

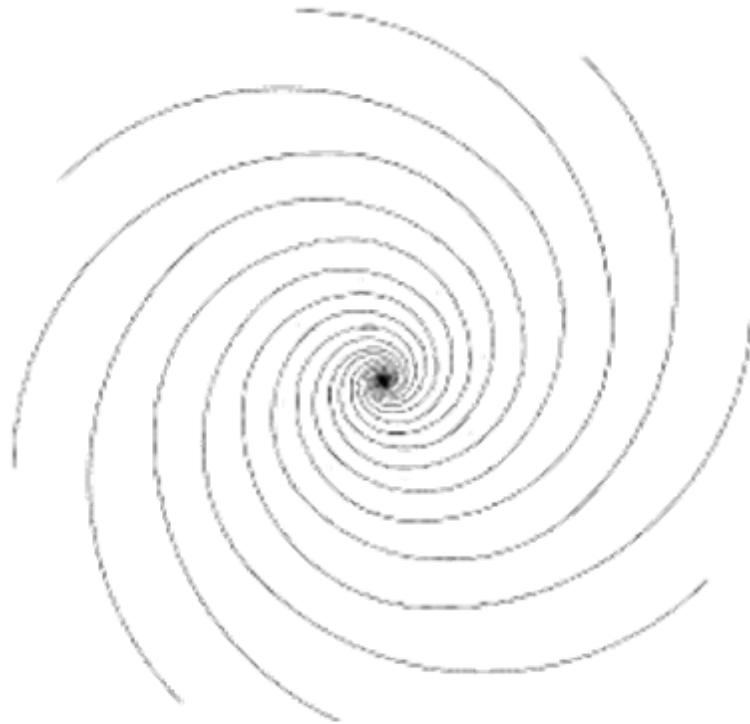
2023 Edition : Menzingen

# LIFE

## ‘DARE TO SET OUT A GRACED CROSSING’



# What about me?



## Cover image:

The image used for this edition of LIFE begins with a spiral shape that symbolizes evolution and transformation. Spirals are one of the most ancient and universal symbols found throughout history and across cultures. They represent growth, expansion, new beginnings, and the never-ending cycle of life. The spiral represents the idea that everything in the universe is constantly evolving and changing.

The net-like background that envelops the spiral represents the reality of how modern-day social media is part and parcel of life that will be forever part of our human existence as generations yet to come will never imagine life in any other way.

The combination of photos of real people in daily life portrays how each one of us is interconnected, spiritually, physically, mentally and reminds us that we are all part of the same ebb and flow in the great cycle of life.

Sr. Dorina's foreword:

## AT ALL TIMES GOD QUESTIONS AND ACCOMPANIES US...



During my university studies I read the text written by Martin Buber with the title *"The Way of Man"*. In the first pages of this book there was a dialogue between two characters on how to interpret the question that God asks Adam: *"Adam where are you?"*. Reading the development of that dialogue and the interpretation given to it, I stopped a lot to reflect on the affirmation of one of the characters who maintained that *in every age God questions every person, asking him at what point he is on the path of his life and at what point does he feels he has arrived as a result of all the experiences he has lived*<sup>1</sup>.

I think this question also challenges each of us. Let us ask ourselves in the silence of our hearts *"Where am I on the journey of my life? Where do I think I've arrived internally after everything I have done and met (people, events, choices...etc)?"*

On the journey of our life it is important to be aware of what has happened and what is happening within us: the experiences that have marked us, the failures that have hurt us, the moments that have motivated us but also the beliefs that help us to move forward with passion, the places we prefer to hide and mask our weaknesses, everything that inhabits us and gives meaning to our lives... Knowing in fact what inhabits us and at what point we are on the journey of our human and spiritual growth is essential for us to mature and to transform, with God's grace, those parts of ourselves that are not in conformity with the Gospel, with the vocation and mission to which we are called. This conscience, in order to be honest and to promote life, is called to allow itself to be enlightened by the Word of God and by the hassles of daily life which always bring out the areas of our personality on which we must work, trying to overcome our laziness, our self-justifications, our ingrained resistance to change.

It is wonderful and meaningful that the first Christians - as the book of the Acts of the Apostles attests - were called by others *"those who belonged to the Way,"* (cf. Acts 9,2; 19,9.23; 22,4). They were called *"those on the way"* because they were followers not so much of a doctrine or teaching, but followers of a *"Way"*, and therefore of a *"way"* of behaving, a way of living, of speaking, of working: they were therefore a people on the move<sup>2</sup>. This path was born from the living encounter with a Person: the encounter with the dead and Risen Jesus, *the Way, the Truth and the Life*. (Jn 14:16)

Like the first Christians we must be aware that ***there is a path that life makes us take with all the events*** it presents to us; but there is also ***another path, much deeper, that we are called to choose personally within those events***.

<sup>1</sup> Martin Buber, *"The way of man"*. Edizioni [Qigajon](#)

<sup>2</sup> Emiliano Biadene, *"The path of man as the path of the believer"* in Note di Pastorale Giovanile, November 2015

This journey is a journey of profound transformation, a transformation made possible by God's grace and by our openness to it. Nobody can choose or do it for us!

To motivate us on this journey of conversion, we have chosen as the Congregational Leadership to ask a few people and a few sisters to tell us in this year's edition of LIFE 2023 how they lived some particular passages of their lives and what path of interior transformation and mission they underwent. From each testimony we will be able to clearly grasp the slow path of *'letting themselves be questioned by situations'*, the resistance but also the courage to *"let go"* and *'letting themselves be transformed by God'*, gradually and collaboratively *opening themselves up to the new reality* encountered.

Every step of life really asks us in a radical way: *What can I say about myself and what do I want to choose?* This question awaits our answer in faith and in our daily actions. Let us therefore help each other to be like the first Christians, *'people on the Way'* who dare to set out, every day, tirelessly, motivated by the living and real encounter with Jesus and His Word. It is a demanding journey but at the same time a journey *imbued with the grace and blessing of God*, who never abandons us.

Dear Readers, I feel close to you, *on the Way ...* *m. Dorina*

Congregational Leader





# Stories of transformation & change in the lives of real people!

FROM THE OUTSIDE INWARD - Fr John Paul Mathebula

FROM FRAGMENTATION TO INTEGRATION - Ms. Neo Rakoma

FROM INDIFFERENCE TO CLOSENESS - Sr. Carla m. Montero

THE TRANSFORMATION OF A MOTHER'S DREAM - Mrs. Bruna Ortolan

FROM DESIRES THAT DECEIVE TO DESIRES THAT MATTER - Clarissa Bargauan

OUR INTER-CONGREGATION FORMATION EXPERIENCE IN ROME

Srs Sherly Paul, Sushma Hembrom and Annie Moyo.

THE TREASURE IN JARS OF CLAY <sup>2.Cor. 4:7</sup>

Sr Tosca Ferrante – Queen of the Apostles Institute

REIMAGINING THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

– SELF INTROSPECTION

- A Film Review
- Social Media from the utterings of a teenager



IN THEIR OLD AGE THEY WILL CONTINUE TO BEAR FRUIT... <sup>PSALM 92:14</sup>



'OUR LIFE IS BUT A WALK'

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## 'Common Heart – Common Journey'

Harmony	Sr Gloria
Empowerment	Sr Robina
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Seeds of hope	Sr Marika
Midwife	Sr Mary
Interiority	Sr Joaquina
Pilgrim	Sr Josia
Discernment	Sr Linet



### A letter from Sr Ivana and the Sisters of the Lenno Community

A special word of gratitude to all who have collaborated with CLT to prepare this magazine:

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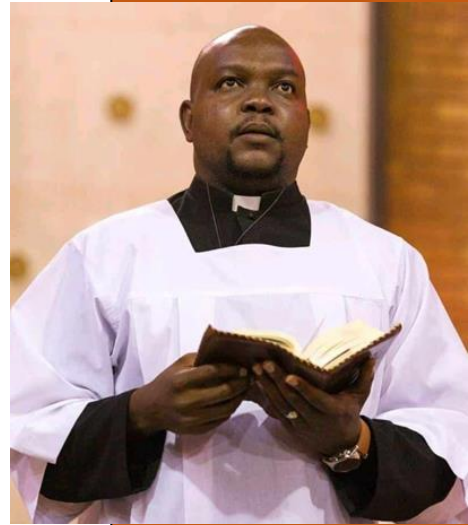
We are deeply grateful to all our contributors who have shared their personal stories with us. We feel indebted for your generosity and openness.



# The journey from outside inward...

**‘When the Lord delivered Zion, it seemed like a dream, too good to be true...’** these words taken from the famous Psalm 126;1-6 resonates with the story I’m about to reminisce on; the great experiences and challenges of my youth, the milestones, the moments of despair, the events that led to and the encounter with self and with God. As one musician of our yester years once noted, **“we are born free but always in chains.”** This resonates with my own pilgrimage through life. Today as I reflect upon my own vocational journey I come to the humble realization that it hasn’t been easy but it has all been worth it. I wouldn’t trade for anything in the world save that my name may be written in the kingdom of heaven. The journey has been one that required me to become consistently open to the will of God through constant discernment and introspection and be ready to embrace the will of God. Consequently to **‘Dare to set out’**, or as Christ invited Peter on the faith-filled morning, *‘Duc in Altum,’* (put out into the deep, Luke 5; 4), take the risk and trust in God’s guiding. It is a persistent longing to be free from the bondages of self-gratification and materialism towards self-realization and transcendence in Christ.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> November 1980 a baby boy was born at the Holy Cross convent (maternity ward) the last child of a family of six (including my parents). Being born into a very devout Catholic family I was baptized on the 15<sup>th</sup> December of that same year with a baptismal name John-Paul, not knowing if it was wishful thinking or prophetic on the part of my parents and our then parish priest. Growing up for me like any other child, who grew up in the late 80s into the early 90s in apartheid South Africa came with its graces and challenges as would be expected in our country during that period. My father was a mayor of our township working for the then regime whilst my elder brother was actively involved within what was known as the political rebels, who protested against the atrocities and injustices of the government of the day. Thus, life in our home was characterized with tensions and constant police raiding, whilst our parents sought the well-being of their children and would do whatever it took to protect their family. As a result, we had to be moved from one relative to another for our safety and protection.



I am Fr. John-Paul Pickett Mathebula a Catholic priest of the Archdiocese of Pretoria, South Africa. I completed my Licentiate in Canon Law, with the Catholic University of East Africa (CUEA) in July 2020. I serve at the Parish of St. Vincent, in Tembisa Township, as parish Priest and also have various other responsibilities.

We never enjoyed any form of stability or the luxury of being brought up by our parents. However, the turn in the political events and the dawn of a new era in our country meant that we could now enjoy and experience some form of stability in our home and family. My brother and I were then enrolled at a then multi-racial school; there I spent the next five years of my high school years. Moreover, it was here that one got introduced and exposed to a life of debauchery. Guns, smoking, alcohol and other drugs were easily accessible to us like school lunch.

Being a child who never really experienced parental attention and guidance one began to replace parental attention and affection with what the school environment provided as alternatives. Along with many of the new found friends we got involved in gang fights, always causing trouble at school. We gambled with our lunch money and skipped school just so we could have fun with alcohol and this became the norm of our schooling days. We became the *‘It Group.’* We became well known in the school; thus, the void was seemingly



satisfied. I no longer needed my parents for anything save for the money and material provision. I had somehow found myself and my life '**seemed**' to be perfect.

My tertiary life was no different, it was just the continuation of where we left off in high school. I registered to study marketing management, well at least that's what my student card and registration form said. I then graduated from a small boy look into a young man, with dreadlocks and became a pseudo-Rastafarian. I was no longer interested in doing any studies but looked for ways to remain popular and get rich quickly and live the so-called soft life. I lived a double juxtaposed life of a Church going, lawless youngster without limits. With haste I became a man of the world, until I was faced with a series of awakening events; amongst which I almost burned down our house whilst high on marijuana, a girlfriend who had an abortion against my will and witnessing friends getting arrested, some of whom were shot and fatally wounded in my presence. Though one fed off the adrenalin that was part of the excitement of this lifestyle, it dawned on me that as a man born free, the chains that were binding me were fast becoming tighter and heavier. My emancipation was no longer a topic for debate, it had to come and there was only one way out of this life. My void could only be fulfilled and satisfied at the cost of willingness and surrendering to my redeemer, that is finding a life with a purpose. I had to 'dare to set out, from living on the outside to begin to look into what lay deep within me.'

The words of St. Augustine: *"Lord you have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they rest in you,"* began to make sense in my life. I went back to the moment I thought I had a calling to the priesthood and decided, so to speak, to give God a chance (*He had given me many chances in my short life*). Grace had touched my life, and mercy re-wrote it. It was as though I was touched by an angel. Then I entered the seminary formation, a journey that wasn't smooth sailing at all, with each step the hurdles became harder and the moments often led to despair and discouragement. But I dared to set out and the journey became a process of finding God in the midst of confusion and tribulation. At times I found myself asking God, why have you brought me out of my Egypt?

This desert became too hard to accept but when grace had entered my life something new happened and everything of my old way of life made no further sense. Thus, I realized that seeking and responding to my vocational call would be a long and lonely road. It contains a search for a place unknown but has a nourishment that nothing can surpass and a time where nothing else matters but finding the treasure, '**a pearl of great price**.' Like St. Peter one cannot help but sing: *"Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."*

Today I'm seven years into the priesthood. As I look back I can only fall prostrate before my Lord in gratitude for allowing me the courage to *"dare to set out."* The challenges that this life brings are as nothing compared to the joy of being a beacon of hope in the lives of so many people who are seeking God in their lives.

The knowledge that God is able to use a broken, unworthy, struggling vessel to touch and transform the lives of many, is fulfilling, humbling and at times scary.

Thus, I found that the life that God has called me to, has to do with how I offer myself at the service of His Church and His people. In this service I continue to realize that the world may have many things to offer me but none of them are so nourishing as the love of God in my life. Finding God has not been a once off act for me, but a perpetual process involving my continued '**YES**' to His will. It is a daily daring to set out even when it is unpopular to do so in our modern world. We may be crucified with Christ, yet we dare to live, no longer for ourselves but in union with Christ living in us. The journey wasn't and is still not easy but if you ask me it sure was and continues to be worth it. For me to live is daring to let Christ into your heart.

### A THOUGHT TO PONDER...

Looking back over the journey of your life where can you tangibly see God's hand at work?

Reflect on this awareness for a time of prayer.

Conclude with a prayer of gratitude in your heart.





## **My journey from fragmentation to integration**

I was born in 1983 as Neo Charlene Mashaba to a teenage mother. I was surrounded by love as a child because I had my mother, aunts and granny staying under one roof. I also had the privilege of being with my older cousins. Though I was a bit young to really have remembered my grandmother well but what I know is, that she was a staunch Catholic and she introduced the Catholic faith to me. I vividly remember the day she left this world when I was eight years old. I came back from school and my aunts were home together with my mom, the look on their faces showed me that something was wrong. I saw my grandmother lying in bed looking very sick. I continued to wash my socks and went to play outside, when I came back I was told of her passing. I was shattered, I had spent every day of my life for eight years with her. Fast forward to after the funeral and my mom decided that she was going to take me to stay with her and my step dad. We moved from place to place never had a stable home. At that time, I had a little brother Motheo.



My parents loved going out and in many instances, I was the one taking care of my little brother. I remember having to wash his nappies. That time there were no pampers (disposable nappies) and we used cloth nappies "black label". I never used to play in the streets because I had house chores to do and I also had to look after my brother. I was quite a lonely child. My dad used to be very abusive towards me and my mom. I remember one time he gave me a hiding because I finished the sausages. I remembered

hearing him tell my mom about how we gossiped about him when he was asleep whilst we were watching late night TV. The words "your child" really cut deep because he always wanted to make it clear that I was not his child.

I deeply feel that I was deprived of my childhood because I had to do house chores during the week after school (cleaning and cooking) and over the weekends I used to play nanny to my younger brother. I don't remember having friends when I started school because we never had a stable home, plus I had no time to socialize. I started having friends when I started attending school at Andrew Anthony Primary School grade 5 in Laudium. At that time my parents had bought a house in Atteridgeville. My brother and I stayed with my paternal grandparents during the week for transport purposes and went home on Fridays. My grandparents used to own a shebeen so there were always people at home. I had house chores to do there also. Every Monday without fail I would clean and shine the steel pots and every Friday before going home I would mop the whole house, apply polish and have the house shining. Staying with the grandparents was great. Granny used to give us spending money daily and we also carried a lunchbox.

Sometimes I dreaded going home on Fridays because my parents used to fight a lot during weekends. Every weekend after my dad had some beers he would beat up my mom and sometimes I would also get a hiding for a very stupid thing. Due to my situation at home, I became a very quiet and reserved person who kept to myself. I mostly stayed in my room so that I didn't step on any body's toes. I only interacted with my friends at school but I was never open to them about my home situation. At times my parents fought so much that my mom would move out of the house and find alternative

accommodation. At one time she rented out a flat in Pretoria West and my brother and I had to adapt to our new travelling route. That made my brother very streetwise as he had to travel alone because we went in different directions. Every time after their "break ups" they would make up and we would move back home. In 1999 we moved to Danville. We got such a nice welcome in Danville!

On our first night they broke into our house and stole some electrical appliances. As a result, my dad never allowed the house be left alone especially at weekends. As I mentioned before my parents loved going out. At weekends when they went out my brother and I would remain to look after the house. My family was quite nomadic, we moved from Danville to Phillip Nel and from there we moved to Suiderberg. In Suiderberg I made great friendships and it became a very happy place. Because the house had very nice features (a big pool and a Lapa) it became a party house for parents, they liked hosting parties. I also liked to invite friends. My brother was streetwise. He started making friends at the Holy Cross Convent and Home for the Elderly nearby. He started attending Mass there and he also roped us in. There we met Sr Bernadette Duffy (fondly known to us as Mmatshupo) in English, meaning, 'Mother of Hope.' She introduced us to a nearby parish in Hercules which she also attended and we built a beautiful Christian community. Sr Bernadette also introduced me to a programme called Education for Life. There I found a family and I met young people who had similar issues as I had. There I could be comfortable and tell my story and that



brought me so much healing and growth. Sr Bernadette assisted me to get my first job at the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference. My responsibilities involved doing administrative duties and conducting Education for Life workshops in the Southern African region. Through that programme I found my passion and calling in life and I also got the opportunity to study towards a Diploma in Youth Development.

I dedicated a lot of my life to Education for Life and youth development. I had no dreams of being married and having children and even at some point contemplated going into religious life. I owe my life to the programme because not only did it help me to get healing but I also became a wounded healer. I also helped or assisted other young people to find healing. I unexpectedly met my husband when I was thirty and because we knew each other from school it became easy to form a friendship and later a relationship. Today, we are married and I am a mother of two handsome boys and for me that is the most fulfilling vocation. I am still in the youth development profession because I believe that young people have the power to change the world.

Recently I have also felt the call from God to branch out into deeper waters to begin another faith-based youth programme or even a youth organisation. I am in the process of discerning what God wants.

United in prayer - Neo

#### **A MOMENT'S THOUGHT:**

**'God, pick up the pieces. Put me back together again. You are my praise!'**  
**Jeremiah 17:14**

**Where in your life do you feel God wanting to recreate you?**

## Crossing over

### ... FROM INDIFFERENCE TO CLOSENESS

The aim of education in Chile is the full development of the individual in the different stages of his or her life, and parents have the preferential right and duty to educate their children. Freedom of education includes the right of educational establishments to accept children and their parents; in turn, parents can choose the type of educational project they wish for their children's education. These principles are based on the acceptance of diversity in society and the need for all of us to complement, accept and include each other. This means that education is an obligation for all children from the age of 4, when they enter Pre-Kindergarten and after a couple of years, they begin to move on to Basic Education which lasts eight years ending at the age of 17 or 18 in Secondary Education. (which is the context in which I carry out my pastoral mission).

This reality guarantees on the one hand that all of them finish their Basic and Secondary Education and on the other hand that they receive a general preparation to carry out jobs or trades without the need to continue on to University or Higher Education. In most of the educational establishments, the starting time for classes is 08:00 and school finishes in most cases at 15:30. The expectation is that at the end of the school day, children and young people return home and are welcomed by their parents, family or other caregivers, share



time with them and accompany them until the end of the day when they should retire to rest. As I got to know the students better and was able to talk to them and get to know their interests and concerns, I found that many of their parents have to work. They are forced to leave the home to carry out tasks to meet the needs and attend to the complex and uncertain economic situation that many of them live in.

As a result, many children are left at home alone, with no one to care for them because the household does not have the resources to employ caregivers. Therefore, once they leave school, they manage on their own, guard their homes, and are responsible for the keys to their homes, in many cases having only the telephone to contact their parents in case of an emergency. At the end of the school day, they remain alone for about five hours a day, as their parents return home at approximately 19:00 to 20:00.

This reality affects many children between the ages of ten and fourteen. When we have the possibility of approaching them, accompanying them in some of their general education activities and getting to know their children's concerns, we can recognise the great need for company and guidance that their parents, due to time and space restrictions, are unable to give them. This impressed me a lot and I began to think of a way to help parents who have to carry out their work outside the home and children who in those hours of solitude can carry out activities that keep them busy, interested and especially that strengthen their overall



development. In order to help with this problem, several extracurricular workshops have been promoted, such as: Football for girls and boys, Rhythmic Gymnastics, Folklore, Environmental Forgers, Holy Cross Leaders, among others, so that the students can stay longer in school. In spite of this initiative there are students who cannot afford to stay in school because they do not have an adult to pick them up and take them home. So, I ask myself again, are we taking care of the needs of all the children? Obviously my answer is that it is still necessary to make a greater effort and for this reason I have created the "Handicrafts Workshop", where I invite children from Year 1 (6 years old) to Year 8 (13 years old) to participate. The idea is to be able to teach in a free and voluntary way techniques such as: embroidery, jewellery, loom-weaving, among others. We meet every day during the students' break periods and I am pleased to say that I have many members, fifty in total, who come to my workshop whenever they can or when they have the opportunity. It is very pleasing to recognise that the motivation that I give them during these periods has stimulated their interest to such an extent that today many of them take their manual work home. Then when they are alone at home, they use their time to make progress in their handicrafts. We have created a messaging group and through it, whenever there are doubts, they can ask and I give them tutorials and indications in case something does not work for them. It is very important that through this activity I can attend to them from afar, guide them and accompany them.

Pope Francis says; **“education is an act of hope, which looks to the future from the present.”** Today and every day my religious work and mission is strengthened. This daily encounter with children is for my life a spiritual growth, an instance to collaborate with fathers, mothers, guardians and especially for the children. If together we protect and accompany each other we are strengthening and fostering humanity.

This work is for me a way of sharing life and talking about God's love in a simple, practical and familiar language.

Sister Carla M. Montero R.



Andrea M. Prieto S. who accompanies these workshops.

## THE TRANSFORMATION OF A MOTHER'S DREAM

I am Bruna a fifty-eight-year-old mother and wife, and I can say that my dreams and wishes for a family have come true.

Ever since I was a little girl, my greatest wish was to be a mother. Like many other little girls, I played with dolls, and my desire to be a mother was so strong that I used to put a pillow under my t-shirt to see my belly grow!

The years went by, I got married very young, and life put me to the test. I was a young bride in my early twenties feeling hopeful that I could finally realise my dream. Unfortunately, I fell seriously ill, and what was even worse for me than the disease, metastatic ovarian adenocarcinoma, was that it would forever prevent me from realising my dream of becoming a mother.

I who had always wished for a large family, and had always said I wanted many children, could never again realise my greatest dream. This caused me great trauma, it was a nightmare, and the world seemed to be falling on top of me. I was angry and disappointed and in addition to the physical pain of the treatment, which was so severe I had to carry this burden.

Then a year later, while still undergoing treatment, my husband and I made a decision. (We had always said we wanted biological children and were open to the possibility of adopting more) but between saying and doing...



And here our adventure began, our beautiful adventure, after interviews, documents, meetings and although not always very easy, we finally obtained eligibility to adopt.

After another year, they called us from Pakistan with a little three-month-old baby girl, Jasmine, waiting for us.

The paperwork was '**Our Pregnancy**,'  
the flight '**Our Labour**,'  
the moment we met our baby's eyes '**Our Delivery**'.

We repeated this incredible adventure three years later, with another beautiful little girl, Agnes, this time older, a little over two years old, but with a history behind her. With her the bonding process was more complicated, especially with me, probably due to problems that she had with some female figure from the past. For a few months she avoided even physical contact with me. I had to struggle a lot to accept and deal with it all.

We always talk freely about their adoption and the culture of their country, Pakistan. We shared with them our history of longing for a family and to have children of our own as well as desiring to adopt. Although our desire to have our own children wasn't possible we are deeply grateful for our beautiful adopted daughters who we love deeply with all our hearts.

We have always tried to respect their life choices. With the youngest it has been easier, as she is more determined, not easily influenced by others and much more stubborn. Our eldest daughter is more cooperative and sensitive, she has always allowed herself to be influenced especially by what we propose as parents... but this has not prevented her from being very successful in her studies and work, filling us with satisfaction.

Life has taken from us - life has given us so much. For nothing in the world would we change our past, we would never give up our wonderful daughters, who are now truly remarkable women!

Of course, it was not easy for anyone. Personally, I will forever miss the fact that I could not feel a new life growing in me. and the difficulty our daughters had to embrace due to the abandonment of the mothers who gave them life.

But love works miracles, and we remain lucky to have such a beautiful and united family.

*How do I respond in situations when my deepest desires cannot be realized?*

*Do I give up on my dreams, live with regrets of unfilled dreams or do I open myself to hear what other plans God has for me to bring my dreams to fruition?*

Bruna with her husband, Gianni and the girls, all grown up now.





## **From desires that deceive to desires that matter In dialogue with a young woman: Clarissa**

*Hi, Clarissa, I met you when you were a young girl during the meetings organised by the Holy Cross Sisters, about 12 years ago... It's been a long time. Can you tell me something about yourself and your story?*

*Hi, Sr. Dorina, Of course I will! I'm Clarissa as you know, I'll be twenty-three soon (on 10th May), I have a wonderful family for which I am very grateful, my mother Paola, sister Susanna (30), and little sister Ludovica (16). I was born and grew up in Valtellina, although I have travelled a lot over the years thanks to my dad and his work. I currently live in Ponte in Valtellina with my boyfriend*



*whom I met eight years ago. In my daily life I work in an outpatients' clinic and study psychology at university. Since we met, there have been many changes in my life, some positive and some less so. I have grown psychologically and not so much physically. In high school I studied accountancy and discovered that it was not my path. As hobbies I have cooking (I like making and decorating cakes), dancing, music, painting, board games and above all travelling. I really like the sea.*

***We know that desires are an important part of our lives, from a very young age. What did you wish for when you were young and what do you wish for now at 23?***

*When I was little, I wanted many things: I wanted to be the prima ballerina at La Scala, to be an engineer (I really liked assembling furniture and I thought that was the engineer's job), to have a horse, a very big house on an island, to become a pilot to fly around the world. Let's say that things have changed a bit... I still assemble furniture but I don't want to be an engineer, I have a house and I've discovered that the bigger it is, the more I have to clean it, I don't have a horse but I have a very lively little dog, I'm not a pilot but let's say I'm working hard to do some travelling around the world. To become a prima ballerina at La Scala went wrong... I wasn't as talented as I thought, but I still dance sometimes (clearly not ballet), and that makes me happy. My desires have changed over time. I currently wish to finish university and become a good psychotherapist. I still want to explore the world as much as possible and I would like in time to build a family of my own.*

***Was there a situation in your life when you realised that you were looking for something important but in the wrong way?***

*Yes, there was a period in my late teens when I realised that I was unhappy and that I was looking for happiness in the wrong way. I was looking for happiness in a material way and in other ways, sometimes blaming others for making me unhappy. I did not realise that I had to look for happiness within myself and that I had to ask myself why I could not be happy with myself and my life.*

***Was there an experience that affected you deeply and made you realise the important things in life?***

*Yes, the experience I had to learn the most from and that affected me the most was the loss of my dad in 2013. When I was thirteen I was thinking about having fun and classic teenage things. I had no idea what 'death' and the feeling of abandonment, sadness and loneliness could be. My dad died in hospital in Pavia after three years of illness which for me seemed very long. He appeared to us to be*

recovering but died quite unexpectedly. No one in my family expected this. Following this event, a series of responsibilities, of feelings unknown to me, caused my world to fall apart. I had to grow up quickly to help my family and cope with the situation. It was difficult to cope, especially since my grandmother also died two days later. This experience changed me dramatically: for me now the most important things in life are family, experiences and time. Now I am very grateful when I can spend good time with my family or with those I love.

***In your opinion, thinking about your own life, when do wishes turn into illusions and when do they become an opportunity to build something new in you and around you?***

*Illusions are often difficult to recognise. In my opinion, desires turn into illusions when they feed an apparent future happiness that is only attainable upon completion of the set goal. In other words, when we 'tell' ourselves that we can only be happy if we reach a certain goal, believing that joy can only belong to something that does not yet exist and that it can only be reached in the future, forgetting the present and focusing only on that goal. For me, desires become an opportunity when they push us to improve, when happiness and joy do not depend on achieving them but on going all the way towards them, even if we do not know if and when we will achieve them.*

***You have chosen to study psychology. What is the deep desire behind your choice of study that helps guide your life?***

*The reason I chose psychology was to fulfil a deep need to improve and learn how to deal with life's situations, both good and bad; it is a need to grow, learn, know and understand each other better. I would like once I put it into practice on myself, to also be able to help others who have the same desire.*

***How much has faith helped you to guide and qualify your desires?***

*Faith has helped me to have a much greater awareness of what life is about, in the sense that it has enabled me to reflect and realise what I really want and consider to be important in life.*

***What message do you feel you are giving to young people today so that they can seek the true desires they carry in their hearts and not mere illusions?***

*I would say to every young person: "To give yourself the chance to understand yourself and in order to distinguish your desires from illusions you need time to think. Give yourself the chance to be bored. In the moments of the day when you 'stop your activities' and feel that you are getting bored, instead of 'scrolling' on social media, listen and focus on your deeper self and thoughts".*

***How do you think we consecrated women can help young people discern between the 'illusions' that reality generates and the path to a life worth living?***

*In my opinion, the greatest help you can offer us as consecrated women is true, non-judgmental listening. We all need someone to listen to us. In our often-hectic everyday lives, it is difficult to find someone who has 'time' for us and who is able to really listen and not just give advice.*

**Thank you, Clarissa, for opening your heart to me, our Congregation and to our readers. May your life continue to blossom and may you communicate to the world every beautiful gift that God has placed in you... Happy journey...**

In our modern-day society so many adult and young people pay to be listened to by psychologists and psychotherapists.

- How much space and time do I give to listening to the needs of others, the youth, those I meet in my work place and mission and those I live with in community and in my family?



# OUR INTER-CONGREGATION FORMATION EXPERIENCE IN ROME

We attended the programme of Preparation for Formators at UISG. We were forty-five participants from twenty-two countries, and from thirty-two Congregations. It was an international, inter-Congregation, inter-cultural, and multi-lingual group.

Indeed, it was a very enriching and an awakening programme, that called us to embrace our vulnerabilities from the very beginning. It became for us a grace filled experience, source of new strengths, courage and opened us to accompany each other on our six months' journey. It again called us to be transformed in order to accompany others on their journey of transformation. It helped us to look into ourselves to address our biases and lack of sensitivity to otherness. It was an adventurous experience for personal transformation.

The opportunity challenged us to grow and discover the value and beauty of living in a diverse community or an inter-cultural community. It encouraged and challenged us to move together, walk together, co-network and collaborate with others and build relationships for mutual growth and support. The process enabled us to focus less on self 'I' and to move towards thinking of others 'We' that brings about the wealth of being together by becoming more relational, listening with an ear of the heart, discerning together and becoming a powerful and positive presence to each other. This also invited us to appreciate individual differences, uniqueness and to cultivate a curiosity for a deeper knowledge of others that opens a way to communion.



UISG Inter-Congregation programme for Formators  
Rome, 2023

The Inter-Congregation formation experience has deepened our understanding of religious life in which we are called to incarnate love with joy. To have a deep and intimate relationship with God, strengthens us to embrace our differences without losing our own identity. We learnt to be hospitable and step out of our comfort zones to venture into the unfamiliar world of different cultures, personalities, age and charisms in order to be fruitful. This became a nourishing and motivating aspect that we shared. We appreciated the presence and giftedness of each other and enjoyed the richness of different Charisms. Our differences became our motivation as we began to see that it is not only individuals that need transformation but whole cultures.

The experience has offered us an opportunity for transforming our lives by looking and embracing holistic self-care for effective performance, to enable us to flourish so that others may flourish as well and to bring about balance in our lives. For when we care for ourselves in a holistic way, we help our communities and missions to grow. We all need to be nourished in order to nurture the well-being of other sisters and people that the Lord has called us to serve.



The experience also opened our eyes and ears to the vulnerabilities and challenges that religious are facing today, such as, lack of community life, neglect of prayer and a misunderstanding of the vow of Obedience. Exposure to these challenges created a deeper desire to follow Jesus more closely as religious women called to live evangelical vows.

On a more global level we felt encouraged by the words of Pope Francis; **“I am counting on you the Religious to Wake Up the World”**. This empowered us to listen to God and try to respond to the needs of the time with the same audacity of our Founders, the Charism, Spirituality and be innovative and creative in our ministries.

We remain grateful for the opportunity given to us that has enabled growth and change in our perspective and given us new understanding for Formation.

Srs Sherly Paul, Sushma Hembrom and Anne Moyo.

## Our three Sister Formators in Rome



## The treasure in jars of clay" (cf 2Cor 4:7)

### The new life that can be born from our limitations

Alessandro D'Avenia, an Italian writer, beloved by teenagers and young people, writes: *"The sea seems limitless, yet it only sings when it finds them"*<sup>3</sup>. Fragility, a term that recalls *fran-gere* i.e. 'to break', reminds us of our being limited and, consequently, generates a condition of vulnerability in our lives. How strange to hear that these words: fragility, crisis, limit, vulnerability can become space and resource so that our life can 'sing', can 'renew itself', 'find itself'. There are so many limits that we are called upon to deal with on a daily basis: physical, character, legal, related to relationships, etc. And yet within us there continues to be a 'vital' force that makes us oscillate between the desire for the future and the fear of encountering it, between what we feel we are and what we wish to become, between what we would like to shout to the four winds and what remains hidden in our hearts often our wounds, pain, humiliation, etc.

We are reminded of our limitations by the Word of God from the very beginning: *"You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil"* (Gen 2:16). Almost *everything, but not everything*, reminds us that we are women and men who are capable of most things but we are not 'omnipotent'; that trace of 'narcissism' present in each of us is rendered opaque by a key and clear word: "prohibition". Prohibition is not a failure but the awareness of a boundary. And boundaries, in life, are necessary; where there are none, misunderstandings, fractures, abuse, disturbances in the relational sphere are generated. Boundaries, limits, are the possibility we have to become better and more aware of ourselves, of the vital space we are called to occupy in the world, without feeling we are the 'centre of the world'. The

British writer, essayist and theologian, C.S. Lewis, writes: *"True humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less"*<sup>4</sup>. It is an interesting invitation to occupy our place by taking care of others without failing to take care of ourselves. It is always difficult to find the right balance.

This mature awareness of oneself, can become a testimony that we can give today in a world where one must be a winner governed by the expectations of others and where defeats become no longer tolerable and sometimes even lead to extreme gestures, especially in the world of adolescents.



Acknowledging one's own fragility means accepting failure and by putting things into perspective so that the preciousness of oneself is not undermined by the 'flaws and imperfections' that are part of life.

In this regard, I remember an ancient Japanese technique, that of '*kintsugi*', which consists of recovering and fixing ceramics (cups, vases, etc.) by reuniting the fragments with a composition made of gold dust. The 'scars' are healed and repaired with gold and this makes the previously broken crock pot unique and precious. Where the shards have

<sup>3</sup> A. D'Avenia, *Cose che nessuno sa*, Mondadori 2011

<sup>4</sup> Cit. da: S. Bucci, *Cambiare è possibile. Il modello Emmaus per avviare e accompagnare processi pastorali*, Milano, Paoline 2020, p 75.

been lost, more gold pouring is needed to put it back together.

This technique, I think, can be a very apt metaphor for being able to grasp the new life that comes out of limitations. Is it possible to think of our lives as precious and unique vessels whose wounds are held together by 'something else', if so, what and who can become 'gold' for our existence?

I propose a few key words that might help our reflection.

**Relationship.** We know well from our experience how beautiful and, at the same time, challenging it is to meet people, to live together, to collaborate. Each of us is the bearer of a gift, of an experience, of our own personal history, wounded and blessed. This often finds room for understanding, respect and care. Sometimes it also finds rigidity, lack of respect, superficiality that makes it more difficult to *remain*. I believe that reality always needs to be read not only *from our point of view*, I mean our emotions, feelings, the values we believe in. It also needs *to be deepened* using the *magnifying glass* of faith, the fruit of a relationship with God that leads one to look further in order not to lose one's way.

### **Involvement.**

The psychotherapist, Don Stefano Guarinelli, in an interesting text of his where he puts theology and psychology into pastoral dialogue, writes that "conforming to Christ", in imitation of Him, is not to be understood in a psychological sense, but in a moral and spiritual sense. In other words, we are called to live and love *as* He loved, but starting from the fact that none of us is Christ. Each one is called *to be like* Him but in our own unique way.

**Change.** We carry the experience of change inscribed in our bodies: we are no longer what we were when we were born, and each passing day, while on the one hand highlighting the fragility of the body, on the other hand it enables us to grow in wisdom. Continuity and discontinuity are *contained* in the dynamics of change and, once again, it is a question of *integration* which means

- ***opening the mind*** to become aware of one's place in the world today;
- ***opening the heart*** to recognise the presence of God who *renews everything with his Spirit* and makes even our limitations precious;
- ***opening the will*** to *decide passionately* to cooperate in the realisation of the Kingdom through concrete choices that start precisely from the choice to change!

Einstein said in one of his famous speeches: **"We can't expect things to change, if we continue doing the same things. Crisis is the greatest blessing for people [...]"**

(taken from "The world as I see it" 1931 - Albert Einstein from <https://www.edizionisanlorenzo.it/blogs/news/ultime-offerte>).

All the crises and limits in our lives can indeed become a great training ground for life, a blessing that makes us grow in the dimension of gratitude. They also make us relax and perhaps, sometimes, laugh at our limits, pay attention: at our *own limits* and not at the limits of others!

And laugh, it is good for the mind and the heart!

Good journey!

Sr Tosca Ferrante Ap





# Reimagining the Role of Social Media and the challenge to look within ourselves



## *A Media Review:*

*Through this article we are called to have the courage to open a window on the use of Social Media on a personal, community and mission level through the viewing of a film...*

## *Cues for an education that transforms our daily use of the Media*

The use of social media, is not only related to the world of youth or a current world fashion, but has become a commodity that we cannot do without. Not only has the reality of Covid 19 pushed us to use online communication platforms that we were not familiar with and unused to, but the same mobile phones and laptops, within reach of almost all of us, are bringing us closer to a world that we need to get to know and educate ourselves seriously.

The film ***Disconnect***, a film produced in 2012 in the United States of America and directed by Henry Alex Rubin, is a film that takes us without much diplomacy or masking to what a naive, uninformed and purely compensatory use can generate: the real (and not virtual!) destruction of relationships and people's lives through devious pretence and deceit.

In this film, three stories are told that take place in different cities and contexts but have in common the pain generated by a network that is accessed only to project one's own needs, curiosities or for the evil desire to bully someone.

***The first story*** concerns a journalist who, in order to get a prominent position in publishing, navigates through the world of pornography in order to contact a young man who will allow himself to be interviewed and

tell how he got into that world and what he thinks he will get out of that kind of life. Unfortunately, in order to get that interview, the journalist deludes the young man, whom she managed to contact via chat, making him believe she had feelings for him that did not actually exist and promising him a different life that she could not actually guarantee. The journalist with her brilliant article and her courageous interview will achieve great success but at the same time will create in the young man the lacerating pain of having been simply exploited to promote the audience of others and the anger of not being able to access a different life because it is tied to an illusion.

***The second story*** concerns a young teenager who is shy and closed in his world both at home and at school. Two of his friends, just for fun, start contacting him via the Internet pretending to be a girl interested in him. The young man is immediately fascinated and to prove his love he sends a video of himself that will be spread everywhere, generating derision from the whole school. Blinded by grief and humiliation, he tries to take his own life and, saved at the point of death by his sister, remains in a coma cared for by his family members who, in facing this misfortune, will rediscover the strength and light of family love.

*The third story* concerns a couple who without realising it have grown apart. The wife starts chatting with a man online, confiding her grief at losing a child and feeling often lonely. The husband instead uses the family's credit card to access online games. The result? The card is cloned and all the money saved over time disappears in an instant. The couple will be devastated on several levels: by the pain of betrayed mutual trust, by the poverty caused by the disappearance of the money, and by the utter helplessness of the police in tracking down the culprit. Despite the pain, however, the couple will find, after much effort, a way of reconciliation.

These stories may seem to us to be born of pure invention and yet I am sure that this is what we have all, at different times, read in the news stories of our countries or what may have happened in the same cities where we live.

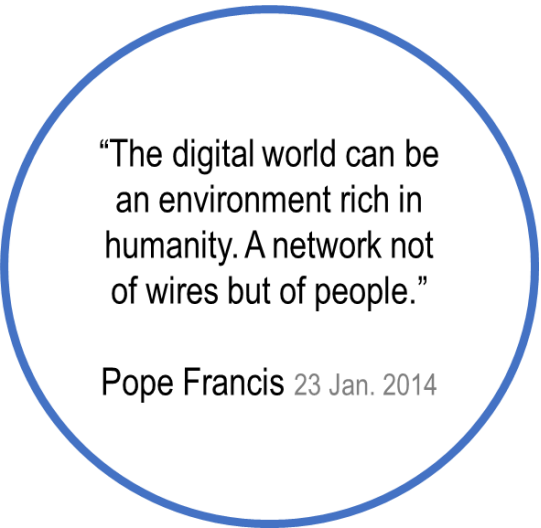
This film, seen on a personal, community or parish/school group level - possibly people of mature age - can help us look inside ourselves and ask honestly what we are looking for when we connect with someone through our mobile phones or Skype, Meet, Tick Toc... Even the pictures and words posted on our Facebook and Whatsapp profiles tell something about us to those we know well but also to those we do not know at all. We need to be increasingly aware that an underdeveloped emotional life and incorrect training in the use of social networks can become a winning combination to ruin our vocation and also the lives of others.

### *Connecting with the deepest part of ourselves*

#### *and with God*

We must not fear the virtual world or prohibit its absolute use; rather, we must educate ourselves to an awareness of our deepest affective needs so as not to use the Internet to compensate for them. We are called to use the Internet with the clear objective of communicating values related to the Gospel and truth. When we are disconnected within ourselves we can really run the risk of connecting with realities that delude us and then disappoint us. As in the stories told in the film, what can save us from the abuse of a world that isolates us within our own communities and families is honesty with ourselves and true relationship with those around us.

Opening our hearts to wise spiritual people, cultivating healthy relationships in community, informing ourselves in the use of new technologies and maintaining our Christian values all educate us to use media correctly in our lives. Such formation also transforms us inwardly because it helps us study new paths of evangelisation and helps us avoid painful addictions. In fact, no media can replace the richness and authentic creativity of human relationships, which often challenge us but at the same time, with God's grace, can 'save' us from the dangers our vulnerability can incur.



"The digital world can be an environment rich in humanity. A network not of wires but of people."

Pope Francis 23 Jan. 2014

## FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION

In a moment of silence and prayer, I try to reread the messages or emails I send or receive not for work or mission purpose. I try to look at the pictures I post on various online profiles. Without useless moralising, I try to stop at one of these questions:

- *How much "flavour of the Gospel" is present in what I write, read or watch?*
- *What new step of affective transformation am I called to take in order not to fall into addiction or superficiality in my use of social media?*
- *How much time does my mobile phone use take away from the personal time of silence and caring for my inner life?*
- *How much time does it take from my relationships in community and in the family?*

I choose a passage from Scripture that can illuminate my journey in this area and try to check myself periodically in the light of it.



### From the utterings of a teenager...

Every day I go on Facebook to check on my wall,  
I just stare and wonder if I even know you people at all.  
I go on Twitter to tweet a tweet, then on Instagram to share a random picture of my feet.  
I post just about the most ridiculous things, including what I wear and what I eat.

I can't stand my page being blank and white, so I come up with a funny story,  
whenever I can't think of anything else to write.  
If I'm really bored I might check out someone else's page instead,  
to post a rude comment about something they said.

I don't hang out with a lot of friends, but according to the internet,  
I have over a hundred and ten!  
This is everyone's routine day by day, as we check posts,  
and secretly call each other names as we pass in the hallway.  
We no longer have genuine compassion; instead, we get straight to the point,  
something I like to call bashing.

We think it's normal to yell "Amy's having a baby and Mark is going crazy!"  
Texting is another great hobby, I just got a message calling Amy a \*\*\*\*,  
and Mark's girlfriend a complete nut.  
We call this our way to connect, but society is turning into a wreck.  
Social media helps us to keep in touch,  
but I think it's the reason we haven't slept much.





*"In their old age they continue  
to bear fruit..."*

*They shall be fresh and flourishing, to declare that  
the LORD is upright."*

*Psalms 92:14&15*





A tell-tale from the life of Sr Caritas Hediger, Maria von Berg, Menzingen, shared with Sr. Fatima who asked her:

Looking back over your life since you stopped active ministry till now - how would you describe your journey?

**Sr. Caritas: Our life is but a walk...**

*We are looking forward to sunny and good hiking days, where we can recharge our batteries and leave everyday life behind.*

*Before leaving, I have to think about where I want to go? Do I have the necessary strength and prerequisites for this goal? Then it's time to pack your rucksack. What do I take with me? For a long hike, I need a compass. You never know if fog will unexpectedly prevent visibility. Rain protection and fortifying provisions and drinks also belong in the rucksack. The hiking sticks can be a good support. The mobile phone is a great help for emergencies. The joy and hope of having a happy time and the enthusiasm should also be my companions. With the well-packed rucksack, the planned part of the trail can be mastered well.*

*Our life is like a hike. We are always on the way and carry our rucksack with us. In the rucksack of life, we pack everything that can help us to cope well with the path and to achieve the set goal. This includes school, vocational training, studies. Talents and gifts help to master the path of life well. The experience of the past also helps to make successful progress. Encounters and conversations along the way can be ground-breaking and enriching and help to achieve the goal well.*

*Maybe the sun doesn't always shine on the path. That's no reason to give up on the goal. On the way, this and that comes into the rucksack: stones, flowers, roots.... However, the weight can become a burden. Unload something? No, no! I need all that - not easy to LET GO.*

*A crossroads, an unexpected change in the weather, impassable terrain, no more visibility ahead... Such experiences make us pause and reflect. What's next? In case of uncertainty on the path of life, the following applies: listen inwardly. Deep down, I can feel: "I am with you. I am your companion. You're not alone." Maybe I need to ask experienced people about the way to move forward.*

*Sometimes we feel that we are carrying unnecessary things with us, which have become a burden and weigh us down like heavy stones; such as disappointments, unachieved goals, unfulfilled expectations, broken relationships, experiences of injustices, fears, worries... yet the journey requires us to tackle these burdens. But where to put them, I ask myself? At the Cross, we are allowed to lay down everything. Jesus said:*

**"Come to me, all of you who are overburdened and burdened with sorrows: I will let you breathe a sigh of relief".**



*And in the Epistle of Peter, it says:*

**"Throw all your cares on Him, for He is concerned about you."**

*It is very important for the hiker to take a break here and there along the way. It is necessary to enjoy the beauty of the surroundings, this awakens courage and joy and makes the journey ahead hopeful. Supporting good experiences, adventures and encounters are not a burden. There is always room for the beautiful and hopeful in the rucksack of life.*



*The thoughts of Dom Helder Camara are impressive and can also be ground-breaking for our life's path:*

**"It's a grace to start well. It is an even greater grace to stay on the right path. But the grace of graces is to go forward to the goal, even when exhausted."**

*We also need to reduce the baggage, get rid of the ballast of unnecessary fears, and decrease the bundles of worries to a tolerable level. What a relief when you no longer have to hold grudges against anyone. To be able to dump the burden of bad and past experiences on the garbage heap and be open to new opportunities. What you really need in the rucksack of life can easily fit in a small bag. Humour doesn't depress, it supports your back. Love is light as a feather and has no weight in the open hand. You don't have to wear tenderness, it carries you.*



### **Crossing over from an active to a more passive life-style.**

**Sister Beatrice Horber, ninety years old, writes about her 'Second-to-last trip'**



My transfer to St. Franziskus Nursing Home was planned for autumn 2022 but due to some unforeseen circumstances the move came quicker than planned.

I wasn't quite prepared but at my age of ninety years old and having obeyed my whole religious life, here I was beginning to pack all my belongings to take with me. I was happy that I could leave behind me all that I did not intend to take and this made life a little bit easier.

On the day following the news of my earlier leaving a nurse immediately came to work with me. After three days, the nurse came down with the flu and had to stay at home for a week. That brought me advantages... short-lived ones because I too took the flu and had to stay in bed with a fever and was not able to leave my room. As a result, the time of my leaving Maria vom Berg was extended by two weeks. I was happy with that!





Sr. Sandra and Sr. Carmela Maria made sure that all my laundry and clothes were provided with laundry number 594 and patched. What a wonderful gift!

Suddenly, I felt lighter and relieved. We made good progress with the clearing. I left a lot of things in the room. It became easier and easier for me. Two days before the **second-to-last trip**, as I call it, I said goodbye to the sisters while sharing three experiences I had while packing my belongings.

I love books and I own quite a few of them. Why did I leave so many behind me? Because I realized that there is little room for them in St. Franziskus. Later I heard that the books followed me to St. Franziskus, for the attention and use of the resident priests.

The **second-to-last trip** was getting closer and closer. I was more open and ready to leave Maria vom Berg. The only thing I miss to this day is the chapel. On July 15th, 2022, we left Maria vom Berg with bag and baggage.

In St. Franziskus I was warmly welcomed by Sr. Elsbeth, by the sisters and the nurses. Sr. Elsbeth accompanied me to the room on the third floor with a priceless, panoramic view. Nurse Dragana helped me unpack and made everything comfortable. In the meantime, Sr. Elsbeth delighted me with a beautiful orchid. I could only thank her and be amazed at such a welcome.

I feel lucky to be here as it gives me ample time to prepare myself spiritually for the next part of my life's journey.

All in God's hands



Interview between Sr Gloria Poblete and Sr. Maria Theresa Leuenberger.

Sr Maria Theresa originates from Switzerland and has been a missionary in Chile for many years. She is now ninety-six years old.

**Looking back on your life from when you were in active apostolate and now in your retirement, how would you describe this journey?**

*I started with a lot of enthusiasm; everything was new. I worked very eagerly with the children in the school and each time there was something to learn. I was young then and the students were almost my age. I preferred some things more than others. I felt at home with the girls. I felt at home, in a family atmosphere and to this day I still have contact with some of them. For the first time I could evangelise. I could prepare the children for the sacraments. I could integrate with the families and this was my initial and deep desire to come to Chile to be a missionary.*



### What were your greatest challenges?

*In my early days I faced difficult things, teaching things I didn't know. Later the bishop asked me to take charge of the catechetical department and I didn't want to be in an office. I had to learn new things. In obedience I gave myself to the Holy Spirit and He enlightened me. This new mission pushed me forward. I felt fulfilled, forming catechists, biblical pastoral ministry, accompanying others as a big catechetical family and through all this I discovered that the spirituality of the Congregation was the same as that of catechesis. I was in that mission for twenty two years of my life.*

*When I finished catechesis, I had a new mission experience in Toltén. I was with the most abandoned people in the parish. I felt very integrated, forming home-based communities in the middle of the village, I accompanied a community of lay people from Santa Cruz.- they were my family.*

### What was the hardest thing to give up?

*It was very difficult for me to leave the people and come to Betania. It seemed that God did not want me to stay there because there was no other sister to accompany me and I could not stay alone. It was difficult to renounce being among the marginalised and the poor and to lose a little of the freedom of being among the people on pilgrimage.*

### How did you respond to these challenges and difficulties?

*At the beginning I felt useless. I had come with all my material to Betania in the hope of working with the sisters engaging in reflection together, but I didn't see much interest. Then I tried various things but nothing worked out. It is very difficult to leave the mission and arrive in the desert. With God's help and the company of the Holy Spirit, I have kept going until today.*

### Describe the time/moment when you felt you had to let go and accept your new lifestyle?

*I didn't feel I had to let go. I didn't really want to let go; you could say it was forced upon me and it wasn't my will but I accepted to let go even though it cost me a lot.*

### How do you feel now that you have finished an active mission and are retired?

*I feel grateful and loved by God. I have always felt His merciful love. Now I am occupied with the mystery of eternal life. One is never ready to leave. One is attached to the earth and to material things. My mind is occupied with that.*

### How do you describe this moment of grace?

*I remain in hope with serenity in my heart. I trust that God is present in my life and has guided and accompanied me in all that I have done as a Missionary.*

Dear Sr. Maria Theresa thank you for sharing your story with me. I too thank you for your long life and love for the people of Chile. May God continue to bless you.



**“In their old age they continued to bear fruit... They shall be fresh and flourishing, to declare that the LORD is upright;” Psalm 92.14 & 15**

**Sr. Alma Keezhanjil shares:**

Writing something on the theme **‘Dare to set out... a graced crossing’**... appears to me interesting and appealing. On opening the bible, we find stories

of ‘daring-set-outs’ and a quick glance into the Old Testament, we encounter brave hearts like Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Sarah, Tamar, Ruth and Esther. In the New Testament, especially Post



Easter and Post Pentecost the events are all about women and men who ventured to go forth with incredible audacity and proclaimed Christ the Good News. A short glance into secular history shows that every single human achievement is the result of a 'daring set out' made by someone somewhere on this earth.

Ultimately, they were all part of God's 'Master plan' of love and mercy for His creation; part of the unfolding of God's great Eternal design. His work in and through human beings chosen for those specific roles in humanity's salvation history. With joy I join to sing Isaiah of old:

***"O Lord, you will ordain peace for us, for indeed all that we have done, you have done for us."***

Is 26:12.

How about those soul-stirring words uttered and 'daring set outs' made by Father Theodosius Florentini, whose 201<sup>st</sup> birthday we celebrated

***"I need sisters who understand the cross"***

And the inspiring words of our Foundress Mother Bernarda Heimgartner:

***"Divine providence is our deposit account."***

and other thought-provoking sayings by both of them.

What boundless trust and genuine confidence they must have had in God's never failing providential care and all-embracing love deep within them.

Their courage and powerful examples to be true to Jesus' call

and His mission in the midst of opposition and difficulties galore, should enthuse and encourage us today to continue their charism with joy and commitment. We need to go forward fearless and hope filled, with the mission of Jesus, always remembering His unalterable promise, 'Fear not I am with you,' <sup>Isaiah 41: 10.</sup>

Glancing back into my own life journey, I am happy and immensely grateful to God for the gift of life, human, Christian, and religious each filled with blessings. I thank God first of all, for the gift of faith in Him, for my loving God-fearing parents and family who taught me to love and live a God-centered life, in all situations and places.

My relationship with God developed through prayer, spirituality, Christian principles and my value-based mind-set and inner connectedness to the Lord who has accompanied me all through my life journey. This made me happy, confident, secure and serene, and gradually became part of my nature, during my school days and further through my fifty-eight years of religious life as a member of the Holy Cross family engaged in various ministries. The Lord's nearness was my greatest strength and His words always a support and consolation. He taught me through my experiences to cultivate a broader vision of things, to look beyond the immediate and empirical realities and struggles in life. He let me experience that He is faithful in all His promises and assurances.

To sum up, God who loves me and who has made me with plan

and purpose (Ps 100:3, Jer 1:5) holds my hand and walks with me daily. O what a journey it has been... joy and deep gratitude fill my heart when I reflect back. In the last analysis, it was all leading towards an ongoing deeper and deeper understanding of myself, God, others, creation and even the purpose and meaning of life itself. All God's gifts:



***"From His fullness we have all received"*** <sup>Jn 1:16</sup>

and His spirit helps us realize that He is "all in all". So, I humbly join the psalmist to muse on:

***"O Lord our sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!"*** <sup>Ps 8:1.</sup>

***"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever"*** <sup>Heb13:8</sup>



***Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*** <sup>Mt 28:20.</sup>



An interview between Sr Bernadette Duffy and Sr Patsy Mc Dermott (England) in the context of **the wisdom learnt from aging as a process from independence to dependence.**

"Getting old is like climbing a mountain; you get a little out of breath, but the view is much better!" – Ingrid Bergman

Having spent some time at the Grange and getting to know Sr Patsy we were then able to have the following conversation.

Sr. Patsy, looking back over the last few years of your life from retirement while still active to now settling into retirement how would you describe that journey? (Sr Patsy shares that her journey of transition all happened so suddenly and like a bolt of lightning she was forced to change her whole lifestyle. She tells her story with a mixture of joy and sadness...and with little sighs in between.)

*"The year 2016 will always be a significant year in my life, especially the last Monday of October that year. It was a beautiful sunny day; better than most days we had that summer. I decided to use the day to start on some pre-Christmas cleaning. With classical music playing softly in the background I started upstairs with the visitors' rooms, then made my way through the corridors and so eventually I finished downstairs in the dining room. I was thoroughly absorbed and enjoying what I was doing until suddenly I was stopped in my tracks. I could not move or lift my right leg, it just seized up and refused to move. Fortunately, I was standing near the handrail and able to hang on to it. After what seemed like hours, I was able to hobble to a chair and to sit down and to try to make sense of what was happening to me. I never experienced anything like this before and felt very frightened. I was still sitting in the same place, when Sister Imelda, my community member, returned home from work that evening."*

**O dear Sr Patsy then what happened?**

*"Well, Imelda immediately tried to sort me out and settle me for the night. I was totally unable to go upstairs so she made a bed downstairs. The next morning, we left early for the hospital where I was assessed by the Triage nurse, prior to the arrival of the duty doctor. After his assessment, I was transferred by ambulance to the Cardiac Unit in Northwich Park hospital, where I was kept in for ten days. Immediately they began attending to me and I had numerous blood tests, X rays, body scans and intensive physiotherapy twice a day. Some days I felt as if I had run a whole marathon. Now, I understand how some of my patients must have felt when I nursed them in my earlier days. When the Medical Team came to a final diagnosis it was clear I would not be able to live in a house with stairs."*

**Ah, thank you for sharing your experience with me.** Our Conversation continues...

**How did you manage (feel) after you realised you would not be able to stay in your present community any longer?**

*"So, I was transferred from the hospital to the Grange Community where I was given a beautiful room and made feel very welcome. Above all I was in a place of peace and quiet. I suddenly had time to think and assess my situation. I realised that my independence was no more. I physically depended on others doing things for me and helping me to be as independent as possible. I was still very frightened, anxious and I felt really cross with myself for being so useless and helpless. There were many black, dark and uncertain days."*



## How did you respond to these challenges and difficulties?

*"I must say I tried my best to respond with gratitude as Sharon and her Team did not give up on me and now I know I have been extremely fortunate to be so well looked after here at the Grange. I have everything I need and I have just to ask for help and it is available. I am truly blessed and I thank the Lord every day for my community and my carers. This new outlook on life helps me to accept the challenges and difficulties of my ill health."*

## How would you describe the moment when you felt it was time to let go and accept your new life-style?

*"Each day as I continue to accept my new life living in the Grange community I feel I have travelled a long distance to find myself. I know I totally depend on my walking frame my 'Special Friend'. I really cannot move anywhere without it. Now I have another 'Special Friend', a new helper, 'My Pacemaker'. I truly did not realise how much it was needed to enable me to breathe and to feel God's protection over me. This all gives me new hope."*

## How do you feel now having made the 'Cross-Over'?

*"I am gradually becoming more aware how I am not alone on this road. I am convinced in my heart that there is a hand leading and guiding me. But I am not always aware of it and I have to sometimes do things (said with a little smile) 'my way' as I have always done. I have so much to be thankful to the Lord for, and I pray with joy and gratitude of knowing He is always there for me. And that I will always have the courage to reach out for Him and feel His presence close to me. I pray that I will be receptive and ready for whatever the Lords wants of me. All I have done has been for Him alone. I have so much to be thankful for and now His hand leads me. I submit myself to being led. I pray only for this grace!"*

## What symbol comes to mind when you reflect on the crossing over from independence to being dependent on others ?

*"I think of open hands as a symbol to express how this journey is leading me."*



*"Sr Patsy, thank you, it was really lovely having this time to listen to your story of change and the journey you have made in crossing from independence to being dependent on others for most of your needs.*

*God bless and I promise to keep you in my prayers."*



# For a synodal Church

communion | participation | mission

“We recall that the purpose of the Synod is to:

plant dreams,

draw forth prophecies and visions,

allow hope to flourish,

inspire trust,

bind up wounds,

weave together relationships,

awaken a dawn of hope,

learn from one another

and create a bright resourcefulness that will enlighten minds, warm hearts, give strength to our hands.”

General Secretariat of the Synod, Vatican.



communion | participation | mission



# FROM 'I' TO 'WE' THE ROAD OF SYNODALITY

When I first heard about the Synod in June/July 2021, I was delighted! Pope Francis was inviting me, along with all the People of God, to contribute to the way forward for the Church! Pope Francis stressed the word LISTENING, not just hearing and responding, but listening.

There were to be various stages to this process – individual reflection, parish, deanery, diocese, country, continent, culminating in a working document INSTRUMENTUM LABORIS, for the first session of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops to take place in the Vatican in October 2023.

I eagerly waited for the process to be started in my parish, but was disappointed with the way it was led and the outcome. The parishioners thought it was just a local survey, and had no idea that Pope Francis wanted to hear their views about the life of the Church.

However, the Conference of Religious in England and Wales were invited to send their responses directly to CICLSAL (Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life). I was part of a steering committee preparing the sessions for the Religious.



For each of the three themes; **COMMUNION**, **PARTICIPATION** and **MISSION** we arranged for a Religious sister to give a reflection, followed by sharing thoughts on the following questions, which were the same for each session:

**What is your experience as religious of living in the Church in this country?**

**What things might we need to let go of in this country to allow new or deeper experiences to come?**

**What things might we need to develop or learn to do in this country, to allow new or deeper experiences to come?**

Each of us is invited to reflect  
on the same questions to  
focus on where we are going  
and the life in the local  
Church.

There were many animated discussions, and the response was tremendous. After each session the Religious were invited to share further reflections. The challenge was then to summarise all the contributions. It revealed a vision of Church which can often be accompanied by a sense of frustration by what is perceived as a more limited national perspective, embodied in the Conference of Bishops, which is experienced as being primarily focus on maintenance and administration, rather than leading a spiritual movement that is trying to build God's kingdom in today's reality. In this country the Religious want to work towards a 'One Church' approach, but often the Bishops Conference go ahead with their agenda without thinking of the Religious and Laity. We try in small ways to encourage the Bishops to consult, so sowing seeds that one day we hope may come to fruition.

Although the age profile of Religious in this country is high, there is so much energy and goodwill of wanting the Church to move forward in today's world. This is reflected in the work of the Religious in this country – we may not be leading schools, hospitals, children's homes or any large establishments/institutions, but are working hidden at the margins of society such as; trafficking, immigration, justice and peace issues, the homeless, relief of poverty etc. This is what Pope Francis has asked us to do – to go to the margins.

The Sisters of the Holy Cross in England had an afternoon, where we shared on the three themes of the Synod. It was an enriching and productive time together for us.

Sr Natalie Bocquart, XMCJ, Under-secretary of the General Secretariat of the Synod, stressed the importance of the discernment process. This is vital for our Congregation, not only for the bigger issues, but also for the local ones – if we are not letting the Holy Spirit guide our lives, where are we going?

An Archbishop described the synodal process experience as one in which, "we recognize and celebrate the great diversity in the Church" – an experience of, "profound unity, not grounded in uniformity." Organisations, including schools, in this country are constantly being reminded to make sure that diversity, equality and inclusion are evident. However, this does not always happen in the Church, where the role of women is not sufficiently recognized. We need to acknowledge obstacles to synodality and areas for improvement.

This synodal process has taught me not to let disappointments dominate, but to strive and find other ways in which all contribute to the renewed life of the Church.

We need open, honest, attentive and respectful speaking and listening.

I am hoping that what has been produced so far, will not just remain a paper document, but will be taken forward and implemented. The synodal journey is an ongoing process. We trust that the Holy Spirit is leading us in the direction the Lord wants us to go.

We need to open our ears to the needs of all the People of God.

Pope Francis invited us on a risky journey, but we would be poorer without it.

by **Sr Margaret Donovan**, England



**'Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground it remains a grain of wheat...' John 12:24**



*The daring lives of Mother Bernarda and Fr. Theodosius attracted me because I like people who dare to take a risk and who work together for a good cause. What fascinated and attracted me to Mother Bernarda was her love and closeness to her sisters. She is my role model in my religious life.*

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## A Personal experience of Synodality

by Sr Rani Punnasseril

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I experienced from my childhood the unfolding love of God and it became more visible in my youth. I can recall the changes and adjustments I have made to become a strong instrument in the hands of God. I have only one desire then and now - to be a voice for the voiceless.

I was given opportunities to live in small communities where I could relate to my sisters and people of different religions and castes. North India is known for casteism and religiosity; people look at us as foreigners even though our skin colour and features match theirs, not the belief. It is through Divine Providence that we the sisters in India are living in peace, though there are isolated incidents of attack on us.

The Prophet of our time 'Pope Francis' is an inspiration to me. His message on every occasion speaks about inclusiveness. I am fascinated that he is young at heart and reaches out to the people affected by war, ethnic cleansing, and displacement due to internal conflict. His heart goes out to migrants and refugees. His messages to them have given me conviction and the ability to serve the refugees, who fled their homes due to war.

The pandemic crisis of migrants and refugees in India is vivid in my mind. It was on 24th September, 2022, on the World Day of Migrants and Refugees that I met Mr. Augustine Pau Suan Dal, an asylum seeker from Myanmar. He came to the church along with more than twenty refugees. We talked for some time and they invited me to visit them, which I accepted. I joined their prayer service and listened to their horrific incidents of violence.

What surprised me was that despite all their struggles and threats to life they seemed happy. They have a multipurpose rented hall that was filled with the young and old. They also have a wonderful choir. When they come for prayer and Mass they won't leave the place, even if there is an emergency call.

Many of them are sick and in depression but united in prayer. From their meagre earnings they served me coffee and snacks. Their community feeling, care for each other and unity are remarkable. Their caring and sharing reminded me of the early Christians mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles chapter 2. Now, we work as one family to help them get their food and medicines.



*While serving them, I am humbled to review my religious life which I have voluntarily chosen. Their constraints and nothingness have forced me to disengage from matters that divide my mind. The synodality is a lived reality among these people. They journey together as we see in the silhouette of the synodal document. I am inspired by these simple, humble people of God.*

**REFLECTION :** How am I engaging with the synodal journey as a member of my local parish or organization?



**‘Common  
Heart...**



**Common  
Journey’**

## 'Common Heart – Common Journey'

The Council of the Congregation held in Como during the month of May, 2023.

According to our Constitutions Art. n.289:

The Council of the Congregation is a CONSULTATIVE body. It DEALS WITH THE IMPORTANT MATTERS of the Congregation and provinces, EXAMINES THE IMPLEMENTATION of the decisions of the last General Chapter and PREPARES PROPOSALS FOR THE NEXT General Chapter.

In this light the Congregational Leadership and the Provincials from all four continents came together to engage in a process of reflection and dialogue. The theme chosen for this Council of the Congregation arose from a call that has been growing in the hearts of the Congregational Leadership since the first year of their mandate, namely:

**"Seeking together an open and meaningful Leadership for today's world".**

It is a call that we have felt emerge from listening to and sharing our common reflections on the reality of the Congregation and the message of the 2019 General Chapter.

Two objectives for the time together were:

1. "Creating a 'Common Heart' in contact with the heartbeat of the Spirit
2. Discerning a transformative Formation for today's world

During the Council of the Congregation as a favourable experience for reflecting and discerning together... the journey began.

To help us engage with the vision proposed we have inputs from professional lay and religious women who led us through deep, personal and communal experiences embedded in the Gospel and new insights and teachings regarding Formation, Communal Living and Scripture seen through the eyes of TRANSFORMATION.

At the end of our time together the Provincials were invited to choose one word that touched them in a new light and to share that with us in this edition of LIFE.

What follows is their sharing:







## EMPOWERMENT

We, the Holy Cross Sisters are called to promote empowerment as part of our consecrated life. Let us trust in God's providence, faithfulness and goodness which continues to empower and energize us each day of our life. Our spirituality is enriched and strengthened when we empower others who share their lives and love with us. Empowerment enables one to recognize and value each person in their full human dignity and potential. We are committed to promote the empowerment of all people who collaborate in our mission.

Sr. Robina. Paulin. Sri Lankan.

## HARMONY

The climate of Harmony that was experienced in the Council of the Congregation is a clear manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Among the sisters of the different provinces there was a natural, dynamic, joyful, profound harmony in each shared moment. The harmony of a common heart! The Spirit created that harmony in the group, gave us peace and the openness to offer the diversity of talents and the depth of reflection. As Pope Francis says: "See each brother and sister in faith as part of the same body to which I belong; This is the harmonious gaze of the Spirit, this is the path that it shows us". (Pentecost 2023 message)

Sr Gloria Poblete. Latin America.

## JOURNEY

Without a companion I cannot reach far. Christ is the companion on the journey and His Word is the one that sustains me because the love relationship I have with Him keeps me trusting and hoping and this hope in Christ will never disappoint me. I am a Holy Cross Sister rooted in Christ and hope.

Sr Phuthunywa. Southern African.

## LOVE

We know ourselves to be loved by the infinite, positive and all-embracing God, who lets us know that we are precious despite our "brokenness". We are called into relationship with Jesus to live and share His mission of **love** in solidarity with one another and by answering in a responsible way to the present needs. The Word of God inspires and guides us daily on our road to transformation.

Sr Trudi Eichler. Swiss.

**ACCOMPANIMENT** as companions on a spiritual journey. Relationships at personal and community level, in our religious life, can be strengthened by accompaniment.

Accompaniment can help us and those we accompany to develop our confidence and draw out innate potential. Although we may be different in many ways, through accompaniment we can experience God's love, know one another better and live harmoniously.

With love and prayer

Sr. Clementina Teba-Teba. Lesotho.

CHEMINS DE SAINT-JACQUES



## VULNERABILITY

Vulnerability is our willingness to expose the truth about ourselves. This can be really hard, because the truth can be scary and shameful. Therefore, we do everything to hide our vulnerability. Vulnerability is a gift we give to ourselves. Being vulnerable isn't the same as being scared, nor is it admitting defeat. In fact, knowing and accepting our vulnerability is actually insight into our strengths. It shows people that we're not afraid to admit our pains and our need for the constant presence of God in our lives. Let us challenge ourselves to welcome honest vulnerability into our everyday life and into our interactions with each other.

Sr. Shiny Jose. Central Indian



## COMPASSION

I am learning from the compassionate heart of Jesus, to love and accept all people with mercy and compassion, regardless of who they are.

"Compassion takes us along the path to true justice. We must always return what rightfully belongs to someone else, and this always saves us from selfishness, from indifference, from our own closure". Pope Francis, Vatican 2019

Sr. Immaculata Sililo. Zambia

## RELATIONSHIPS

From the inputs given for reflection on Luke 7:36-8:3 I now see in a new light the story of Jesus' relationship with the woman who came to Him in the house of Simon. This woman who was known to be a sinner in the eyes of the Pharisees had a special relationship with Jesus. She had inner freedom and was able in herself to express her gratitude and thankfulness to Jesus by washing His feet and drying them with her hair. She was fully aware of her own sinfulness, but her heart was open to Jesus' love and forgiveness. She discovered who she was and who Jesus was for her. She saw Him as her Lord and Master.

I ask myself, who is Jesus in my Life?

Sr. Imelda Fleming. England.

## VULNERABILITY

After the Congregation Council meeting I had many thoughts to ponder in my heart and to carry back home with me. Having aroused my interest, I allowed myself to be stimulated by a definition of God:

God is the God of the vulnerable. Vulnerability is not just a state of being in need, but is the God-given human capacity to respond to the other. And this makes us relational, compassionate people capable of entering into the vulnerability of our brothers and sisters. When others meet me they must feel comfortable and at home. This gift of God, welcomed and lived by us in community makes us equal sisters and this is an important condition for living synodality. It is in the vulnerability of Jesus, powerless on the cross, that God is still at work to save the world.

Sr. Agnese Ambrosetti. Italy

## SEEDS OF HOPE

When I reflected on the discussions I was impressed by the input of the speakers. I became aware again of the strong hope that the Paschal Mystery gives: Resurrected life can be found all around us! It is precisely in the midst of suffering that God is at work. In the midst of pain, fears, etc. God is there to transform our weakness, even to use it for His work of salvation. This is an invitation for me to discover the seeds of hope in every situation.

Sr. Marika Wippenbeck. Germany



## LESSONS FROM THE MIDWIFE

We live in a society where individualism and self-fulfilment are the norm, prevalent even in Religious Life. During my reflection on 'open and relevant Leadership style for today's world', I was deeply inspired by the role of a midwife. This role is worthy of emulation because she is attentive and responsive to the needs of one person at a time. She is supportive, empowering and fosters self-belief in those she cares for, while assisting with the birthing process. She knows that she is only there for part of the journey and graciously withdraws while she awaits her new assignment. Leadership in Consecrated Life has that same call. This is an invitation and challenge for all consecrated persons as everyone has some aspect of leadership.

Sr Mary Quimpo. Cape

**Biblical text. Luke, 7, 36-50.**

## JESUS-STYLE LEADERSHIP.

Based on building meaningful relationships, establishing personal connections with followers, knowing their strengths and weaknesses and encouraging them to grow and develop. Based on compassion, humility, service and love which are what transforms our lives and inspires and encourages us to communicate it to others.

Sr. M. Joaquina Montero Rubilar. Cunco





## PILGRIM

Pilgrims on the way....

At Lenno - different languages, diverse cultures, Yet a 'Common Heart'.

Searched together 'Jesus as the WORD'

Dreamed together a future with hope

Discerned together in-depth our spirituality and the charism of our Founders

To accompany the young and give them space to recognise their real identity.



With the joy of being together to deepen our roots,

With the confidence of being empowered:

*To journey,*

*To accompany,*

*To strengthen communities,*

**The pilgrim's journey continues.....**

Sr Josia Koonamprayil. South Indian



## SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT

Spiritual Discernment is a gift from God. It is a decision-making process that honors the place of God's will in our lives. It is an interior search that seeks to align our own will with the will of God. It frees us from the manipulations and deceptions of others allowing us to freely live the values of the Gospel in imitation of Jesus. We receive this gift of Discernment as did Christ Himself by the anointing of the Spirit.

Through our understanding of God's Word, and our experience of His grace we see a progressive unfolding of the truth that lies in our own hearts. It inspires me to evaluate myself, others and the reality of real situations. This gives us a clearer perception on what is true, right and essential. The gift of being able to discern God's Spirit equips us with tools that help us to filter and make informed judgements in order to take action.

Sr Linet Kottappillykudy. North India Province

**WHERE AT THIS STAGE OF YOUR LIFE'S JOURNEY DO YOU FEEL THE NUDGINGS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT LEADING YOU TO SOMETHING NEW?**





*A letter from Sr. Ivana and the Sisters, in the community of Lenno  
What transpires when two Congregations of Religious Women meet...*

Dearest Sr Dorina,

Dearest Sisters of the Holy Cross participants of the Council of the Congregation.

Now, two weeks after your departure, I am able to get to the computer to tell you in a few lines our still rather vivid resonances of your stay in our house and to share with gratitude the beautiful experience that our community of Adorers had in the month of May, which has just passed, hosting your international meeting.

It was an experience that involved us very much, both in the preparation of the house and of the heart, but even more so in its unfolding during the different weeks and passages of the month. It was a very significant and, dare I say it, prophetic experience: at the level of reflection, study, deepening, we talk a lot about inter-Congregation but then we know the fatigue and, why not, also the resistance that consecrated life experiences in making this prophecy concrete. This time we have tried to put into practice what we so often read, hear and even say to each other. At least we have tried!

First of all, we return your generous kindness and say a big **THANK YOU!**

Thank you because you have given us the opportunity to widen the perimeter of our hospitality, to let our hearts be filled with the love of Jesus and to learn to love a little more like Him, without measure, in joy and gratuitously. This is His style: to love equals to serve! And this is the style that we increasingly want to make our own in simplicity and that we choose to live and communicate when together we welcome into our home friends, brothers and sisters, who ask us to experience moments of silence, prayer and fraternity.

So too with you, the choice was this: to love in order to serve and to serve in order to love and to put ourselves at your complete disposal so that each of you might feel at home with us, and for us to feel at home with you in your presence among us. Despite the challenge of diverse languages that slowed down our understanding and communication in the first few days, everything melted away like snow in the sun and the Spirit took over.

Another Pentecost really happened when the language of the heart gave expression to our words of interaction and made it possible for us to understand what was needed and what we desired to share with one another. With a few Italian or English buzz-words, invented 'on the spot', and several gestures more or less enlightened by common sense and a good dose of imagination, we made it through and the understanding seemed to blossom into a pleasant friendship, seasoned with good laughs. Hurray for fraternity that makes all things possible.

How nice! With your presence, we tried to make our own style of simplicity, of gratuitousness, of generosity that the Spirit concretely transformed into service, into attention to your questions, to your needs, and the same Spirit then sustained and accompanied our days full of things to do, commitments to fulfil and schedules to keep. Yes, that's right: the Spirit and us...because 'without me you can do nothing' says Jesus...and so it was!

If we have managed to be for you Martha and Mary, to serve and pray for you and for the success of your Council of the Congregation, it is because the wind of the Spirit has carried us and sustained us, has made us fly high even within our more normal labours and frailties. In the small and poor everyday situations, the Lord Jesus took us by the hand, or rather in His arms, and shared with us His strength, His readiness, His patience, His kindness and His loving gaze. We offered our simple service and our prayers for you so that the Lord could continue the work that through your religious family He began in the Church, where He has called you to share His Love, that of the Cross.

How great to know that within your journey there is now also a little bit of us: with our shared friendship, during this month of May, that we will certainly not forget. Woe, that would be a grave sin!

May the commitment, the listening, the study, the deepening that you have shared these days among you, as Holy Cross Sisters in leadership for the Congregation, be like seeds that the Spirit has sown in the hands and hearts of each one, finding a welcoming soil in your communities to bear Gospel fruits of goodness and fruitfulness in love.

Through you and us, two Charisms have truly met: not on paper but in life. They have come to know and love each other, recognising the preciousness of their identities.

It is indeed a great good to learn to meet the originality of the other and their diversity and not to be afraid to accept each other for what we are in our differences that God himself conceived and willed precisely to complete us. In unity we learn to see richness in diversity.

Unity in diversity is a great gift to treasure and remember with gratitude to the Lord.

It is a gift of His love that with patience we are called to accept without resistance. Let us hope! Let us together praise His name and thank Him with all our voices and hearts because His promise is faithful and His faithfulness is forever, never failing, for those who trust in Him and believe His Word.

Thank you, Sister Dorina and sisters, for so much good that has circulated among us during this month. We have touched it with our own hands indeed; thank you for so much cordiality, so much gratitude and goodwill that we too have received from you and your Congregational Leadership. From all of you we experienced a great compassion, a beautiful understanding and a strong testimony of benevolence, of dedication, of collaboration, of attention to the other and towards us, sisters and staff.

To end on a high note, we can say, because our paths have crossed and we have shared life together our consecrated life has found a deeper meaning expressed through each unique charism. Isn't that right?

A fraternal embrace and a dear greeting to all.

*Sr Ivana and Sisters, Lenno*



# 'Common Heart – Common Journey'

"The joy of life comes from our experiences, therefore, there is no greater joy than to have an endless horizon to change and our secret is the meaning of the Cross. So may Christ be like the sun that rises every day."



Every transformative moment in life is not easy. Sometimes it's really painful. But when I contemplate the flower of grace that blossoms on that little or big daily 'letting go' and that fruit that ripens on 'that making space' for God's creative love, I thank God for every situation and every person who has given me and to the world his authentic closeness and the transforming light of the Gospel. Graced crossroads...



## God's Fingerprints

"Every day awakens me with a call to recognise God's Fingerprints and catch a glimpse of the ways that God is at work in others, in me and in the world. The challenging and changing reality for me is to discern every moment on what to let go, what to keep and what to dare. I urge with confidence the Holy Spirit to look at the new life within me and around, to be a sign of Hope, the Synodality trusting in God. May God walk with us on our daily attempts and failures. May God continue to write His history through us."



Life takes you on a journey of changes that one never expects. The attitude of 'LET GO' makes life comfortable. The journey that will change one's life is the journey within. God gives us the grace to embrace all the changes that our life demands to welcome every new experience and opportunity to make life more meaningful and beautiful



'To change is to grow... to grow is to change often!'  
ELF Motto  
Just do it!  
Change...

