually get healed of all their traumatic experiences.

Our simple presence among the people helped us to inculcate values in children and youth that support a pluralistic and tolerant approach to issues and problems that arise with other communities and within their own. Our life in the community in the year 2021 became another inspiration since one of our Sinhala speaking sisters joined the community to learn Tamil. People of Silawaturai expressed their admiration seeing the unity among the sisters who speak different languages in turn challenged them to respect and accept others as God's children.

This work of promoting peace and reconciliation has a long way to go. Thirty years of civil war, continue to cast shadows of grief, loss and sectarian tension among the Sinhala Buddhist, Tamil Hindus, Muslims and Catholics. The schools are the key institutes to meet this challenge. It has been a mandate of Government to reform

the education system to foster greater tolerance and to end inter communal conflicts and violence. The sisters in different parts of the island commit themselves for this great task of teaching in Sinhala, Tamil and English mediums in government and private schools, in spite of many challenges. These are promising attempts to improve inter communal relations in the country.

Unfortunately, today Sri Lanka has entered into another chaotic era making the entire nation engulfed in an unprecedented economic downfall and political instability which has made the people to languish in long queues for fuel and cooking gas while prices of essentials are soaring. Once again people are hurt and disappointed with the leaders of our country who promised to uplift the nation; they seem to be self-centered, irresponsible, craving for political powers and enjoying life to the maximum at the expense of the poor and ordinary people. We as followers of Christ and especially as consecrated women continue to battle uncompromisingly against all kinds of evil and sin which continue to divide, dominate and spread in our world. Let us be the beacon of light and hope as we strive to live and promote the Kingdom values of peace and unity wherever we are called to serve.





CLAUDINE'S MODULAR KITCHEN

A phrase I overheard recently was, "Claudine's Modular Kitchen". Now, what's that? What sort of kitchen could that be? I experienced a sense of bewilderment!

'Modular kitchen' conveys an idea of a kitchen 'set-up' that is perfectly tailored to meet any and every need attributed to the culinary arts – gadgets, instant connections, attractive ambience and all!

I elaborate here how Claudine's little kitchen can also be seen as a modular kitchen of her times, namely a place which was well disposed to meet the needs of those who entered in. Claudine perceived the lacuna experienced by the young girls and children of the parish, by way of basic education and a good moral foundation. She gathered the little girls in her humble kitchen and equipped them, while simultaneously instilling a love of God and neighbour, arming their youthful hearts against the snares of evil that surrounded them. This little kitchen soon became the cradle of the future Congregation of the Sisters of the Cross.

Never grow old... sings Jim Reeves. Cut to the present day, our seniors continue to be on fire with their own initiatives. Some have gone way forward defying their time line and wanting to be great contributors.

Sr. Eliza D'Lima, now retired from active ministry, felt the need to find a way to be of service to society and at the same time use her

expertise fruitfully. She had been at the mission of the Congregation for well nigh 22 years in France and Switzerland. With that exposure she had acquired a proficiency in French, spoken, read and written. Already, on her return to India, while she was in Pune, taking classes for the Novices on Family Annals, she proposed a little exposure to French, the mother tongue of our dear Foundress which was met with an enthusiastic 'Yes'. When she came to Goa, she took up the challenge of offering her expertise to the students of Goa, a thorough and relevant method of teaching French. The students are well equipped when they venture out to find good and rewarding employment, as multi-language skills are a huge asset. Much more is the effort put in to inculcate in them good and upright attitudes towards life and, for those of our faith, to gain a little more knowledge of it informally, through gentle reminders and some added information, thus following in the footsteps of Mother Claudine to promote all round growth of the youth.



Sr. Caroline Pereira
Province of Pune

Sr. Magdalene Sophie is confined to her chair for the better part of the day, but finds joy in mending, stitching and embroidering altar linen, albs and kerchiefs. Colourful tea candles and other decorative candles for the chapel made from leftover wax, tallow and crayons give expression to her aesthetic sense. Sr. Gwen Pinto sits serenely on the porch bench, with an ever ready heart to listen to the students, friends, even passersby attracted by her pleasant composure, who are confident that these little sharings will find a place in her earnest and faith-filled prayer later in the day. Sr. Marie Frances shouts out loud, 'See I am healed'. She has met the challenge of stiff, arthritic fingers by engaging in designing and preparing cards from old cards for almost any occasion.





A very interesting Project: Jan Vikas Kendra, Khopoli - Deep in the valley of Khopoli, in Raigad District of Maharashtra State is our very small mission house. The sisters have been working there since 1990 in a collaborative mission begun by the Jesuits. More than ten different congregations are involved in the empowerment of the Khatkari tribal and some local low income groups. In due time the Bombay Archdiocesan Centre for Social Action (CSA) took over the Raigad Mission Project. A 'Ten Year Plan' was fulfilled from 2010-2020. Evaluating its outcome, Bishop Allwyn D'Silva who is in charge of the area convened a meeting, involving the Major Superiors of the Congregations working in that area. With the help of experts a new project for 2021-2030 took shape through collaborative decision making. Our sisters Marina, Angeline and Pinky form the present community.

Gavki and Government Schemes:

In the midst of the pandemic, through networking with the government, two villages had their

roads repaired, drinking water problems solved and community halls built. In a remote village, Adoshi, a primary health centre was built and proper documents for example Aadhaar card, voting card, residential certificates, etc. were procured. These people being illiterate, are an easy target for vested interests. Our intervention is much appreciated as it gives the recipients a renewed sense of identity and dignity.

Women, Youth and Children:

Empower a woman and you can change the world! The formation of SHGs (Self Help Groups) have helped the women to enhance the incomes of the family thus generating a positive attitude and a deep sense of self-esteem. Through their meetings, discussions and the training given periodically, the capacity of the women in decision making has improved considerably. There is a proportionate leap in the social, economic and legal strength of these women. The women, now being aware of the various government schemes, go forward and claim their rights. Being well

aware of the environmental issues they are slowly getting involved in 'saving nature' activities including cleanliness drives. The Kishori groups transform shy, backward young girls into well informed maidens ready to face the future with greater hope and zeal. Their self worth takes a giant stride. The training also includes programmes on health, family building, positive parenting and self-discovery. These go a long way in forestalling the practice of child marriage which is quite rampant in these areas. Balsabhas or Children's Parliaments are enabling the young to hone their leadership skills. Many achievements go into their credit as they march out to government offices demanding their rights and solving their wadi (hamlet) problems. The Health Promotion Trust, a wing of the Bombay Archdiocese, promotes the knowledge of traditional medical practices through training women to prepare herbal medicines, making medicinal plants available and conducting various health awareness programmes.

We are grateful to the social workers and the assistance given by CSA. It is deeply satisfying to see the smiles on the faces of the people, mostly women and children.

The generous enterprise of our mission oriented seniors and young sisters (only a few are highlighted here, among many others) are some of our modular kitchens. The daughters of Mother Claudine still find opportunities to meet the corporal and spiritual needs of the children of God.



BE THE FRAGRANCE OF COMPASSIONATE LOVE TO HEAL THE BROKEN HEARTED



Sr. Regie Chinnappan
Province of Tiruchirappalli

“**M**any are the plans in a man’s heart, but it is the Lord’s purpose that prevails.”

Proverb 19:21

To work in the Land of God’s glory is a heart throbbing and soul filling experience. We are grateful to God for choosing us for this mission and to be the witnesses of Paschal Joy.

It is indeed the great plan and purpose of God that we, the eight sisters are placed in two communities namely Shuafat and Ein Karim. Srs. Alphonse Mary Chinnasamy, Vandana Mahish, Lucy John, Srs. Aleycia Varkey, Daisy Mangaiarkarasi, Fabiyana Tete, Shanthi Divyanathan and Regie Chinnappan are very happy to greet each one of you through this Intercom.

When we speak of Holy Land, we are transported to heavenly realm of bliss, the biblical history of God’s choice of Israel. God formed Israel, the chosen people, nourished, accompanied and protected them. Jesus, today continues His work in and through us, a small community of the Sisters of the Cross in His own Land so that like Him, we may be wounded healers.

In this mission, our Mother Foundress, Claudine Echernier stands tall as a model to reach out to people in humble prayer and simplicity of life to do ordinary things with an extra-ordinary love and compassion.



Our Sisters in Ein Karim at the Monastery of Franciscans take care of the presbytery, do household chores and attend to the pilgrims who visit the cave of John the Baptist, which protected John from the wrath of Herod. They serve the Lord with inner joy and freedom, in emulating Mother Claudine’s committed and loving service at the presbytery of Chavanod.

The Sisters at Shuafat do various services. Two sisters, work with the Missionaries of Africa known as White Fathers. They attend to the



pilgrims that come to St. Anne's Basilica which houses the cave that housed Saints Anne and Joaquim, the grand parents of Jesus. It is



here that Mother Mary was born. Just outside the Basilica is the pool of Bethesda where Jesus healed the paralytic who suffered for 38 years. It is indeed a great opportunity to make the good God known and loved to thousands of pilgrims through our joyful welcoming spirit.

One of the sisters is ever available to the parish church, administered by Franciscan Fathers at Beit Hanina, through her service at the sacristy and the surrounding catholic community. The youth, the Senior Club etc. appreciate her vibrant presence and generous service.

Accompanying the sick on the path of healing, promoting empathy and compassion to the abandoned and ignored, gives meaning to life.

"Sickness has more than one face" says Pope Francis. Our service in the hospice of St. Louis is very much in accordance with the signs of the time and spirit of Mother Claudine Echernier. It is also a Gospel imperative. Two of our sisters render their compassionate service at the St. Louis Hospital run by the St. Joseph's Sisters of Apparition. This hospital functioned for people of all religious communities from 1851-1948. Then in response to the growing need they started to cater to patients in advanced stages of cancer and is functioning as a hospice for all people with advanced disease. It is encouraging to listen to a visitor who comments, "St. Louise is a soulful place; with a dedicated staff of Jewish Doctors, Jewish and Arab Nurses and scores of volunteers from all three faiths. It is here one can find, a Muslim offering a Jew, a cup of tea or an embrace as a gesture of comfort and compassion in the face of suffering and death". Our sisters with utmost care and genuine love take care of the patients who need palliative and geriatric care. Through their presence they offer life-giving moments and service to the patients.

Two sisters, along with the Sisters of Mother Theresa, regularly visit the expatriate, the drug addicts and people who are in peripheries at Tel Aviv. They pray with them and distribute food items and medicine.

It is indeed a very beautiful way of witnessing to those around, the compassionate love of Jesus. It is Mother Claudine's way of small entry, for a great task of evangelical presence.



FROM BROKENNESS TO WHOLENESS

Taking care of the physically, emotionally, psychologically and spiritually despondent is a demanding service. Patients walk into our facilities with great hope of being made whole. “My flesh and my heart fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion” (Psalm 73:26). In the medical field people come daily with some mental anguish, physical weakness or other life challenging difficulties which provide an opportunity for us to reveal Christ’s compassion to the suffering. Listening to the suffering with no limitations of time nor anticipating a particular outcome teaches us the meaning of genuine concern and make us selfless. The trust that we have in Jesus gives us the required energy to start each day with greater hopes, to share the healing love of Christ and heal our patients and make them whole. Majority of the patients leave happier than when they came to us and also give us the joy of serving them, and even refer us to others for our benevolent services.

We give our best every day despite the challenging fact that we are a very few in the medical apostolate. At times the call of this healing ministry is so demanding and we are left with no time to think of ourselves. On certain occasions we find ourselves inadequate and incompetent with skills and facilities needed to attend to our patients and are forced to refer them to other centers. Though the patients believe that they are safe in our hands, there are those special few who need exclusive and extra care.

Care for the mother and child is on a very high demand during this time, but the user fee curtails the clients from availing the service. Some mothers who come in the last stages of labour deliver outside our facility while we make plans to refer them to other facilities offering free maternal services. As the user fee poses great challenge to our facilities, we feel insufficient and unsuccessful to reach out to all the needy and sick patients. Though we wish to give them free treatment we cannot afford the same, due to the cost of the medical equipment, training and other amenities needed to do so. Some elderly patients who attend some of our facilities with chronic illnesses like diabetes and hypertension, get treatment for a short time and leave it half way as it is expensive. Some die during the process while some others are seldom supported by family members. Till date we have not gotten a project that can empower us to reach out boldly to the patients from poor families. Clients express their angst by saying that they should go back to the creator God if they fail to get well in the hands of our sisters.

The pandemic Covid-19 which left many people jobless and suffering



Sr. Rose Mary Kainga
Province of East Africa

economically, socially and physically put us into a challenging period of caring for depressed patients and their families especially in Kenya and Uganda where lockdown was strict. Our facilities had no capacity to accommodate them for longer periods. Counselling them at the facility level and then home based follow up was a herculean task. Wearing the masks throughout the day left the health workers with





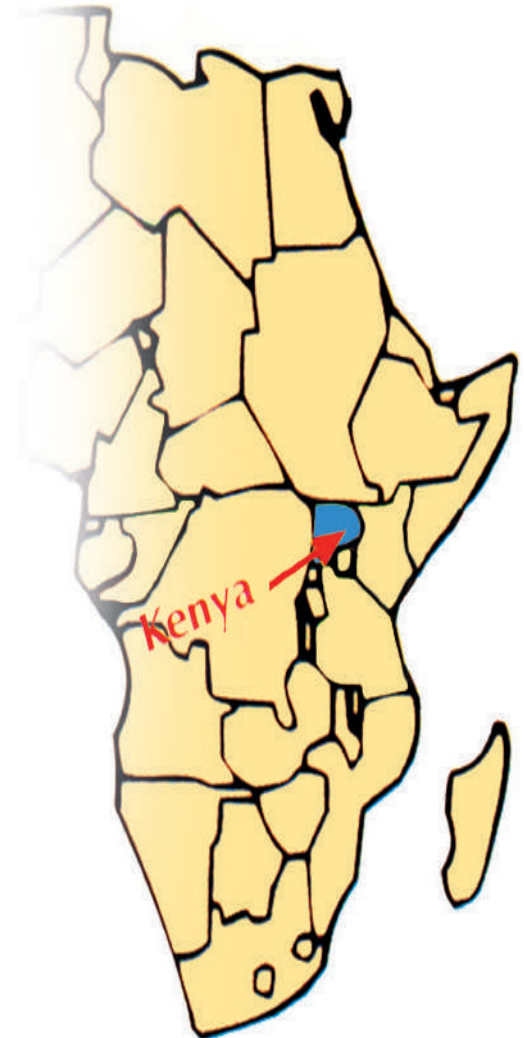
respiratory problems, headache and tiredness. We put our trust in God for protection and did not close the facilities to guard ourselves from the Virus, instead like soldiers of Christ we served dauntlessly with compassion every day. Many facilities were closed down due to lack of finance and by God's mercy ours was spared. In our helplessness with the psalmist we said, "The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as a contrite spirit" (Psalm 34:18). We spent time together discussing about the challenges faced by our facilities and searched for solutions. We leave to God what is beyond our capacity and ability and let Him take control in His infinite wisdom that surpasses human understanding. By God's grace some mercifully get healed even before being treated, through our warm and holistic approach.

The satisfaction we experience at the recovery of the patients, the good feelings and blessings they share with us enhance our spirits to continue to participate in the

healing ministry of Jesus Himself. The one-to-one care, the listening ear, the whole person care in the treatment of the disease makes a huge difference in the life of the people and make our healing ministry different from those with better facilities. The preventive services that we offer along with health education have reduced some of the preventable diseases like Diarrhoea and Typhoid. There are times when we come across some arrogant patients who feel it's their right to be treated in our facilities, we remain patient and give them the best care possible and this act of forbearance changes the situation. Christ like experiences as these create opportunities for us to grow further in loving service of the Lord's people. We are grateful to be used by Christ as His instruments to reach out to His flock with His healing touch.

We desire to have outreach clinics but finding resources for these periphery activities are dreams not yet realized. The health care workers need time to relax and get healed themselves too but then the demands of this ministry call for the sacrifice of our personal time and to be there ever ready for the exigencies of the sick.

We remain open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and like Florence Nightingale, we will remain open to all irrespective of their creed, colour, and preferences. Let the Good God continue to be known and loved through our healing ministry as He helps us to make a big difference in the life of the people who come to us with the hope of being healed.





COURAGE TO WALK INTO THE UNFAMILIAR BACKYARDS

Courage to walk into the unfamiliar, unusual, untrodden dark paths is quite a daunting task. Some possess the gift of grit and determination to walk into the known backyards and a few dare to walk into unknown backyards. The home of marginalized and excluded are not found either in metropolitan cities or rural areas but in backyards. Working with and for the transgender community can be quite challenging and at the same time exciting.

The trans women/men and the entire LGBT+ community are people with multiple talents and abilities. If we can empower to capitalize on their goodness and talents, there could be a ripple effect in the society to accept and embrace them. Anything different from the 'usual' or 'normal' is unusual and abnormal for most of us.

The daring launch into the lives of third gender by the Sisters of the Cross in India is the outcome of General Chapter held in 2019. To

reach out to the peripheries in order to meet the excluded, marginalized and ostracized was emphasized during the Chapter. A project titled "Economic and Psycho-social Well-being of Transgender – Revamping Livelihood" by Holy Cross College Trichy, activities for the welfare of third gender by Madurai and Amravati Provinces and the 'Rainbow Home of Seven Sisters (RHoSS)' a shelter home for transgender people of the seven states of Northeast India by the Province of Guwahati are outcomes of our GC 2019.

The Province of Guwahati had ventured into this unknown backyard of Guwahati city from the year 2016. They had been interacting with the community of third gender called Kinner community to motivate them in skill training and so to mainstreaming them to the society. RHoSS welcomes trans people who come to the city for medical support or counselling or as make-up artist and seek shelter in RHoSS for a short or long stay.



Sr. Prema Chowallur
Province of Guwahati

The third gender who live in the slums of the cities often approach RHoSS when they face with problems from the law enforcement agencies and threats from their own fellow trans people with vested interest and exploit them. Our lawyers from Human Rights Law and Network (HRLN) help them to sort out their issues lawfully, free of cost.

The Social Welfare Officers both in the State and District level invite RHoSS for consultations and decision making. We also collaborate with other NGOs who work for the same cause and have formed a support group to discuss common issues and problems faced by the LBGT+ community and respond to challenges, if necessary through government mechanisms.

RHoSS is also a member in Global Net Work of Rainbow Catholics (GNRC). It has volunteers and interns from different walks of life, such as lawyers, doctors, researchers and students doing Masters in different colleges. It takes up mini researches on third gender with the help of volunteers who are research scholars. RHoSS networks with universities and





colleges on gender and sexuality, and Human Trafficking issues.

Holy Cross College, Province of Trichy, took up a project titled “Economic and Psycho - Social Well-being of Transgender - Revamping Livelihood.” Under this project the activities are a targeted field survey about the livelihood of transgender in Madurai and Trichy. A Focus Group Discussion (FGD) also was initiated with transgender community.

Holy Cross College signed MoU with Mx. Priya Babu, Transgender Managing Trustee, Trichy and Madurai for further collaboration as well as to bring to the limelight the success stories, achievements, life’s challenges, activities, lifestyles as videos, blogs, short films and journals with the help of the Transgender Resource Centre, Trichy.

There is a need to work together to create an exclusive website (Tee Gen) which will serve as a one stop resource centre for transgender community for which a copy right will be obtained and also create an e-library link for Holy Cross College.

The college organised frequent conferences, seminars, workshops, discussions with transgender and students to have better awareness and understanding. A session on “The Other side of Transgender” by Mx. Priya Babu, Trichy was conducted for the students. The students were encouraged to participate in National Short Film Festival conducted by Transgender Resource Centre at Madurai.



POWER Social Work Centre, Viralimalai, Pudukkottai facilitated and took all the possible measures to help transgender people during Covid-19. They organised a one-day programme based on the theme “To bridge the gap between transgender and the public”. In view of Women’s Day Celebration, they invited Mx. Asina Nayak, the leader of the transgender community, Pudukkottai district, as a guest of honour for the celebration.

Mainstreaming Trans Community is one of the outcomes of our work. Holy Cross College has appointed transgender Rafick and Mohamed Ibrahim as administrative staff. RHoSS has mainstreamed a trans woman by appointing her as one of the staff for House Management along with the opportunities given to her for skill training for makeup artist, beautician and driving.

Divya Sadan Social Centre Wadali of the Province of Amravati launched a programme for the welfare of trans community during the lockdown period which began with the distribution of dry ration to trans people. They met the District Collector and other Government officials and provided them with Aadhar cards, Ration cards, Identity

Cards and the Election Cards. They are working to get their shares of property of their parents. They are also making effort to meet the parents of these community people for counselling, so that they may treat their children who belong to the category of sexual minorities like any other child in their family.

They plan to start a vocational training for the trans community to enable them to lead a dignified life. They also intend to provide educational facilities and job opportunity to this marginalised community.

As we read in the prayer of St. Augustine, “Late have I loved you, O Beauty so ancient, O Beauty so new....” we have begun to love trans people very late indeed. Humanity has failed to realize the beauty that lies within them. Ultimately we had lost an appreciation for the variety, beauty, and diversity in our families, churches, society and environment.

Let us continue to hear and respond to the cry of our lost brothers and sisters from the backyards, from the margins of our society and the peripheries of our hearts.



THE SAGA OF THE SISTERS OF THE CROSS IN NEPAL

Nepal is a diverse, colourful and very special country. To this beautiful Nepal known as “the kingdom of gods” the Sisters of the Cross were called to live the Gospel in 1987. There are three communities of the Sisters of the Cross in this country engaged in various ministries.

Amar Jyoti Convent, Bhairahawa:

Siddharthanagar, formerly and colloquially still called Bhairahawa, is a municipality and the administrative headquarter of Rupandehi District in Lumbini Province of Nepal, 265 km west of Nepal’s capital Kathmandu. Our house is situated a little away from the town. We are five sisters engaged in various ministries here.

Amar Jyoti Day Care Centre for mentally challenged children was the mission entrusted to us. Working with mentally challenged children was a first-hand experience for the pioneers; hence it was a herculean task too. Soon the sisters by their boundless affection and tender compassion won the hearts of the children. The number of children from twenty increased steadily and now there are 52 children on the roll. Children in the centre are given training to improve their motor skills and sharpen their brains. The severely affected children are given home based care. Parents are also given counselling to understand, accept and manage the children at home.

At times we are left with questions unanswered but we are also left with wow moments when we see that in spite of all their deformities they excel in art and craft, painting and weaving, music and dance, sports and gymnastics.

Financial crunches to run the centre have been faced from its inception. There had been many generous contributors to our noble endeavour. Amar Jyoti Boarding (English Medium) School registered under National Examination Board of Nepal was established in 1992 to support the Day Care Centre. The school has more than 1000 children. It gives education based on values; it is known for its discipline, academic excellence and all round development. Nineteen batches of children have gone through this portal completing their secondary education examination. All of them are well placed in and outside of the country.

Our efforts to make the merciful love of the Father known to them bring mental, psychological and emotional healing. Although the presence of Catholics here is like a drop in the ocean yet we witness Christ in and through all our activities and ministries.

Holy Cross Convent, Pokhara:

The Sisters of the Cross opened its second community in Nepal in the year 2005 with just two sisters. Since then the sisters gave themselves in caring for the



Sr. Stella Davis
Province of Kolkata

differently abled children. When the Nepal Jesuits took charge of the centre, the sisters co-operate with the management in all its activities.

As the number of Catholics increased, the sisters got involved in teaching catechism and other pastoral activities. A magnificent church has been built and it stands as the icon of the Catholic family for the people of Pokhara in Nepal. They regularly visit the families of their students as well as the neighborhood. With just two members in the community, they are actively involved in the mission; they are akin to a pinch of salt that brings greater flavour, a spoonful of leaven that lifts and a ray of light that pierce the darkness.

Holy Cross Convent, Kathmandu:

It was a pressing need for the Sisters of the Cross to have a head office in Nepal like the Amar Jyoti Chavanod Society in Katmandu. This need was actualized when the house was opened in 2013, May 7th at Kumarigal, located between



the most famous temple of the Hindus - Pashupatinath and a very important centre for Buddhism – Swayambhunath in Kathmandu.

Two sisters were appointed; one worked at the St. Xavier's College in Kathmadu and the other joined the same college as student for a Bachelor's Degree. Once the sisters returned from the college, they visited the families in their neighbourhood and built strong rapport with them. They thoroughly explored the area, adequately learned the local language, and quickly got accustomed to the food habits, culture, customs and traditions of the people. People around them were very open and welcoming. The sisters opened the gates of their house for the children, young girls and women to enter freely and helped them generously. Their constant visit to the families and the candid sharing of the women therein helped them to sense the need of the people in their milieu. Inauguration of the Computer Center on 27th June

2016 and Women's Empowerment Programme initiated were the first steps taken to meet their needs. Gradually neighbours, local leaders and local governments also supported the sisters in their benevolent endeavours.

At present there are three sisters in the community, all of them are involved in empowering the women, young girls and children of the society and one of them continues to give her service in the college as head of the department of Social Work. Committed staff, benefactors and beneficiaries are always constructive contributors for our Social work center. Women's Day, Environment Day, etc., are celebrated every year meaningfully to bring about awareness on many social and superstitious issues. Interns and volunteers are the sources of support to the centre. After the training in computer and tailoring, job opportunities are offered to the students. It is amazing to see the students working and earning to manage their life.

Since the house is insufficient to accommodate the number of trainees the sisters extended their training programmes in a rented room in the town. Regular family visits are the backbone of spreading the value of their presence and work. They are invited for the festivals and celebrations by the natives and they believe that presence of the sisters bring blessings, joy and peace.

Natural calamities, political instabilities, cross border crisis with India and Nepal and lack of basic necessities during the crisis make life at times difficult and challenging. There are many social issues of women and children that needs to be addressed and ample of work to be carried out. The sisters are addressing them systematically and thus empower the people of God after the example of Mother Claudine.

Nepal needs Jesus. Jesus is proclaimed but not heard and believed. Nepal has churches but members must become disciples and not just the members of the church. For years, we have been looking for opportunities. It's true that there have been sporadic incidents of violence against Christians in Nepal. People are now receptive to the Gospel and we must not lose this opportunity. The words of our Mother Claudine, "My dear sisters, the good God is not known! The good God is not loved!" are often echoed. Hence we hold high the banner of the Cross and march forward courageously to Make the good God known and loved.



WITNESSING CHRIST IN THE FACE OF THE PANDEMIC

Covid-19 pandemic was a rage but trusting in the mighty power of God and in His word “Fear not for I am with you” (Isaiah 41:10) we are able to satisfy the hunger and thirst of people and care for the sick who are in our milieu. Through this simple charitable deed, we could witness the guiding hand of God.

Many of our communities actively participated in extending their help to the poor and the needy. When many doors were shut to help the poor, the door of the Sisters of the Cross, Province of Tenali was opened. Every sister took part in helping the needy in her own way. Here I am glad to mention some of our communities, where our sisters dared to reach out to the suffering.

The Community at Kollipara:

“Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine you did for me” (Mathew 25:40). We met a nomadic community who are called

‘Jangas’ and whose livelihood is to sell trinkets and toys during festivals and carnivals, etc. They are under privileged, wander from place to place with their merchandize. This pandemic and the lock-down shattered their livelihood shutting up the sources of income. The situation was so terrible, that they were stranded not knowing what to do. With the financial support of Sr. Priyanthi our Provincial and her team, we were able to distribute provisions for thirty families consisting of hundred adults and children. We also invited them for Holy Cross Feast on 14th September 2021 and conducted prayer for them after which we gave the provisions. This act of Kollipara community made them feel recognised and important. We too had the joy of revealing God’s merciful love.

The Community at Kambhampadu:

Mr. Bhaskar Rao was in a pathetic condition after the Covid could not manage the family.



Sr. Chinnamma Raju
Province of Tenali

His leg which was operated for more than four times was finally amputated up to the knee, which added to the misery. Sisters visited his family, discussed his problems in the community and with the help of donors opened a petty shop for his livelihood as a support for his family. Today the family is happy and is able to manage their needs. They equipped the shop gradually. Sisters make frequent visits to his home. This is one of the many works that Kambhampadu community did during the pandemic.

The community at Nellore:

Children with special needs are more vulnerable to be infected with Corona virus due to their physical, intellectual, sensory and cognitive limitations. Therefore, Vianney Home for the physically handicapped organized an awareness programme on various preventive measures of Covid-19 by reaching out to some target groups in Nellore District. With the instructions of our sisters, parents have taken extra care in providing therapies to the Children with Disabilities





(CWDs). Visiting the families and instructing them helped the parents with special children to come out of their depression, fear, anxiety, helplessness and loneliness. It brought peace in the family; it gave a new life and kept them all with good health and protected from the deadly virus.

500 HIV/AIDS families were provided with the Covid kit and provisions. We are indebted to some of our regular donors who made us channels of God's love. It is through their support the sisters could help them. This timely effort saved them from sicknesses by increasing their immune system. The sisters also reached out to migrants, families with disabled persons, the economically poor, pregnant women, tribal and the elderly destitute. They were provided with food materials and nutrition supplements. Sisters were extremely happy to render their service to these needy people.

The community at Guntur:

One of the teaching staff requested the superior to help a



group of people from the nearby slum area who were facing economic crisis at the time of Pandemic. This request was brought to the notice of the Provincial and her council. They responded immediately and supplied rice and other ingredients to 35 families of that area. From then on, sisters were able to reach out to many families in need.

Working with Covid Patients:

Srs. Sophia Clement and Shakila Yesudoss dared to render their help to the Covid patients in JMJ hospital, Guntur. They administered care to the patients whom no family member could reach. They visited families in

anxiety and pain, listened to their groaning, carried messages of love and support from family members to patients, wept with the families who lost their loved ones. After their service in the hospital miraculously both the sisters tested Covid negative. Sisters from Provincialate community namely Srs. Stella Viswanathan, Jyothi Gade, Nireesha, Yellebonia, Roselin Kitheri and Sagayameri Devarinti served the Covid patients in the Government hospital, Tenali. They could see the face of Christ in the patients and gave hope to them.

Our life is a mixture of joys and difficulties, sufferings and comforts. Every suffering has its purpose and everyone who overcomes the suffering will be happy. "It is good to give thanks to the Lord" (Psalm 92:1). Since God was leading us, we were able to reach out to the poor with the given resources. We have witnessed Christ in our mission. Indeed, we were happy to help the poor during the pandemic. This pandemic has drawn us very close to Him. We are grateful to God for His constant companionship and guidance. Let us be a blessing to many more people who live in the peripheries.





**Monument to OUR LADY OF COMPASSION
Patroness of the Congregation**

Monument erected at Chavanod in 1883

***“We contemplate in **Mary**,
one who responded perfectly to the
Love of the Father, in docility to the Holy Spirit,
one who lived a faithful attachment to Christ
in her participation in His mission of salvation.”***

Some Addresses of the Congregation

Maison Générale
Sœurs de la Croix de Chavanod
8 Rue Alcide Jentzer
C.P.420, CH-1211, Geneva 4
SWITZERLAND

Tel: (00) (41) 022 320 92 82 Email: generalatescc@gmail.com

IN EUROPE

Sœurs de la Croix
Maison Provinciale
4 B Rue des Cols Verts
Annecy-Le-Vieux
74940 Annecy
FRANCE
Tel: (33) 04 50 27 56 95
Email: province.fr.sœurs.croix@orange.fr

Maison du Grand Pré
Centre spirituel et culturel
18, Impasse du Grand Pré
74650 Chavanod
FRANCE
Tel : (33) 04 50 02 82 13
Email: maisondugrandpre@gmail.com

Sœurs de la Croix
Foyer L'Accueil
8 Rue Alcide Jentzer
Ch 1205, GENEVE 4
SWITZERLAND
Tel: (41) 022 320 92 77 /
(41) 022 320 10 24
Email: accueil@informaniak.ch

IN ASIA

Sisters of the Cross
Provincialate
Divya Jyoti, Hira Nagar
Nara Ring Road, Jaripatka
Nagpur - 440 014
MAHARASHTRA
INDIA
Tel: (91) 0712 2651630
Email: divyajyotinagpur@gmail.com

Holy Cross Provincialate
Puthur
Tiruchirapalli - 620 017
TAMIL NADU
INDIA
Tel: (91) 0431 2771 724
Email: sccprovincialatetry@gmail.com

Holy Cross Provincialate
138-A Anna Nagar
Madurai - 625 020
TAMIL NADU
INDIA
Tel: (91) 0452 2534482
Email: sccmdu@yahoo.com

Sisters of the Cross, Provincialate
28 Lower Range
Circus Avenue P.O.
Kolkata - 700 017
WEST BENGAL, **INDIA**
Tel: (91) 033 22909650
Email: scckolkata17@gmail.com

Sisters of the Cross
Provincialate
Dhole Patil Road
38 Sassoon Road
Pune - 411 001
MAHARASHTRA, **INDIA**
Tel: (91) 020 26162075
Email: srs pune85@gmail.com

Sisters of the Cross Provincialate
G.P.O. Box No.29
Joypur, Kharghuli
Guwahati - 781004
ASSAM
INDIA
Mobile: (91) 09435195523
Email: sccghypro@gmail.com

Sisters of the Cross Provincialate
Puliyannam P.O.
Peechanikad
Angamaly - 683 572
KERALA
INDIA
Tel: (91) 0484 2459718 / 2996718
Email: angamalyacc@rediffmail.com

Holy Cross Provincialate
Angalakuduru P.O.
Tenali - 522211
Guntur District
ANDHRA PRADESH, **INDIA**
Mobile: (91) 93926 60447
Email: tenalipro2017@gmail.com

Amar Jyothi
Post Box No. 7
Bhairahawa
NEPAL
Tel: (977) 071 521326
Email: amarjyotisc@gmail.com

Sisters of the Cross, Provincialate
Panideniya
Peradeniya - 20400
SRI LANKA
Tel: (94) 081 2388114
Email: socross.lanka@gmail.com

Sisters of the Cross
5 Ash Shabby Street
P.O.B 25078, Shuafat
9125002 Jerusalem
ISRAEL
Tel: (972) 2581 4962
Email: sistersofthecross@gmail.com

IN AFRICA

Sisters of the Cross, Provincialate
P.O. Box 71410, MtoniKijichi
DAR-ES-SALAAM
TANZANIA
Tel: (255) 754 678739
Email: eastafricacc@gmail.com

Sisters of the Cross
P.O. Box 154, Chogoria, Iruma,
MERU, **KENYA**
Tel: (254)729432488
Email: rosiekendi@gmail.com

Sisters of the Cross of Chavanod
C/o Diocese of Kasana-Luweero
P.O. Box 303, Luweero
KASANA, **UGANDA**
Tel: (256) 703922050
Email: scckasana@gmail.com

Maison de la Délégation
Soeurs de la Croix, B.P. 1276 B1
BRAZZAVILLE
RÉPUBLIQUE DU CONGO
Tel: (242) 0535322960
Email: croixchavanod.congocameroun@yahoo.fr

Soeurs de la Croix
OYOM-ABANG C/252
B.P. 185, YAOUNDE
CAMEROON
Tel: (237) 07 145 30 33
Email: oyomabangcommunaute@gmail.com

IN LATIN AMERICA

Hermanas de la Cruz 7160
Jiron Tupac Yupanqui
Urb.El Trebol, Los Olivos
Lima 39, **PERU**
Tel : (51) 1 6537081
Mobile: (51) 926727014
Email: delegationla@gmail.com

Hermanas de la Cruz de Chavanod
Calle 11A, No.3A-33, URB.El Porvenir
Madrid, Cundinamarca
Bogota, **COLOMBIA**
Tel : (57) 1 8280799
Mobile: (57) 3144868055

Hermanas de la Cruz
Apartado 13-01-395
Porto Viejo
Manabi, **ECUADOR**
Tel: (593) 5 2934833
Mobile : (593) 993286879

IN NORTH AMERICA

Sisters of the Cross
866 Arsenal Street, Watertown
NEW YORK - 13601
USA
Tel: (1) 315 661 6104
Email: sccwatertown@yahoo.com

Peru
France
Switzerland
India
Colombia
Kenya
United States
Sri Lanka
Congo
Uganda
Congo
Tanzania
Ecuador
Nepal
Israel
Democratic Republic of Congo
Cameroon

*The Cross of Christ
traces for us a way of growth
to receive the fullness of
God's gift, enabling us to
help all people to open
themselves to the grace of the
passion of Christ,
a power always at work
in the world.*