

Sisters of the Holy Cross, Menzingen

Life ...Vie...Vita....Leben...Vida

November 2017

2 *Signs of hope*

I had a wonderful opportunity of living in a community of Sisters belonging to different congregations for three weeks. The basis community is that of the Menzingen Sisters. The group consisted of sisters from Ingenbohl, Menzingen, Dominicans, Benedictines, Deaconesses, Katharina Sisters. We had beautiful liturgical celebrations, intense Prayer of the Church, shared meal. The purpose of this community of Menzingen Sisters was/is ministry to the Sisters who needed times of relaxation, quiet and prayer. And a sign of collaboration in this age of diminution!

Recently I was at a good-bye ceremony to a community of Sisters in Germany. The community was started 160 years ago. One cannot but admire the courage of the pioneer sisters and the hard work of their followers. The same courage has motivated the present leadership team to give it up.

During my journey, I had a flash of thoughts connecting this event to the present day realities of religious life: Closing of a community is as joyful as of opening one. It is a sign that we are ready and willing to move on; here is an opportunity for renewal and revival. The present time demands from us the courage to dare. (Here is an English expression: 'hang in there, times will change! This does not hold good as regards Religious Life and ministries!) Read carefully the signs of the time. Today the call is to move on. Are we ready to set out?

Are we willing to leave behind the familiar and long cherished, for the sake of the unknown and uncertain? Who needs our solidarity today? Do we hear the voices from the margins? Are we ready to be immersed in the human reality of today?

At the breakfast table today we shared an incident among ourselves. Many of you know Sr Paulus Maria Kaelin. She lived in Rome for some time. One morning as she was climbing the steps of St. Peter's Basilica, someone grabbed her small handbag and ran away. She stopped for a moment, and slowly proceeded. When she came back after half an hour, there stands the 'gentleman-thief' with her handbag. He gave the handbag back and said: "I believe you are more in need than me!" Is my life style strong enough to proclaim the evangelical counsels?

Sr Telma

Theodosius Florentini and Bernarda Heimgartner

A few of you responded to the thoughts in this column of the last edition. Thank you! My reflection today flows from your inspiration.

In this fast changing scenario of religious life, the discernment process takes the congregations back to their founders to gain deeper insight for the present. We also open ourselves: What would it be/what is it that Fr Theodosius and Mother Bernarda are telling us today?

The historic words of Theodosius Florentini “the need of the time is the will of God” is well quoted. But the challenge before us today is *to interpret the need of the time*. Do we still hear the voices from the margins as Father Theodosius and Mother Bernarda heard them? With great conviction and ardent desire Fr. Theodosius wrote “I will send my sisters **there**, where they are most badly needed and most ardently expected—namely, to the poor, to those hungry for education, to the sick, the orphans, the neglected, the factory-children and the industrial workers.

There they will **live** in such a way that they become witnesses of Christ’s presence among the people.

They will show how vital and effective Christian charity can be.

They will share the poverty and need of the poor and become all things to all.“

Today’s God-given leaders like Pope Francis exhort us with the same sentiments of our Founders.

Do we recognize it? Were we not in line with Fr Theodosius and Mother Bernarda when we declared at the CoC “Go forth to heal the broken world”? What is the face of the broken world today in my context? Have we taken notice of it? Or do we want to?

It takes courage!

Our Founders challenge us today to be **change makers** in our time. Every sister, every Provincial Leader, every Provincial Leadership Team is called upon to make a new path. A path is made by walking; *a new path is made when someone dares to walk*. Are we short of imagination, creativity, insight and openness to the Spirit and the world? Are we blind and deaf to the changing context in which we live?

I hear the WAKE UP call. Don’t you?

Sr Telma

of the Holy Cross Congregation was initiated by Bishop Aloysius Maria Benziger OCD, who will soon be proclaimed 'servant of God'. The hospitals in Travancore (part of present day Kerala state) needed better health care facilities and the King requested for nursing sisters from Europe in 1906.



The sisters in the South Indian Province still continue this legacy, working in four government hospitals as honorary Nurses. They continue the health care mission, though different from the founding mission of Switzerland.

The first convent of the sisters still exists

Their ministries are spread to all corners of India. The Provinces of Sri Lanka, Central and North India of today are the branches of the Mother Indian Province. Kerala and Tamil Nadu together form today's South Indian Province. Their mission has gone beyond their borders to Libya and Iraq where they responded to the call in very challenging situations.

In a pluralistic, democratic country with many diverse cultures and languages, the brokenness experienced by humanity and mother earth are varied and complex. The affluent south continues to attract people from north for jobs and livelihood. But very often they are treated as foreigners in their own land where justice is not meted out to them. It is encouraging to see that the sisters reach out to them through various ways so that a humanized environment is created for migrant workers. They are constantly aware of the many brokenness in the society and at times face challenges and blocks, in responding to them in a creative way.



The sisters of the South Indian province have become aware of the suffocation experienced by Mother Earth well before the publication of 'Laudato Si'. But they do have a big invitation to make it become part of their institutions and outside their boundaries.



They are encouraged to join likeminded people to combat this evil, though the journey is long and hazardous as India continues to remain high on the list of deaths due to pollution.

Besides focusing on the Health Care institutions they have also moved into very many socio-pastoral ministries, daring to venture into difficult areas where law and government policies are involved to work for the rights of the people. Women and children, victims of domestic violence are certain areas where they collaborate with government and other agencies. The programmes organised for the community-radio are another venture to educate ordinary people of injustice and corruption in the existing systems.

The journey which began 111 years ago continues. Even though the faces continue to change the purpose remain the same i.e to respond to the various needs of humanity so that justice and peace are maintained. In many remote areas the sisters live in small communities but each one engaged in different ministries are a great witness to the marginalised

people. Even the few tribal colonies are not neglected, but the children are empowered so that they recognise their own rich culture through education.



These children will grow as good citizens, with a value based life!

Visitation notes: South Indian Province

The sisters are encouraged more to prevent the Indian society from decaying and to work towards keeping moral values. They are ready to be 'contemplative prophets' and launch into new ministries, to collaborate with many other organisations to be in solidarity with women, youth, children, migrants, sick and vulnerable. They are invited to **look** into the eyes and **speak** to the hearts of the people they encounter.

Humanity needs you!

*Continue to be the torch bearers to
show the way!*

Build a new world here on Earth!

Sr Immaculate Joseph



**THEY SHALL STILL BRING FORTH
FRUIT IN OLD AGE....**

Our dear Sister *Claudia Viel* has just turned 100 on Tuesday 27th June. Her life has been rich in experience, wisdom and unshakable faith in God. It was beautiful to see in her the serenity and the peace of mind of those who know that life is a gift to taste thoroughly. She was glad when she saw our Mayor and Councillor of our town of Sondrio , who came to share this moment of happiness with our community. She was also interviewed by our local television and newspapers. Sr Claudia showed the beauty and value of our daily life : “I thank God for every day that He gives me, because I can know Him better and praise Him more”.



Congratulations!

She also had visitors including those who attended the nursery school in Saint Lorenzo convent around 40 years ago. Among them a lady said : “Sr Claudia was a point of reference for us as children. She knew how to answer our questions truthfully and her words are still the right ones even nowadays. How beautiful! A woman of hope.....till the end

Sr Dorina Zanoni- Italian Province

New PLT, Central India Provincial



From left to Right: Sr. Jobina Ambattu, Sr. Helena Peedikaparambil, Sr. Valsa Kumblankal, Provincial Leader Sr. Fatima Puthenthoppil, Sr. Lourd Joseph, Sr. Shiny Jose

Small is Beautiful

“Can I rest a bit here?” a young Muslim woman asks me. She says that she is on her way to Iran. She looks very tired. I smile at her and nod my head.

She happily lies down beside me on her prayer rug and covers her face with her veil. The small prayer room, which is strictly divided into a men’s and women’s section, was open to all religions. I had gladly left the noisy departure lounge at the airport Heathrow/London in order to find a little peace and quiet here. This is very touching: I am a Christian,

a Catholic nun - and while I am praying in this small room, a Muslim woman is sleeping beside me peacefully.

She is feeling safe. It is a good picture for what Sr Telma and I experienced during the recent visitation in the small Province of England:

The Sisters give the people a safe space and security.

Be it Muslims who are included in the inter-religious dialogue, be it that

women are encouraged to see themselves as equal to men, be it handicapped children who feel the affection of a Sister, be it the people in the parishes who work with the Sisters, be it the young people being educated in Theology and Philosophy, be it the people who receive spiritual direction from the Sisters, be it members of faith and religious groups who receive encouragement for their journey of faith from the Sisters, be it seniors in a care center who are happy about the smiles of a Sister or be it the children of a primary school who can develop their talents on the basis of the Holy-Cross-Charism. It is particularly remarkable, how the religious gifts are nurtured in the children.

For this reason, it is touching, but not surprising, to hear the spontaneous prayer of a nine year old girl: “We love you, Lord.”

Our Sisters do all that in a small but beautiful setting. Most of them work voluntarily, because they have reached the pension age.

It always involves encouraging and holistically supporting the people. And people are being accompanied especially on their spiritual journey. One evening during the visitation, a Sister came home smiling from doing service in the parish. When asked, why she was so happy, she answered: “Three young people asked about baptism today.” There is an active faith thriving in this parish, in a very contagious way. The Sister has certainly been contributing to this.

As we step into The Grange, we see a large glass window and behind it the friendly statue of Mother Bernarda. She is lovingly holding a child. She is giving the child a sense of security and also providing a safe space, where the child can develop its own abilities. It seems that she is inviting us: my Sisters, give the people room, so they can discover their gifts.



Visitation: Notes: Province of England



The group of older Sisters in The Grange are connected with many Sisters worldwide; they are very interested in all the happenings within the entire congregation. At the same time, they are active in the parish and in environmental projects.

Hospitality is very important in the small province: Sisters from all provinces of our congregation are always welcome, be it for a short visit or for a longer stay, if they want to attend a course in the London area, for example.

Sr Franziska Mitterer

All Sisters of the province are very aware of what is happening in church and society. Through their lives, the Sisters are a transforming presence for everyone: Small is beautiful!



Justice and Peace Group

“Go forth to heal our broken world”

Ideally the majority of mankind wants to live in a world where Justice and Peace prevail everywhere -to try to live out Jesus second commandment of ‘Love your neighbour as yourself’. Realistically we know in many parts of the world people suffer from tyranny and exploitation – physically and emotionally. So in starting a parish group for Justice and Peace it would only be a small drop in a very large ocean. However oceans are made up of millions of small drops.

In our parish of St Joseph’s run by the Carmelite fathers we have many people who are dedicated to working for the Church. There are about 12 active members in the group with many who are interested and will pray for our projects being kept in touch by e-mail. Stephen, our secretary, is the backbone of the group. In the beginning his whole family was involved. The two boys have now moved on.

At our meetings we discuss the current project(s) to see how they are coming on. Any member can suggest a new project, which is then discussed to see whether members want to take it on.

Our first project was to make our parish a fair trade parish by using fair-trade coffee and tea, which we achieved. One of our members sells fair trade goods once a month after the Sunday morning Masses. Every year Eileen, a retired teacher, and myself give a presentation one evening to the children taking part in the confirmation programme.

Cafod, our national catholic relief agency, has some excellent material that we can use – a good video and a game, where the children imagine they are the elders of village that has been given £1000 to spend. There are 10 suggestions; they have to choose the ones that would be most beneficial to the village e.g a doctor £500 p.a, nurse £200p.a, a bicycle £60, sinking a well for clean water £300, paying for a child’s secondary education £200. They discuss this in groups then pool the answers. Usually there is a good agreement between the groups. Then they get to taste fair trade chocolate and bananas! We hope they will encourage their parents to buy fair trade goods in the supermarkets.

Not all of our projects go forward. For example Amanda visits a prison regularly. Three of our members joined her for some training. It seems one very important work was to give refreshments to families visiting the prison, some of whom had come a long distance.

That has mostly fallen by the wayside, chiefly because of the distance to the prison and other commitments. It was suggested we try to find an outlet for dresses made by women in Thailand through the contact of a work colleague.

Justice and Peace Group

That was not adopted by the group. Also a project to help prisoners in a Carmelite parish in Nigeria did not materialise through lack of communication.

An ongoing project is arranging for disability access in our Church. There are financial implications here, assessments from the diocese. It is making gradual, although slow progress, but it is happening.

Margaret who is a retired social worker wanted to do something for people who are lonely in the parish. She set up a ‘Tea in the Pot’ one afternoon a week in one of the committee rooms. We take it in turns to be there on a monthly rota. It is popular and the numbers are growing.

Maura, Brenda and Jed organised a parish quiz to raise money for a charity. It was a very successful and friendly evening. So they would like to do this on a regular basis. They raised £400 which was sent to the Bishop who is raising money to build a community centre in a poor part of Northampton.

Peter suggested our latest project to support Cafod campaigns by sending e mails to our members of parliament on environmental and human rights issues. Jed is our local Cafod representative. He has been asked to set up a Justice and Peace group in a neighbouring parish.

That will be a good link for us. At the moment the campaigns are for Climate Coalition, using renewable energy and to stop giving aid and arms to countries where Christians are being persecuted. We will also ask fellow parishioners to support these campaigns.

We meet about every 6 weeks at the convent. It is always a good meeting.

Sr Mary-Christa Stanton
English Province



We want to be poor among the poor.

Every day we intend to be "women of hope". But what kind of hope is it? Pope Benedict XVI writes in his encyclical "Spe salvi", : "We need the greater and lesser hopes that keep us going day by day. But these are not enough without the great hope, which must surpass everything else. This great hope can only be God, who encompasses the whole of reality and who can bestow upon us what we, by ourselves, cannot attain". (Spe salvi, 31).

This is my own experience when I care for terminally ill people or welcome someone who has come to a deadlock. During our meetings we often tell them: "Remember that God loves you, by whatever name your God is called. People often reply "I hope so!" Then I add : " Yes, Believe it and Hope, because this is the only certainty. See how all other certainties crumble and fall apart!" Sick and unhappy people usually answer "Thank you" In fact suffering is together with prayer , "A first essential setting for learning hope " (Spe salvi , 32). You can learn a lot from those who suffer a lot!



Our common commitment is to help heal our wounded world. Only God can cure us! Our task is to take on ourselves the wounds of our brothers and sisters, close or far away. This means sharing the poverty of every single person, with their material, physical or spiritual needs:

as common people in a block of flats, where relationships among the residents and inside families are often tense and difficult, welcoming in our flat those who need care or simply someone to talk to; everyday hosting young people with precarious health conditions or school problems , family or personal hardships. We listen to everyone, we offer our concrete help and empathy. We often instil hope and faith, relief in physical and moral suffering, courage and joy.

“Go forth to heal our broken world”

In our big city there are a lot of lonely people, mainly widows or forlorn people. We try to soothe their sadness and loneliness helping them with their difficulties as far as we can.

Milan is the final destination of a lot of refugees, immigrants and poor. They are all over the city. We would like to help them so much, but often we can only listen to them, hug them, cry with them, poor among the poor, because we do not have material means and our physical energy decreases due to our old age. Nevertheless, each of them has a place in our heart and in our prayers. They usually call us “Mummy”.

Sr M. Michela Battistessa

Community in Milan



"Do something different, something outside your own comfort zone"...

This is what a very good friend said to me when I came out of 39 full time teaching years.

Now that was a challenge! I have always felt somewhat awkward around mentally or physically disabled people, simply because I was not sure how to engage with them. There is a school (Bedelsford) in Kingston, not too far from New Malden, for severely mentally and physically disabled children of all ages. Having mainly taught able children, I challenged myself to go there as a volunteer. It was indeed a very different way of looking at life. It is demanding, but so very rewarding. .



*Helping a pupil to learn to hold a cup!
This is some achievement for Zachari!*

These children are able to teach us what really matters in life. I like to call the children "other abled" rather than "disabled". Our tasks as helpers is to enable the pupils to learn simple life skills such as picking up a spoon and feeding themselves, or moving around in their wheelchairs and some just manage a smile or give a recognisable sound.

The contrast is all the more noticeable when I go back to our own Holy Cross school where I engage in Pastoral Care for our very able pupils! However, in many ways the basic needs of love and acceptance are the same. Thinking about this – surely this goes for us all.



Solomon is learning the difference between the numbers 2 and 3! He can only communicate with his eyes.

Sr Ursula Eberhardt,

English Province

Pilgrim's Attendant at the Place of Grace Altötting

“Go forth to heal our broken world”

Each year, up to 1 million people come to Altötting, some only for a few hours, some for several days. These people bring their gratitude and thanks, or their problems and sorrows, to Our Mother of Grace. They need advice or help, or sometimes they just simply need someone to talk to. A group of 30 voluntary Pilgrim's Attendants was

appointed for this purpose. I received an invitation to participate, which I gladly accepted. After a training period that lasted for several months and included subjects such as local contexts, spiritual topics, overview of the history of pilgrimage, basic conversational skills and a first aid course, 30 voluntary Pilgrim's Attendants were officially designated and sent by the Diocesan Bishop on May 1, 2016.

On Saturdays, Sundays and holidays, three of us serve three-hour shifts in the direct vicinity of the Mercy Chapel. We can be identified by our blue uniform jackets and you can find us at a mobile pavilion “Pilgerbetreuung” (Ministry for pilgrims). We begin and end our service by praying together.

It is important, to perceive the pilgrim as a human being and to be open for his/her needs. A friendly smile and a sympathetic ear help the pilgrim to find a little piece of home. *What do we do?*

Inform: Providing information about localities and opportunities for spiritual experiences in Altötting. Where is the Black Madonna

Where do I find opportunities for confession, the next Holy Mass, the blessing of devotional articles?

Inspire: Approaching people, giving a word of God, and starting a conversation in this way. The pilgrims especially love this.

Listen: Often, the pilgrims want to talk about their personal questions. People, who make a pilgrimage to Altötting, carry an invisible backpack full of sorrows. In dealing with these sometimes difficult conversations, we Pilgrim's Attendants are careful and discreet. The essential message is the message of “Maria Knotenlöserin” . In addition to talks about existential worries and difficulties, talks about faith sometimes ensue that point the right way. Pilgrims often say that it is a great relief to find someone that listens to them. There are always three Pilgrim's Attendants serving at the same time: The colleagues that are free at the moment support the others with their prayers.

Bear Testimony: With our service we are bearing witness for our faith. However, we receive a lot more than we give - the gifts of testimonies from pilgrims during personal talks, but also from great pilgrimages, especially when pilgrims on foot come in after walking for days.

In this way, we Holy Cross Sisters can be women of hope, and we can direct some of the brokenness of life towards healing.

Sr. Manuela Kollmannsberger
German Province



*Sr. Manuela with two pilgrims
at the Kapellplatz*

Healing the wounds of the children.
Traiguén community-
Latin American Province

For those who read this phrase it might sound like a beautiful slogan, but it is a challenge for us who live close to girls from 2 to 18 years, broken in their innocence, physically and psychically abused, at social risk and in some cases abused and abandoned by their families.,

Since 1981, the Latin American Province has carried out agreements with SENAME (National Center for Minors, Institution that belongs to the Ministry of Justice), assuming the mission of hosting girls at social risk and abandonment.

We are given the guidelines to be carried out according to the situation (abuse, abandonment, mistreatment ...) presented in each case, and it is in this reality that we are committed to accompany the girls, helping them to carry their cross, promoting life, awakening hope and faith in the future.

Together with the professionals, and the staff who work in the Home we sisters respond to the girls in their psychological and social needs, accompanying them day and night, providing them with basic necessities, offering support, closeness, affection and much encouragement so that they feel welcomed and cherished.

As many of them spend a lifetime in the home, until they turn 18 or older, if necessary, they are provided with education in different schools in and out of the town, depending on their abilities. Inside the home their education is reinforced with opportunities such as housework, cooking courses, weaving and singing. They also receive talks on health, self-help, and vocational guidance, human and Christian formation.

For us it is a great joy to receive the testimony of many young women who have graduated and who have nevertheless come back to remember their life in the home and to thank for it. Along with coming here to recall their own experiences, they have united to provide the girls who are currently in the Home with caring, attention and refreshments. The vast majority of them are now professionals, mothers of families: all happy women.

Traiguén community

Latin American Province



In Menzingen

“Go forth to heal our broken world”

Since Spring of 2015, the armed forces facility on top of the Gubel in Menzingen serves as a refugee center. It is a federal refugee center, where asylum seekers, who are waiting for a decision on their asylum application, are accepted. Most of them are young men, women and families with children. The average stay at the center is four to eight weeks. Depending on the decision reached in the asylum matter, the asylum seekers are allocated to a canton or deported, after this time.

Many volunteers in the district of Menzingen and vicinity help by providing a culture-of-welcome to the asylum seekers. I am privileged to serve with this group as well. It is most important for me, to share in some of the experiences of the asylum seekers and to let them experience their own dignity. This is sometimes extremely difficult, due to almost insurmountable language barriers. Hiking trips, cultural mediation and activity programmes for children are some of the ways to work around this, so they can have a few hours of carefree fun and relaxation.

Here is a little report from one of the hiking trips:

A group of 20 people met on the Gubel in best weather conditions. 17 of the participants were asylum seekers.

The group included two minor girls (13 and 15 year old sisters), from Sudan, both Muslims.

The hike took place during the month of Ramadan - at 2 p.m. the girls already had to observe a prayer time. I don't know if the two girls had been carrying their prayer rugs under their loose-fitting clothing. In any case, they rolled them out before my eyes and sat down for their prayer. I called my colleague at the front of the hiking group on my cellphone and asked her to wait for us at the next turnoff.

The next surprise: We enjoyed an ice cream in front of the “Höllgrotten”. During the month of Ramadan, it is actually allowed for people to eat and drink while they are travelling. The two girls each chose a ice cream, but then put it into a bag and said: “We will eat the ice cream after sunset, at 9 p.m.....”

To be on the road with asylum seekers from eleven nations and to experience such a kind and pleasant atmosphere – what a truly Pentecostal experience!

***Sr. Gisela Maria Rey,
Menzingen***

Tiny drops of hope on a wounded world

(Italian Province)

"Go forth to heal our broken world"

About the wounded world of illness.

On the 19th of February, after our local Carnival parade, a young lady friend of mine, joined me on my way back home to ask me to pray for her: she had just been diagnosed with cancer which was probably widespread. She could not have surgery. She was hoping in a special alternative treatment. I assured her of my willingness to pray, together with the whole community: I promised to pray for nine days with our Mother Bernarda. The lady started her treatment without any signs of improvement. Nevertheless, she spreads a great serenity, peace and a strong faith. Also the people who live around her are enlightened. Our prayers to Mother Bernarda have not resulted in the grace of physical healing but the grace of inner healing leaving the legacy to her family and to everybody, that one can live in peace and serenity even with a serious illness. That lady put herself confidently in the loving hands of God.

Sr Agnese Ambrosetti

About the wounded world of creation

It has been a tradition for some years to immerse a statue of Jesus Christ in lake Palù (Chiesa in Valmalenco). Every year at around midday, after celebrating Mass on a raft in the middle of the lake or on the shores the evocative immersion of the statue called The Christ from the Abysses takes place at 6 metres depth thanks to the help of Valtellina diving club. The first immersion in this lake Palù happened in the autumn of the 1970s. In those days the lake was at risk of disappearing due to indiscriminate collection of water on behalf of an electrical company. Moreover it was full of rubbish and of every kind of waste. Since then people have started to save water, preserving the beauty and purity of this lake crowning everything with the celebration of Eucharist and a religious procession.

Christ of Abysses is an expression of an act of faith. Christ plunged in the depth of the lake offers protection to divers who often dive into rivers and lakes in dangerous circumstances. It is also symbol of the protection for the lake, the surrounding mountains and wildlife fighting against serious ravages done by man. Taking part in this suggestive spiritual and environmental moment was for me an immersion in that care for creation promoted by the Church and by our Congregation. Only Jesus Christ, from the abysses of our heart, can help us to see and act towards the creation in a better and more human way.

Sr Imelda Zecca

About our wounded world of relations.

More than one year ago our community changed our place of mission: from the parish church of Ovada to the town of Sondrio. We live in a block of flats and we continue trying to be near the people welcoming them with their experiences, difficulties, sufferings and joys. This can happen in different ways. Meeting people along the streets or visiting in the hospital or inviting them for lunch or dinner in our community. Among all the people we have met there is a mother who sees our house as her own. Her heart is bleeding because her daughter is undergoing a difficult moment. She feels the effort and responsibility of being a parent. She does not know how to face this wound. So sometimes she comes to us to sing the praises. Sometimes she stops before going to work to have a coffee or simply to have a chat. For her it is important not to feel alone. For us she is as a daughter with her expectations, anxieties, problems but also joys. She is a woman of faith who follows our own path. With her but also with other people we feel that hope is about knowing how to give and receive presence, help and sharing which are ways of living that help that bring back life.

Sr Piera Pezzini, Sr Lucia Pedroncelli and Sr Ettorina Zugnoni

About the wounded world of a "Fragile Life"

I feel at ease among the elderly. For them a glance, a smile, a hug, a word is enough. Grandmother Amelia calls me very often and says: "Sister, Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ think about me" then she shakes my hand as if to say: "I am glad you are here!"

Sometimes they call me, I come near to listen to the question: "When are we going to Church and pray? For the elderly our presence is a sort of tranquillizer. They feel protected and listened to. They feel secure. They need great humanity and to make them feel at ease they need only a bit of peace. One day an old lady was dying alone without any relatives. All of a sudden she opened her eyes, she turned towards me, she smiled, then she closed her eyes and she passed away peacefully. We are really tiny presences of hope, tiny but able to throw light on the world.

Sr Armida Pezzini

In our provincial plan, which covered three years, we considered as a significant experience for us as Latin American Province, the realization of a Provincial Mission...

All the members of the Provincial Leadership were taking part and we convoked the sisters of the three countries, extending the invitation to the members of the Holy Cross lay movement, the teachers of our schools and lay people of the respective parishes.

The first experience was in Peru in September after 15 years of presence in the country. Two councillors, who had not visited our mission there, accompanied the sisters, visiting the families of the pupils of our school.

In Chile we organized a weekend mission on October 20, 21 and 22, simultaneously in three places: Temuco, Huellahue, a place near Panguipulli and Hualpin, a little village near Toltén.

In Argentina, the mission will soon take place...

I sense life emerging, great commitment and enthusiasm on behalf of the sisters and lay people of the different places. This experience makes me realize the urgency of activating a very strong missionary dimension. I am deeply touched by the call of Pope Francis "to be a Church in missionary departure ... I prefer a church injured for going out, than a sick one, that does not dare to go out"



Testimony of sisters participating in the mission:

- **Sr Jacinta Leonelli:** “For me this mission has been motivating and revitalizing, I want to continue being part of an outgoing Church, as Pope Francis says.”

- **Sr Elia Cumiquir:** “What struck me most in Peru and in Huellahue is the faith, hope and joy with which people assume their condition, many times, very complicated and difficult for us, (sickness, material poverty, loneliness).”

-**Sr Laura Ozuna:** an experience of joy and faith with my sisters, a challenge of love and dedication in my consecrated life.

-**Sr Judith Faúndez:** For me it was a very enriching experience and from what I've heard it was the same everywhere.

I thank the parish priests who opened the doors and supported us in carrying out the mission. There is a great life experience in the pastoral agents, I feel: it is possible... “Go into the whole world and preach the gospel to all creation”

Sr Rosa Rico
Provincial Leader,
Province Latin America



Solidarity with Humanity and Creation

It is Monday 19th June, and I awake to hear radio-news that members of the local Mosque have been the victims of a terrorist attack. Almost as soon as I've recovered from the news, the phone rings and members of the local Faith Forum are enquiring if I am free to go to the Mosque and offer support. It's also possible that I will be asked to take part in a Press Conference.

I set off to do what I can. The Police have cordoned-off the area; local members of Parliament, councillors, church and synagogue leaders have already gathered, and the world's press is hard at work, collecting comments and interviews, desperate to find an eye-witness.

Hastily arranged by all concerned, in the evening there will be a Vigil outside the Mosque: it is very crowded by local people joining all those from the Faith communities, a number of whom I know.

And the following Sunday Christian ministers & their parishioners sign cards and letters of solidarity, and we take them to the Mosque.

Happily, not every day in interfaith work here in London is like that.



“Go forth to heal our broken world”

Most days it is much less dramatic - ordinary everyday standing and working alongside each other.

In fact, it is just because we have built up normal fraternal relationships that we were able to respond so quickly and effectively in that particular emergency.

It is over 20 years since the Finsbury Park Christian and Muslim Leaders met monthly to discuss faith, life and whatever came to mind.

The Faiths' Forum - Muslims, Jews, Sikhs, Buddhists and Christians – stage public events for all to see and take part in: from football tournaments to townhall debates.

An Anglican woman Priest and I are working together to draw Muslim and Christian women to share their Scriptures and very recently we all shared a picnic in a local park. It is early days.

The diocese of Westminster asked me to be engaged in this interfaith work in 1994.

In that time I and my colleagues have a day-long annually led a pilgrimage visiting mosques, gurdwaras, temples, synagogues in various parts of the archdiocese. Numbers started small, but recently they have sometimes reached 200 – such is the interest in all the faith-traditions to be found in our city.

There are numerous interfaith discussion groups here and there; I myself facilitate one in north London which started as a Lent Course in 1995: still going!

*Sr Elizabeth O'Donohoe –
English Province*



Cunco Province

CHILE.



"Awakening love and sowing for life"

Since 2009, Sr Andrea has been teaching at the Catholic school in Rahue Mission, suburb of the town of Osorno, South of Chile. This school belonging to the Osorno Diocese. Her educational work is aimed at developing the creativity and manual skills of the children through Craft Workshops from 1st to 8th grade. This has been a way to enable the children to be teachers in their own homes, transferring their knowledge to their mothers, who could develop projects that allow them to earn a living, improving their conditions of life.

The apostolate of Sister Andrea consists in accompanying the children with a word of encouragement, active listening and the transmission of the Paschal Mystery through the example of her vocation of service.

Sr Andrea Prieto Solís.

"To be a teacher in a world of inclusion"

Since 2016, Sr Yilda has been teaching at the Holy Cross High school in the village of Cunco, Region of the Araucanía. She has been a religious of the congregation for 17 years and has specialized as a Differential Educator, orienting her educational work towards children and young people who have special educational needs, trying to provide them with the tools that allow them to function normally in today's world, fostering respect and love of neighbor in the whole educational community.

The apostolate of Sr Yilda consists in inviting the community to be captivated by the simplicity of life, with a grateful smile, a gesture of affection that give meaning to the fundamental option: Yes it is worthwhile to spend life giving oneself to those who are the Lord's favorites, promoting in them high expectations and a Christian sense that guides their action in today's world as agents of positive change, promoting the joy of the Paschal Mystery.



Hna. Yilda Vidal Pozas

“God hugs you with reality”

Each day we encounter the broken world and all its limitations in a different way. I would like to tell a short story about this reality that happened in our House Raphael.

About 4 years ago, a mother from Chechnya with her 5 children came to us, looking for church asylum. We agreed to it, after consulting with our Provincial Superior, Sr. Chiara. The woman and her 5 children were supposed to be deported to Poland. They needed a so-called “safe room” for the duration of three months, until the time limit for transfers had expired. This means that the children were allowed to attend school, but no other contact with the outside world was permitted. They did not receive any state subsidies during this time, either. Muslim women from the neighborhood took over the care, because they were Muslim and they brought food on a regular basis. This was a good opportunity for us to make contact with them. We had some good experiences with that. The Muslim women had the same goal as we did: To give hope and prospects of a better future to people in need. We were able to establish some good connections and enable support for integration, despite the difficulties in communication, due to the language barriers. There were some funny scenes during German language lessons. Up until now, the family has no legal right to stay in Germany. We continue to keep in touch and keep visiting them from time to time.

After the church asylum had ended, we gave the district administration the living space on the second level of House Raphael to use for asylum seekers

It was not long until a family of seven people from Syria came to stay with us. They were also Muslims. For us they were people, who were looking for a better future after difficult and traumatic experiences.

The five boys were between 11 and 2 1/2 years old. There were some language barriers to work on at first. Soon the children could understand German, they were learning relatively fast. Any offer of support was welcomed during the learning phase. During these additional learning sessions, the children sometimes started to open up about their traumatic experiences, e.g. dramatic shootings that they were involved in, or about their journey across the Mediterranean Sea, where only the third boat offered to help them.

There were so many forms to fill out, appointments at doctor's offices to be made, and visits to government agencies to be accompanied. It was sometimes difficult to find the right balance between support and individual responsibility/autonomy. Cooperation with school and kindergarten had to be arranged and it was difficult not to leave out the parents, even though they had great difficulties with the language. When the family received their status as recognized refugees after 1 1/2 years, the search for an apartment began. Our support was needed for this project as well. Not all landlords were willing to rent to refugees and definitely not t

o a family with 5 children! Looking for apartments, making calls, looking at an apartment, getting rejections, all this had to be accompanied.

“God hugs you with reality”

The family will move to their own apartment in August of this year, but we have the assurance of the children: “Please do not be sad, we will come and visit you!”

An emergency call from a Capuchin (Kapuziner). I have a young woman from Nigeria, she is pregnant and is supposed to be deported. Could you put her up for at least two nights until I have found another room for her in church asylum. The 2 nights turned into a whole week, then Fr. J. had found space for her.

Congratulations!

This year on International women’s day, our ***Sr Clara Alappat*** was honored for her achievements and her work done for the women and children who are down-trodden and neglected. Sr Clara has been working mainly for the *women in conflict with law*. *Many women prisoners were helped to get legal assistance, and rehabilitation into the society was made possible together with the sisters of the community and other collaborators.*

Sr. Valsa Kumblankal
Provincial Leader
Central India Province, Bangalore

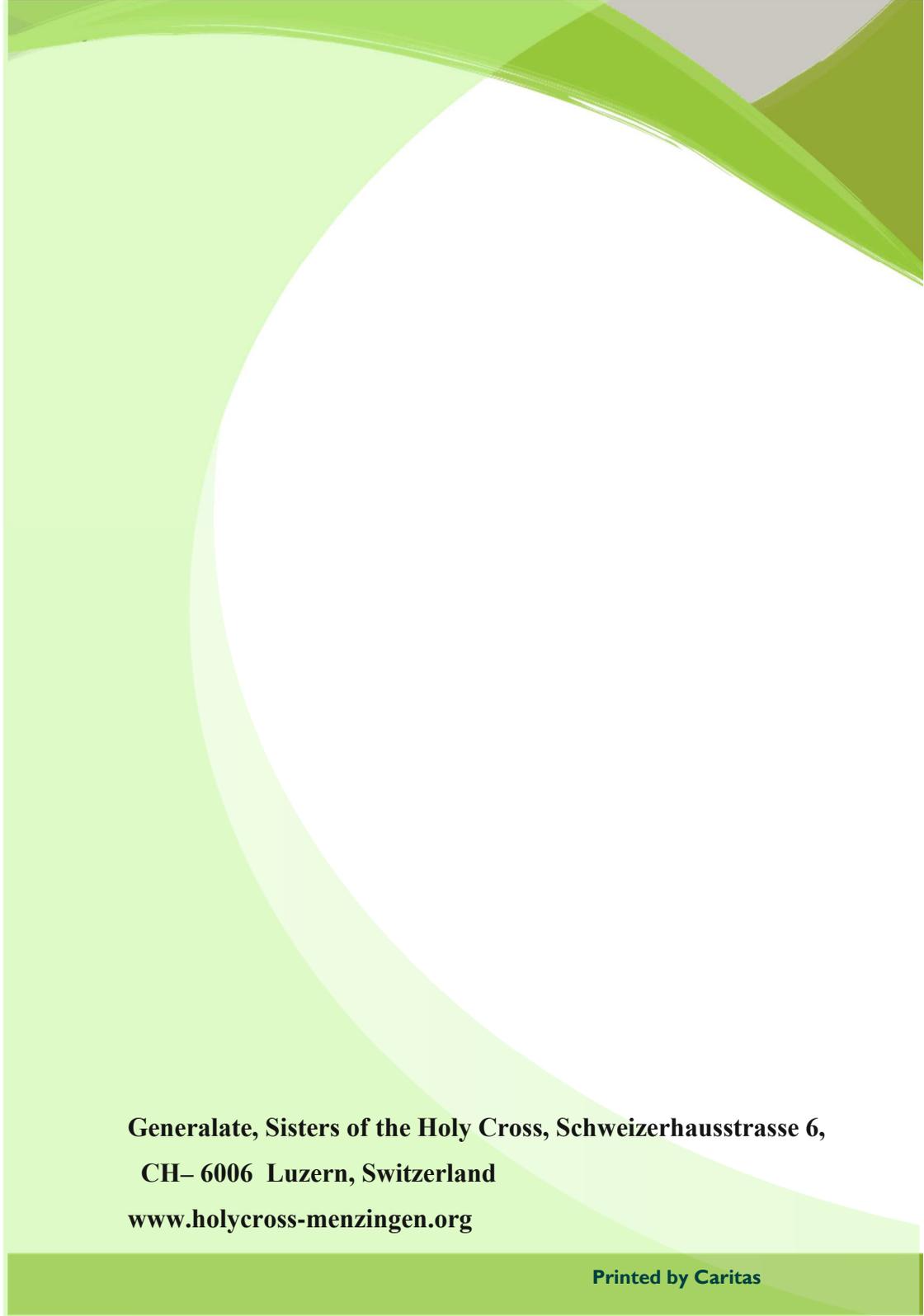
“Go forth to heal our broken world”

A heartfelt embrace, a thank you and “God bless you and your child”, marked the end of this encounter. We will keep the young woman in our hearts.

The broken world comes to our doorstep and every day we see the mission and hear the order to do good to others and to help them build a future. We really hope that this helps to bring light into the world and to make some of God’s love visible.

Sr. Blanca Zarembowicz
German Province





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