



**Holy Cross Sisters immersed
in HUMAN REALITY**

LIFE

**Celebrate and Uphold
the good that is happening.**



Photo by
Domenico Marelli

Trust the process



Domenico Marelli has been baking bread for many years. He rises before dawn each morning to get his freshly baked bread ready for his customers. He shared with us his experience:

“Making bread is not only a profession, but it is a passion, love for my work and if it is done well, it becomes poetry. The baker is an artisan who produces good bread only if he takes care and dedication in kneading the ingredients. Choose carefully the mixing times, create by mixing the best flours, combining salt and finally the yeast which will give the dough development and softness. Then the work remains waiting until the bread takes shape and comes to life. Once the leavening has taken place, it is put in the oven for baking and the miracle begins... there is nothing better than the smell of freshly baked bread! At that moment I go back to my childhood, and I see the bread my grandmother made in the oven at home, so I thank God for the precious gift.”



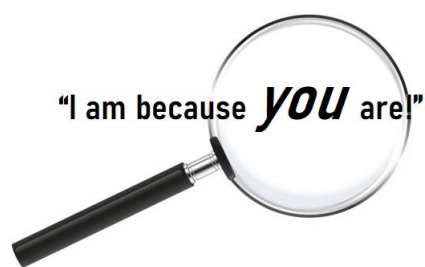
A Word from Sr Dorina

A few years ago, reading a short story book, I was struck by a very simple but at the same time a very significant episode. This episode told the experience of an anthropologist. This anthropologist one day proposed a game to some children of an African tribe.

He placed a fruit basket next to a tree and told the children that whoever comes first would win all the fruit. When the starting signal was given, all the children joined hands and ran together, after which, once they took the basket, they sat down and enjoyed the prize together.

When the children were asked why they wanted to run together and gave up giving one person the chance to take all the fruit, they replied: "Ubuntu! How could one of us be happy to own all the fruit if everyone else is sad? "

At the end of this story the meaning of this *word* was well explained: "**Ubuntu**" This word in sub-Saharan African culture means:



I think this word "**UBUNTU**" expresses very well the potential that our magazine "**LIFE**" wishes to communicate. In fact, if we want to enter into the deep meaning of this **UBUNTU**, we can truly realize that what a Province is experiencing, even if it is very different from the others, has great value because it affects the whole life of a Congregation. To the extent that we open up to the lives of others, we receive life, inspirations, consolations or new inputs to improve.



During the General Chapter, Sr Pat Farrell had explained to us very well the importance of Inter-dependence:

"We will not go anywhere if we do not go somehow together. The day of the individual protagonists is over. It's time for collaboration. It is urgent to learn to access the wisdom of the common heart, to start from there ... "

Father Theodosius himself said that the sisters would have done great things if they had remained united among themselves and had kept their gaze fixed on the purpose to which they had dedicated their life.

Dear Sisters, I wish you and me to read these pages of **LIFE**, lived by **US**, Sisters of the Holy Cross, in different parts of the world, with the desire to listen a little to the beat of the **COMMON HEART**, to start from there to live with passion our charism and our spirituality.

In this *common heart*, there is a gift of the Spirit and there is all the potential and grace needed to respond **TOGETHER** to the challenges of today's world. Happy "**UBUNTU**", dear sisters! It is a great invitation to transformation.



Sr. Dolma Zamoni

In Tune with The Beat of OUR COMMON HEART

Part One- Shared Life

WE DANCED WITH GREAT REJOICING

Lesotho Province

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MOTHER BERNARDA'S LIFE

UNCUT DIAMONDS

WHAT REMAINS WHEN WE WALK AWAY?

CONNECT – EVANGELISE – TRANSFORM

EDUCATE TO TRANSFORM

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

Translators:

- Sr Ursula Eberhardt
- Sr Ursula Wyss
- Sr Miguela Müslin
- Professor Walter Kirchschräger

All the Sisters, on behalf of their Provinces,
who have taken time to share with us their
experiences.



WE DANCED WITH GREAT REJOICING...

Lesotho Province

We, the sisters of the Lesotho province, read carefully and with enthusiasm all the proceedings from the General Chapter which were so generously sent to us. We waited with great anticipation the outcomes of each day and we longed to hold and read the message that would guide us into the future.



Tradition was that after previous chapters, the message was enclosed in a circular letter sent to the communities or distributed at the close of a meeting in the Provincial House and each Sister would be instructed to pick the message as she leaves the room. It would be discussed in a different scenario. However, due to unforeseen circumstances the message was only able to be presented to us in November.

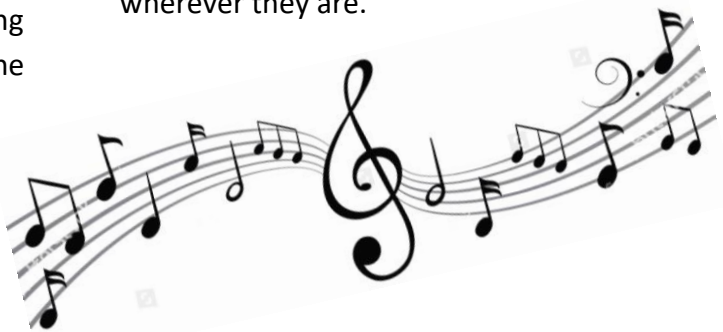
This time tradition had changed completely. On the day we were all invited to Lapeng conference room to receive the message, the environment was decorated with pictures of Fr. Theodosius and Mother Bernarda, the emblem and a lit candle decorated with flowers lighted the room. To our great joy the whole Province arrived punctually. After a

short opening prayer and introduction, the Provincial Leader, Sr. Alice Tlau-tlau and her assistant Sr. Mary Pius Lesaoana presented the General Chapter Message to each Sister saying: "Sr. X you are a transforming presence rooted in Christ". In the background soft music played. It was both personal and unique. Since none of us

had expected such solemnity, we were all dumb-founded and emotionally moved. Some of us shed tears of joy as our anticipation of receiving the Chapter Message became a reality.

After the ceremony was over, the Sisters went for a short break where some expressed their feelings by saying that during the ceremony, they experienced a holy joy similar to what King David felt in 2 Samuel 6:12-13 when he "danced with great rejoicing on account of the ark of God."

Other sisters expressed their firm determination to take their religious life more seriously and to deeply anchor their total trust in God realizing that their lives receive strength in Him. It reminded them of their initial zeal when they entered religious life. Hence, it is true that they can authentically be the transforming presence wherever they are.





raised the points in connection with the Mission and we decided to implement these where we are working with people and in our communities. This, coupled with the high spirit, the imminent preparations for the Golden Jubilee of the Province and the 175 Jubilee of the whole Congregation, we are hopeful that the presentation of our General Message will give us all new impetus to be truly rooted in Christ to be transforming presences in the Congregation in Lesotho!

Returning from lunch, the sisters were divided into small groups to look at the whole message so that it could be put into practice by all the communities. From the Message, we picked up on “**Mission**” and this is the area we have decided to work on. As a whole Province, we

Many cordial thanks to our Provincial Leader Sr. Alice Tlau-tlau and to all her collaborators for the original, vivid and inspiring presentation. We are encouraged to study, pray and put into practice this message with hope and enthusiasm wherever we are – in our communities and with the people we work with.



Khotso
Pula
Nala

Being on mission...

What is the Secret?

House Italia

The Message of the General Chapter 2019 was presented to the sisters in a passionate way, both by Sister Dorina and by Sister Agnese. We perceived that something beautiful was experienced and that could be given to each of us.

We continue the journey that the previous GC 2013 indicated to us: to be Women of Hope who receive strength

from the Word of God to live a meaningful life with passion and let us get involved in innovative ministries.

By placing itself in continuity, the GC invites us to live rooted in the Paschal Mystery of Christ, to be a significant presence in today's world. Each of us, as part of a family, must feel immersed in human reality and become a transforming presence in our

today's context. ***The secret is enclosed in the Contemplative and prophetic tension we face today where we can dare something new with God.*** We are invited to aim for a deep contemplative life that educates us to a greater awareness to become a reference point for this lost and disoriented humanity.

We feel rooted in Christ as a mysterious and transforming presence of God who dwells in us. A love that has been at work since we were called to life. It is an invitation to enter into his Word and to let ourselves be illuminated and transformed by the Spirit into a sincere openness of heart. Like Mother Bernarda we cultivate daily the sense of the presence of God.

“LIVE JESUS IN OUR HEARTS”, a presence that shapes us and transforms us. That trains us to see events, time, people, our personal age-related difficulties in a contemplative way that allows us to live in a positively. It is a letting of oneself to be transformed in order to be immersed in mission with the heart, thought and tenderness of Jesus.

Let the Spirit becomes our travel companion so that we can create fraternity...



Let the Spirit becomes our travel companion so that we can create fraternity among us, with the awareness that we belong to each other in our diversity. If we neglect the commitment to cultivate and maintain a correct relationship with our neighbour towards whom we have the duty of care and custody, we destroy our inner relationship with ourselves, with others, with the Lord and with the earth.

Our mission today, with the age limits and the number of the sisters we are, focuses on the relationship with the person who approaches us

for listening, for attention, for prayer and for accompaniment.

We can't occupy positions of responsibility but we place ourselves next to the volunteers who engage with the sick, elderly and disabled. We also offer our availability in the pastoral ministry. Our limitations have become an opportunity for authentic collaboration with lay people in the Parish. Even the sisters who can no longer be involved in an active service, can live the deep fruits of the Paschal Mystery of Christ who in a real way supports and vivifies the choice of the General Chapter so that our Religious Family is leaven that ferments Humanity and the Church.



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Bringing new life in the face of Death

Bringing new life in the face of Death

Central Indian Province

The Sisters in the Central Indian Province gathered at Maitreya for three seminars; **26th - 27th August, 6th- 7th September and 13th - 14th October 2019**. The get-together of the entire province was a special moment to see and respond to the challenges of the present time.



The input sessions on the General Chapter message”

Rooted in Christ to be a transforming presence' energized and enthused the Sisters in the province to read the word of God daily and to listen to the prophetic voice of God in the scripture.

“We seek to bring new life in the face of death; fullness of life to ourselves, to others, and to our common home” - the message has awakened and disturbed the sisters and enabled them to sense the death situations in their respective ministries as well as in the society and focus on to bring new life by their transforming presence. It enlightened the sisters to evaluate the progress of life and mission in the province.

Srs Valsa, Katheleen and Tresa shared the General Chapter message with the Sisters. All the Sisters attended the seminar. The Sisters worked in groups and customized the Chapter message for the Central Indian Province.

The most relevant feelings, reflections of the Sisters and the steps that were taken for our self transformation process are as follows:



After customizing our action plan for CIP, based on the message of General Chapter 2019, Sr. Valsa the provincial leader delegated all the community Animators to customize the chapter message at community level and to prepare a community project explaining how each community will implement the chapter message 2019.

While making the visitation of the communities, Sr. Valsa went through the community project prepared according to the needs of the community and locality. She gave suggestions as to how the sisters need to implement the chapter message in the community and in the ministries.



With the small card which displays the transforming background design and the theme '**TRANSFORMING PRESENCE...**' we reflected, discussed and shared. It has helped us to move from where we are to where the Lord wants us to be. The personal and collective sharing has rejuvenated the sisters to reflect on varied ways to respond to the new challenges. All feel renewed and strengthened to be the yeast with its transforming presence in the society. Together we searched for new ways of living and making the **CHARISM** alive for our society today, in spite of diminishing numbers in vocation and members!



**WE KEEP STRIVING ...
TO IMMERSE IN HUMAN
REALITY ... AND TO BE A
TRANSFORMING
PRESENCE IN OUR
CONTEXT TODAY...**

Where shall we place our message in daily life?

Swiss Province

After the General Chapter, each sister received and read the message. There were different ways in which sisters expressed and shared about the message.



At the provincial chapter in the autumn, we dealt with the topic in detail. By asking questions and setting priorities in our current context, in preparation for the General Chapter, the sisters had already learnt about the preparations that led to the creation of this message.

The sisters' initial reactions to the texts showed a certain helplessness and the feeling that the message was too abstract.

They questioned how they would be able to implement the message into everyday life

Based on these experiences, we started our chapter proceedings with a meditation on the new message.

Confronted with the text and the following questions:

1. WHAT DOES "BEING A TRANSFORMATIVE PRESENCE" MEAN:

- Personally?
- As a community?
- As a province?

2. WHAT SPEAKS TO ME IN THIS MESSAGE IN PARTICULAR AND WHAT GIVES ME COURAGE AND STRENGTH?

"This is my call –
this is our call, to be
immersed in human reality,
a
TRANSFORMING PRESENCE
..

All the sisters had time to reflect on the message in silence before the Lord.

This silence time proved to be a good entry point for continuing the work with the agenda for the following day.

Next day: Guided by a moderator, we were given insights to deal with the term

"TRANSFORMING PRESENCE".

The exchange in the groups took place in a very good atmosphere. We felt a great openness and a lot of interest. Many sisters felt enlightened as the message was shared with them. The reference to the contemplative dimension of religious life pleased some particularly.

In the course of the day we discussed and shared on the following questions:

1. Where do I recognize the presence of God in my daily life?
2. Where do I recognize God's actions in the everyday life of my community?

From the personal and group sharing the sisters expressed these responses:



Through this group work, the sisters at the provincial chapter were given food for thought as to ***how they will implement the message in everyday life.***

It is our desire that we may receive an ever-deeper insight to the message given to us so that we, as individuals and as community accept the invitation to follow our call and strive again and again to take steps to live the chapter message.

Building and Transforming our Community Living

Sri Lanka

The Holy Cross Sisters, Sri Lankan Province had gone through a series of preparatory programmes for the renewal of our life and mission. Accordingly, there were three gatherings held in Sri Lanka, in January 2020:

All the sisters of the province focused on the theme of the General Chapter 2019:

“ROOTED IN CHRIST, A TRANSFORMING PRESENCE”

The groups had input sessions by Br. Nithiya sagayam OFM Capuchin from India. Different sessions were held **focusing on:**

- ❖ What is going on well with our rootedness and Mission?
- ❖ What are the opportunities available before us?
- ❖ What are our priorities in our life and mission?
- ❖ How effectively can we utilize our potentials to be rooted in Christ and serve better?

The theme of the forthcoming study chapter 2020 will be based on **“FRANCISCAN FRATERNAL LIVING, ROOTED IN CHRIST”**. The preparatory commission came up with the following:

Community Level

What are the positive signs of our Fraternal life?
What are the negative blocks that we come across?

What are the concrete proposals to build up Fraternal living?

What are the concrete proposals to living with the poor and marginalised in our area?

How do we systematically go into this mission of building Fraternity both within and without effectively?

1. **MONTHLY RECOLLECTIONS FOCUSING ON FRATERNAL LIVING:** Each community will fix the date for the monthly day of recollection to reflect more deeply on the points given early.
2. **The topics to be focused on:** 1. Francis and Fraternal life; 2. Ideal Fraternal life of the Holy Cross sisters (models) in history; 3. Fraternal life expected of us in the context of Sri Lanka.
3. **REGIONAL GATHERINGS IN LENT:** The Regional gatherings planned by the province will focus on effective ways of living Franciscan Fraternal life in our local and Regional context. The preparatory committee along with the Regional Coordinator will organize it in time.

4. **HOLY WEEK – GOOD FRIDAY WITH SPECIAL FOCUS ON FRATERNAL LIVING:** 10th April 2020 is Good Friday. This day will be observed as a day of fasting and prayers for our Franciscan fraternal living. It will be marked by a day of penance for the harm each one has done against one another in our personal, Regional, Provincial level as well as in our Apostolate. It will also be a day of receiving the power of Jesus on Calvary to take up the challenges in building true community.
5. **SECTORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS:** In the provinces, there are several Apostolates such as Education, Health Care, Social programmes, youth ministry, etc. The group members of each sector could offer their suggestions to the province through their specific apostolates.
6. **SPIRITUAL COMPANION:** Each one has been given a spiritual companion to grow together in our Franciscan religious life. These two sisters will share with each other on the following:
How each of us can ensure a Zero-Gossip lifestyle daily?
How could each one come forward to stop this character of blaming others in our day-to-day life?
Promote some concrete ways of enhancing fraternal living among our Holy Cross sisters
7. **PRAYER AND THE TEN COMMANDMENTS (FRANCISCAN FRATERNAL LIVING) FOR STUDY CHAPTER:**
The preparatory committee has prepared a prayer card to be prayed in the community invoking God's intervention for the forthcoming study chapter 2020. The purpose of the Ten Commandments is to guide us on various ways of improving Fraternal living.



A Transformative Mission

Southern Africa

The Holy Cross Home and frail care for the aged is situated on the outskirts of Pretoria city. We spend much of our days serving the local people within the home and through our outreach programmes. From the home we have a number of outreach programmes. I like to share with you a few of our outreach programmes that keep us rooted in Christ as we strive to transform our reality today.

Our Holy Cross Home for the Frail and Aged is an eighty-eight Staff establishment. We take care of eighty-four elderly and frail care patients, especially those from as young as sixty years and above. We believe we are a transforming presence which is reflected by the professional and quality nursing care we offer. Over many years Lady Selborne has been home to the poor, the very sick and those in need of real nursing care. It remains our daily joy to

nurse and care for those who knock at our door. It gives us and our residents hope when we see them being nursed to health after a long and often critical sickness. Apart from our professional nursing care we nurture spiritually the hearts, minds and souls of all. Recently we were instrumental in reuniting a mother with her two children after they had lost contact for 20 years. It is our noble mission to keep before our eyes the scripture passage; ***“WHATEVER YOU DO TO THE LEAST OF MY BROTHERS THAT YOU DO UNTO ME”*** (Mathew 25:40). One such programme is Emmanuel place of Hope. This is an informal settlement where we run a creche for the children in the early stages of development. Jesus said, ***“LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOURSELF.”*** (Matthew 32:29). It is our privilege to work among the local people and particularly the children and youth.

During the formative years of early childhood development (ECD) we provide children with a sound foundation on which they build their futures. It is a delicate stage in a child's life that requires a holistic approach to growth, that includes physical, spiritual, mental and cognitive and social development.



At the Emmanuel place of Hope creche there is currently an enrolment list of sixty children. In another outreach programme we care for ninety orphaned and vulnerable children, some of which are living with HIV. Due to the stigma and discrimination they suffer, they find it hard to integrate in society. Caring for these children

and youth lies at the heart of our call as Holy Cross Sisters as we daily immerse ourselves in the lives of the marginalised and among those whom families and society reject. We believe that, ***“To empower youth is to create a means of eliminating poverty”*** and in the process promote life in the midst of limitations.



We run a Holy Cross drop-in-centre which is really a haven of security and love for many children. Most of the children in our care come from ‘Child-Headed’ families or who are raised by grandparents. In most cases parents have died or have left home to seek employment. We strive to implement integrated support structures to provide one good nutritious meal daily.

We also offer after-school care in assisting with homework and engage the children in sports activities. We provide sex education talks that help the children understand their reproductive systems and how to protect themselves against sexual abuse and HIV.

We have observed over time that this truly helps them with character building as well as

developing their talents. Many lives have been transformed as we give them hope where there is so little hope and real family life. We provide a Home-Based Care service for ninety elderly persons. This means we can care for the elderly in the comfort and security of their homes. We assist them with house chores, make sure they get proper food, we collect their medication from the local clinics and collect their State pension monthly. The elderly feels secure with us as we bring joy.

When we as Sisters of the Holy Cross speak about being rooted in Christ to be a Transforming Presence, do our audiences truly know and understand what this means for them in the situations and circumstances they find themselves in?

From 30 January to 02 February 2020, Sr Rodhina and Sr Cheryl-Anne accompanied 21 youth leaders from De La Sal Holy Cross College in Victory Park Johannesburg on their annual pilgrimage to Ngome while staying at the Benedictine Inkamana Abbey in KwaZulu Natal. This pilgrimage incorporates a leadership retreat where the youth leaders spend time in prayer and reflection while planning their programme for the year ahead. The theme chosen by the youth for the year is **“Rooted in Christ to be a Transforming presence.”**

On 30 January 2020, when the 21 youth leaders, set out on their pilgrimage, did they really understand what this Transforming Presence meant or was it just a cool design on the back of their T-shirts. Even the presenters grappled with this concept of being a transforming presence. However, during the first presentation that evening the theme was brought to life for those who participated. While Sr Cheryl-Anne explained what being rooted in Christ meant and how this leads us to be transformed and in turn calls us to be a transforming presence to others, Sr Rodhina mixed the basic ingredients needed for baking bread. The youth leaders were reminded that just as the action of all the ingredients and especially the yeast and water leads to transformation which ultimately results in a loaf of bread, our being rooted in Christ, in the word of God and filled with the Holy Spirit bearing fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness and self-control leads to our own transformation so that we can be a transforming presence in our school community. Within minutes before their eyes, the youth leaders witnessed the transformation and growth of the dough. This demonstration and explanation set the tone for the rest of the weekend’s talks and

presentations. The youth were led to reflect on how they as teenagers can be a transforming presence within their school community, the friendship groups and in the families by simple acts of being welcoming and open to all especially those who feel excluded and neglected; bridging the gaps created by difference and diversity; breaking the barriers of cliques, exclusion, division, separation and groups and going against the norm or how things have always been.



They were challenged to live a more conscious life and to consider their reasons for belonging to the youth group i.e. was it simply for prestige and other selfish reasons or was it genuinely to assist and help other youth. The final talk given to the youth leaders challenged and encouraged them to be transforming leaders within their school community; leaders who witnessed to biblical values and who are of service to others, not for personal gain but to reach and touch the lives of the younger members and beyond.

The talks and presentations were interspersed with meditative praise and worship, praying with prayer partners, praying the rosary, sharing their life experiences and how being part of a spiritual support group helped them through some of the most challenging experiences of their young lives. The youth were also given a

tour of the Abbey by Br Vincent where they had a glimpse of the life of the monks. Praying together at the Ngome Marian Shrine dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary in Ngome, KwaZulu-Natal, brought a sense of peace, tranquillity and unity. At Sunday Mass on the final day of the pilgrimage the youth shared a special occasion when they joined the learners of Inkamana secondary school for a time of praise and worship where bonding and crossing the divides took place.

By the end of the weekend there was a marked difference in how the group interacted with each other. They shared that one of the highlights of the weekend for them was the presence of the Holy Cross Sisters and the interaction with the sisters. They learned a lot about our founders and how they have lived the theme already in 1844, 175 years ago. They had learned to view the sisters in a completely new and different light. The theme transforming presence had really come to life for them.



“Aspire not to have more, but to be more.”

Oscar Romero

"A Future that arises from within..."

Cunco Province

We, the sisters of the Cunco Province, gathered together with an open heart and great joy and went through the thought-provoking Message of the Chapter 2019. During the session we also shared the rich experiences of the Chapter like the Interprovincial sharing, the interculturality and the joy of working in groups to formulate our Chapter Message that strengthens our lives and spirituality as sisters of the Holy Cross and of our need to respond to the realities of our world in the current scenario. We recalled the inputs given by Sr Pat Farrell:

"THE TRANSFORMING PRESENCE: A FUTURE THAT ARISES FROM WITHIN"

"A future that
arises from
within..."

This message led us to reunite ourselves with our Founders and the challenges of their time and to look at our current challenges in the mission. In order to reflect deeply on certain aspects of the message, the inputs received from the General Chapter was really helpful.

During these sessions we reflected mainly on four themes in the message:

1. What does the Lord want from our lives and mission?
2. Why is this issue important in today's context?
3. What are the challenges faced by the Province related to all these?
4. What actions do we propose for the next six years in relation to the Message?

After each session action plans were drawn up to be carried out for the next six years keeping in mind the message,

'ROOTED IN CHRIST...

BE A TRANSFORMATIVE PRESENCE.'

In addition to the above plan, discussions were led on the invitation to awakening in each Sister the vocational consciousness, that each person has a vocation in life and is responsible for fostering it. Also, the need to promote new vocations to the family of the Holy Cross,

'LET JESUS LIVE IN OUR HEARTS.' Mother Bernarda.

Keeping in mind the need for our transformative presence, in our daily living to bear witness to Christ in all our challenging ministries we are urged to work on self-transformation. We ask that the grace of the Holy Spirit to guide us and strengthen us in our great desire to be a transformative presence in the coming days and months.

Strengthening our rootedness to Christ and improving our spirituality by reflecting, deepening the Marian and Franciscan aspects emanating from the Cross.

Empowering each sister with skills that help them in their personal and communal transformation and to be more effective witnesses.

Discovering the beliefs, values and principles that drives one or blocks one for the individual and communal transformation.

Strengthening the human and spiritual development in our consecrated life to accompany people in our Mission.



Promoting ecological knowledge, attitudes and values towards the environment and enabling people to take responsibility for actions of justice, inequality etc.

Awakening in each Sister the consciousness that each person has a vocation in life and to be responsible for fostering it.

Fostering the qualities of leadership through ongoing formation, to be effective leaders in spreading the Kingdom of God in imitation of JESUS,

Motivating and encouraging our Sisters for their own personal Transformation.

ABOVE AREAS FOR ONGOING PERSONAL AND COMMUNAL CONVERSION

LIVING A CONTEMPLATIVE life-STYLE

AMONG THE PEOPLE – German Province

The Message from the General Chapter 2019 paved the way to move on. Initially, our Sisters struggled to understand what **“Transforming Presence”** meant. Finally, the sisters got more insight to implement it. Here are a few examples depicting how the message was brought to the reality in our mission.



Our young people have a wide range of opportunities here in Germany, both on the intellectual and on the practical level. However, there is very little education about spirituality and becoming rooted in God.

Like Mother Bernarda, who also believed that we need an education in faith and belief, we invited the young people to various religious events.

“The Contemplative dimension in its fullest understanding will permeate all aspects of formation.”



One of the Sisters prepares the little ones for First Holy Communion and the children for the Confirmation. This is another way of helping the young to be more rooted in Christ.

A retired Sister gives German lessons to the children of the migrant women and cares for their education while the mothers are working. A very challenging task, but our sister does it with a lot of love and care for the women and children. Working as a volunteer in a welfare shop and experiences the poverty and need of the people is another experience of a sister.

“By our contemplative and prophetic life, we seek to immerse ourselves among the people on the margins”

Two Sisters are happily engaged full time in offering help to the children of the refugees in a Kindergarten in Germany. Above all, the parents of these children need support and help to integrate themselves well into the society.

People who cannot afford a warm meal every day come for lunch to the Provincial House where their needs are cared for with dignity and love.

We plan to open two new small Communities in 2020, which will immerse the Sisters into society to meet the people’s needs. The sisters are aware that they can only be fruitful as contemplative people.

“Formation is a lifelong process. A holistic approach inspires a continuous transformation of mind, heart and will”.



At Provincial level courses on contemplative dialogue were held. The Sisters were happy to work in groups.

The Sisters meet the secularized world with deep confidence that death is not the end but there is a great hope of Resurrection. With this in mind and deeply rooted in Jesus Christ and living daily the Paschal Mystery in great faith, our sisters meet the people and experience to a certain extent the transformation. The most enriching experience is that the transformation they received enables them to be a real transforming presence amidst the people with whom they interact daily. This brings great Joy.

"As co-creators we embrace God's creation..."

English Province

After Sisters Margaret and Elizabeth returned from the chapter, they were enthused to tell us of their experiences. Sr Margaret had taken a number of photos. The Sisters of the province were invited to a meeting at The Grange where some of our elderly Sisters live. We are a very small province so after we had seen the power point presentation, we discussed the chapter message.

Each was given the opportunity to say how she felt she was able to be a transforming presence in today's world rooted in Christ. Some of our elderly Sisters are infirm and not able to be very much in contact with people outside the convent so their presence is with the carers who look after them.

Therefore, it is the Christ like way in which they respond to their carers which is important. The general feeling was that it is who we are, that is more important than what we do; though that is also significant, for example working with the less privileged in society.

Jesus mixed with many different classes of people. So, we try to live out His second commandment 'to love our neighbour as ourselves'.



**'As co-creators we embrace God's creation, and in solidarity we make measures to live sustainably.'
Sr Mary Christa tending the bees in the Grange garden.'**



'Collaborating and networking brings strength to our ministries.'
Chalala School Zambia and Holy Cross Prep School England

Since receiving the Message from the General Chapter, it has been the centre of much interest and discussion in the province. I was again made conscious of the fact that unless my whole way of life is deeply rooted in God, I would not be able to be a real transforming presence in a meaningful way.

The call to bring new life in the face of death is a very real challenge in an ageing province. At a follow-up meeting, I again sensed a positive and hopeful attitude and the desire to look at the way we try to bring life. We embrace God's creation, to live sustainably.

I found this to be so important to us/me and it ties together the way we respect and treat people. People and creation are God's gift to us and we will transform them by our loving presence towards them. I am changing the way I live in many small decisions, such as walking instead of using the car when possible. I use water with more care and feel united with those people who experience drought.

Justice is becoming more important in our world, where those in power seem to cause the difference between the 'haves and the have not' to be even greater. In everyday life, I find the courage to resist judging unjust situation, and defend the rights of the poor. I live among those families who are badly paid, very often the father works at night and mother has a cleaning job simply to get enough money.



'In the globalisation of our world we commit ourselves to promote justice, mercy and equality.'
Sr Bernadette demonstrating her support for vulnerable women, especially those who have been trafficked.

God changes the world with the seeds we plant

North Indian Province

It is very hard for a small seed to open up, it has no idea what follows next, but the spark of life and passion inside of its very essence, drives it to open up. It is a painful process and it probably hurts

too. But the seed does it any way. A seed dies to itself, in order to be transformed into a plant.

Anthony de Mello, an Indian Jesuit priest, who was a spiritual teacher and writer, gives an example of a man, who really wished to transform the world. As a youth with all his passion and vigour, he prayed to God to grant him the grace so that he can change the world. But when he reached middle age, in disappointment he prayed again:



“Lord, I could not do anything for the world, at least let me have the grace that I may bring some changes in the society where I live”. In his old age he prayed again “Lord, I have not done

anything for the society, now give me the grace that I may transform myself”. In order to be a transforming presence in the society I need to bring transformation within myself.

“Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain, but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (John 12:24).

In order to share the message of GC 2019, we had eleven workshops at different regions of the province. The theme **“TRANSFORMING PRESENCE”** was highlighted during the province assembly, helped the individual sisters to be rooted in prayer and to be compassionate and caring towards people and mother earth. The sisters learnt to appreciate the giftedness of each person, empathetic listening and transparency in our dealings. We share in the community our vulnerabilities, hurts, pains, projects and plans, achievements and success. Our community creates space for different personalities, ages, universal opinions, cultures and

languages. We maintain connectedness with others with good communication. In solitude and prayer, we find inner strength and fresh insights. We experience joy and contentment, when we see that the other person’s life becomes whole, more outgoing and more divine. In the mission field sisters are passionate in taking care of the vulnerable members of the society. Women, girls, children, disabled, unwanted, aged, poor and the down-trodden are given special attention by the sisters who are in social pastoral ministries.



During the meeting the groups were asked to discuss and evaluate the following questions:

- What are the key issues facing our province today to make the Kingdom of God a lived reality in the future?
- What are we missing in our ministries?
- What is it that we are not seeing in us, in our communities, in our province and in the society?
- Where are we now with regard to our existence as Holy Cross Sisters?
- What are the challenges which prevent us from being a transforming presence in our life and mission?
- What in the province; communities; sisters, have we to work on, to give birth to new life?

Enthusiastic participation of the sisters and their receptiveness of the General Chapter message showed their eagerness and longing to have a renewal in the existing religious structures.

The following is the consolidated Action Plan for the individual sisters and communities of the North Indian Province to live the message of the GC 2019.



God's love does transform people. The same love that transformed the people in the Bible is able to transform people today. Transformation is recognized in us when our minds are sharpened, our outlooks are shaped and our actions are directed by the Word of God. The more we are rooted in Christ, the more we deeply desire to know God and experience His help in our lives. An inward spiritual transformation will

manifest itself in outward actions. The signs of transformation are seen in the way we increasingly reflect the likeness and glory of Christ. Hence each of us are invited to ask constantly:

“Where do we experience the transforming power of God's love today, in order to become a transforming presence in the society?”



“Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain, but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (John 12:24).



I will make a home with them and bring Christ among them

Zambian Province

Recently I was asked to transfer from my community and ministry where I have been very much involved for over five years. I was called to go and serve in one of the remotest rural areas in Zambia, 700 kms from the Provincial House. In this area solar energy will power our community and around us will be all darkness in the night because people do not have hydroelectricity and they live in simple huts. The solar energy will also pump our water while people around us use hand dug water wells.

There is no proper road, no efficient connection to the internet, no shopping malls and no proper schools or medical services for the people. The nearest town is 80KM away from us. These realities made me feel very unsettled from the life I have known where I had basic needs and was comfortable and now, I was moving into the unknown. This move means for me to know a new people, a new mission, a new language and a new community.

When I took a moment to reflect on my fears and anxieties the words from the General Chapter Message again echoed in my head and gave me assurance:

**“BY OUR CONTEMPLATIVE AND PROPHETIC WAY,
WE SEEK TO IMMERSE OURSELVES AMONG THE PEOPLE ON THE MARGINS OF SOCIETY”**



**“MY CALL IS TO IMMERSE MYSELF IN HUMAN REALITY
AND TO BE A TRANSFORMING PRESENCE IN MY CONTEXT”**

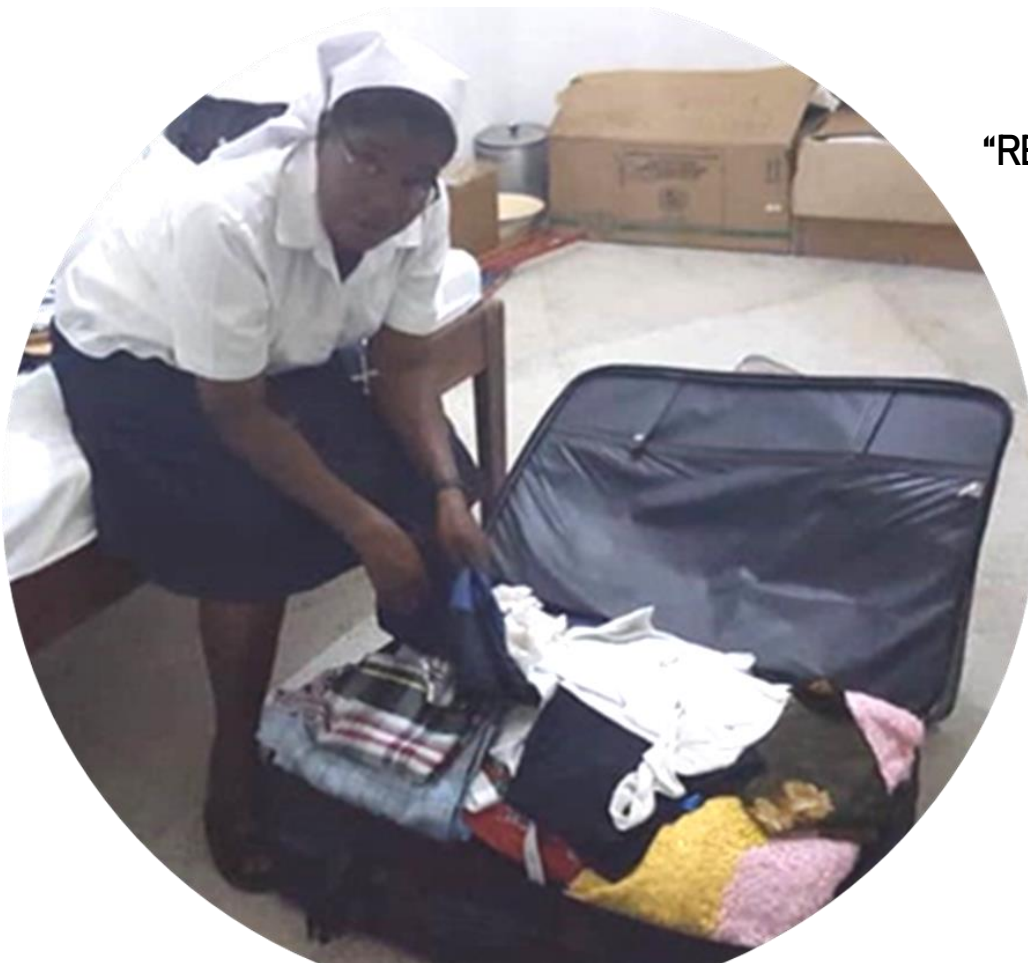
My new context is my new community. Here among God's people whose language I am not very fluent in speaking I will meet Christ. When I arrived in the Provincial House, to make the final departure, each day was a transformation for me. As myself and my two sister companions, who would begin the new mission, packed together every item that we would need in the new house the other sisters prayed and encouraged us daily. Sometimes, they teased us about our fears and the challenges we would face. At a human level, I tried to ensure that we packed every material item we thought we would need in this remote community.

However, through this process I realised I needed to prepare my heart to embrace the challenge that God who was calling me forward and to leave behind what I had known in the past few years and to start a new life with a new people *would go before us*.

As the world becomes more and more engrossed in the sickness and fear of the Corona Virus, I packed my personal belongings and headed to my periphery, an eight hours Journey on a dusty and rough road, to establish the Theodosius Community. As we approached the village smiling faces waved at us in welcome. Here in the midst of nowhere, the people live in their own world, oblivious to the bigger world around them – they extended their hands to greet us. I thought to myself, here I will make a home with them and bring Christ among them, I nervously smiled to myself and the words of Jesus comforted me in the depths of my heart:

**“REMEMBER, I AM WITH
YOU ALWAYS
YES, TO THE
END OF TIME.”**

Mt.28.20



"ROOTED IN CHRIST TO BE A TRANSFORMING PRESENCE IN TODAY'S WORLD"

Our Province Meeting following the General Chapter of 2019 was held on the weekend of 9 – 11 August 2019. The theme for the opening prayer was: *Being a Transforming Presence*. The Sisters were introduced to Contemplative Dialogue and, using pictures from nature for reflection and prayer, they were divided into four groups for sharing on what the theme meant individually and as a group. One member from each group shared as follows:

- *A Transforming presence means the changing of one's outer form from that which one has, to another outward form which comes as a result of an inner change.*
- *The Holy Spirit has power to change our life into a Christ-like character. Only the Holy Spirit has the power to make the changes God wants to make in our lives.*
- *We must first put off our own self-centred thinking by confessing, repenting, and then giving it to God. At this point, we can then put on the Mind of Christ.*
- *If we can see from Christ's perspective, then we'll be able to soar above our circumstances, our problems, and our trials and not get buried under them.*

A PowerPoint illustrating each of the six topics of the Chapter Mandate was presented with a brief pause between slides for Sisters to read and ask clarifying questions. A copy of the Mandate (longer version) prepared in booklet form was handed to each Sister. To close the session, the Jubilee hymn was sung to unite with the Congregation for our 175th Jubilee Year.

Our Provincial Visitation was conducted from mid-August to September 2019 based on the theme: *Being a Transformed Presence – Rooted in Christ*. Reference was made to two significant quotes from our Founders:

"A reform must first transform the interior and then unfold from within to the outside. One who wants to change the society must first change oneself. Then one can reform the single members so that the Divine lives in them and then speaks and acts through them. Then the society will soon be changed." (Theodosius Florentini, Life of the Saints vol. 4, 28-30)

"I thank God for filling your hearts with so much goodness. I pray that it may grow to maturity and bear abundant fruit in the vineyard of the Lord." (M. Bernarda Heimgartner)

Two of the Topics were chosen namely, **Identity and Mission** with emphasis on The Paschal Mystery in everyday life and Personal Transformation and secondly, **Co-creators of our common home**. Video clips were shown and hand-outs were used for enrichment. Questions relating to topics were suggested for weekly community meetings. Each community shared their reflections and how they envisaged applying the Chapter Message to their daily living. Communities were affirmed for their efforts and encouraged to work at their areas for growth.

Our first Province Meeting for 2020 was held on 14th and 15th February 2020. The theme was, *Rooted in Christ, Be a Transforming Presence*. A PowerPoint presentation on *Conscious Dialogue* was used to illustrate growth from unconscious to conscious communication which begins with an awareness of thought processes, words and actions based on the choices we make. Sisters shared within communities and inter-community followed by reporting back in plenum.

The topic, *Formation for Transformation* was chosen and a quote from the mandate was highlighted: *A holistic approach inspires a continuous transformation of mind, heart and*

will to encourage our collective responsibility to attract vocations by our way of life. A member from each community was chosen for the Pastoral Care of Vocations. As a closing ritual, Community leaders received a candle with the Chapter logo and theme to be lit at their weekly meetings. Sisters were invited to embrace every member of the Province in solidarity for our decision namely, Be Rooted in Christ to be a Transforming Presence. The Journey continues...



The theme: Be a Transforming Presence rooted in Christ.



Sharing within community and linking up with another: Langa and Vredenburg Communities.



Each community received a candle to light at their weekly Community Meetings: L: Cape Town and R: Provincial House Community.



Sisters give and receive a friendly embrace as a token of solidarity.



Rooted in Christ, be a Transforming Presence...



Part Two

Inputs for our Formation





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Mother Bernarda's Life: Rooted in Christ... Our Source and Our Inspiration!

MOTHER BERNARDA: ROOTED IN CHRIST AND AS A TRANSFORMING PRESENCE (1844-1863)

When we examine how Mother Bernarda was rooted in Christ and in how far the Menzingen foundation (1844-1863) was a transforming presence in the society in the nineteenth century Switzerland, we first have to look at what we mean by the terms. 'Rooted in Christ' refers not to being forced to fit a predetermined mould, but to the growth of the disciple into a unique image of Christ and to continue His mission. Christ calls persons to discipleship, but founders of religious communities give a

particular corporate shape to that call. Conventionally, we might speak of such experiences as 'transformative' – but the familiarity of such usage should not dull our sense of logical oddness in such talk. In Aristotle's philosophy the idea of 'transformation' is connected with the paradoxes of being born again, of becoming a new creature. The *Merriam –Webster Thesaurus* synonyms for transformation are: 'a change in form, appearance or use'. This article will use the lens of theology to examine this subject.

MENZINGEN FOUNDATION: ROOTED IN THE CHRIST EVENT AND AS A TRANSFORMING PRESENCE

Jesus is the Word of God, the truth of God (John 16:12-15). His earthly disciples do not yet have the capacity to apprehend the whole truth (John 16:12-13), because this 'whole truth' (v.13) is not some theory or system, but the revelation of God in the person of Jesus. The Spirit will 'glorify' Jesus (v.14) by making God's mission visible in history, and he will complete the work of Jesus. The Spirit does not bring a new Gospel, neither will He get the disciples to recite merely from memory the words and deeds of Jesus (John: 14:26). This form of remembrance of Jesus, under the influence of the Spirit will involve the disciples in a deep journey into the inner life of God's holiness. Through this action of the Holy Spirit,



Jesus will openly proclaim the Father through the response given by human beings to the Spirit (John 16:13, 15, 25) in every age in history. What unites the Christ Event and the founding event of Menzingen (1844-1863) is that Mother Bernarda and the founding sisters respond to the Spirit in their hearts, in their own personal lives, in Liturgy and in the historical circumstances of their time. This is a theological claim. It finds its justification in a theology of religious life, in which founding inspirations are interpreted as historical embodiments of Christ's own mission and expressions of the charismatic expressions of the Church.¹

The Menzingen foundation may be seen as a continuation of God's action in the Christ Event, but one that is in form new and effective for European generations in the nineteenth century. In this sense the Menzingen founding inspiration of evangelization and education lived by the sisters in the Swiss villages and towns (outside of enclosure) can be regarded as transformative. It was new in form, understood as not having been there before in that part of German-speaking Switzerland. The course of the Menzingen foundation (1844-1863) was determined by a number of mostly implicit elements. Inspiration was of course the permanent element conceived from its onset in the development of this founding event. A second element included the particular German-Swiss contexts. The Swiss state with its political contests, educational system, mode of production and economy was the terrain in which Mother Bernarda gave the founding inspiration its form. A

final element included the unique personalities in the Swiss Church in the dioceses of Basel and Chur, the Capuchin Order, as well as the personalities in the Menzingen founding group itself. It is important to point out that these persons did not simply interpret the meaning of the Menzingen identity entirely subjectively. Nor was it expressed primarily within language or ideas. That historical context, with its influences of the Enlightenment and the Catholic Enlightenment operating in Church and State, the social needs and the ongoing struggles between the State Liberals and the Swiss Catholic Church, not only helped to form Mother Bernarda and the founding sisters, but they also provided them with a positive direction for interpreting this founding inspiration. The Menzingen founding sisters accepted the existence of a God who somehow liberated them.

In their minds it was God's action working in them which enabled them to carry out their mission. It was God who made the difference; he authorised them to carry out His work, as they understood it. This belief in God transformed them.



¹ Jurado, Manuel, Ruiz, 'Consecrated Life and the Charisms of the Founders', in: Latourelle, René (ed.), (1989), *Vatican II Assessment and Perspective Twenty-five Years After (1962-1987)*. Volume III, p.3

THE FAITH RESPONSE OF THE MENZINGEN FOUNDING SISTERS

The extant discourse of Mother Bernarda and the founding generation demonstrates that they believed God to be the author of, and the actor in, the new Institute. Indeed, Mother Bernarda saw God as the actual founder. In her first extant letter to Bishop Salzmänn of Basel, she affirms that it is *“through the working of God’s tender mercy and goodness”* that this Institute originated. Two years later, she interprets the survival of the Institute *‘at the end of this stormy time’* of the Swiss civil war, as an act of God. Fourteen years after its foundation, Mother Bernarda’s assistant Sister Feliciana, attributes the Institute’s numerical growth to a *‘visit’* made by God to *‘our small society’*. This may be understood to constitute the faith with

which Mother Bernarda and the founding sisters viewed the Congregation. Its abiding significance for them derived from their belief that its origin and being was an inspiration that came from God, in the same way that the Israelites believed their origins lay in a divine power, as is expressed in the key symbols of the Exodus narrative.

This way of describing the Menzingen foundation constitutes the witness of Mother Bernarda and the founding sisters. This is the way they saw, lived and expressed their response given to God, in the light of the Holy Spirit. Within the context of a theological interpretation their witness appears trustworthy.

SELF-DISCLOSURE OF GOD FORMS THE MENZINGEN SPIRITUAL IDENTITY

In her writings, Mother Bernarda surfaced names for God, located primarily in her faith encounter with him. Images and spiritual statements made about God’s care for His people are evident. God is merciful, gentle and full of concern. He is near to the human side of people and He therefore inspires trust. God acts not for Himself but for others; this is part of the meaning of God’s care for Mother Bernarda. She repeatedly refers to the unending goodness and kindness of the *‘Father-God’* who *“never grows tired of doing good for us, that finds its joy when we hope in Him and make many requests of him.”* Mother Bernarda believed that the erection of the chapel of the Institute in Menzingen was *“entirely the work of God and God’s fatherly goodness and the love of human friendship.”*

Faith in God’s care also underpinned her belief that there is a pattern to life. He is not a God for the moment, one who changes every day. He has a clear line. *“Like a good father he [God]*

met our most pressing needs at all times.”

Mother Bernarda expressed this same faith when she sent good wishes for the recovery of the bishop who was ill: *“Our weak prayers need only to be truly blessed by the benevolence of the good Father- God.”* Her letter of thanks to the Ludwig Mission Society in Munich, for a donation towards the building of the convent chapel in Menzingen, is more an expression of thanks to God: in the light of the Spirit, she expressed the belief that it was God who bestowed the grace of generosity on the donor. Mother Bernarda’s confidence in God’s care is the key with which she unlocked the door to the Menzingen primitive inspiration.

Trust in God freed the founding sisters to become agents of a fresh founding initiative known as the Menzingen Institute, in the nineteenth century Swiss Church and society. This meets the definition for being transformative.

THE MENZINGEN FOUNDING INSPIRATION: A TRANSFORMING PRESENCE

In the restricted space of this short article I must confine myself to five areas with reference to the Institute as a transforming presence.

From the beginning of its foundation, Mother Bernarda viewed the state schools as an urgent and characteristic task of the institute, a task which faced the new foundation with enormous odds. The mortality rate among the population and the general backwardness of the region of the 'Innerschweiz' were remarkable in the 1840s, '50s and '60s, a time when the Menzingen founding sisters believed themselves to have been called by God to this extraordinary future-orientated task, the education of the female youth. In response to what she believed to be God's call, and in the power of the Spirit, Mother Bernarda, with the cooperation of the sisters decisively set her face against these obstacles. Her commitment to the evangelisation of the 'Innerschweiz' by means of education and the Gospel was rooted in her desire to carry out what she believed to be a 'work of God'.

Second, the Menzingen founding identity can be understood as a response to growing secularism in the nineteenth century German and Swiss societies. The founding sisters may be understood to have set before their contemporaries a call to reject the temptation to construct a city of '*man*' apart from God and even in opposition to him, in that they brought faith in Jesus as saviour together with the learning of the Enlightenment. They combined the holistic development of young people with attributes of the life of Jesus: belief in the wholehearted commitment to God's care for his people and obedience to the will of God. The sisters may be understood to have shared in the pattern of the life of Jesus, who called his hearers to reflect on what actually belongs to Caesar and what belongs to God (Mark 12:17).

In fact, the sisters did reclaim the sphere of education, specifically as a Christian service from Swiss Liberals and radicals.² In this respect the Institute was a distinctively trans-forming presence.

Third, in devoting their lives to replacing the darkness of ignorance with the light of knowledge through education, the Sisters of Menzingen could be understood to disclose God's intention that every human life has value in and for itself. Admittedly, this understanding is not exhaustive of the expression of God's care: yet, there is certainly a link here that applies especially in the first half of the nineteenth century when God is depicted as the enemy of human beings with a depth of challenge that had been unprecedented.³

Fourth, as religious educators, the Menzingen founding sisters witnessed, especially to Catholics, that faith, education and schooling could be productively integrated. They stood against the then entrenched Swiss Catholic prejudice to progress. Because of their response given to the Spirit the sisters could be subversive. They combined a changing understanding of what it is to be human with faith formation. Within Catholic education they were constructing a new anthropology. Of special interest in this regard is an article in the St. Gallen Newspaper (6 December 1860) which complained that "*instead of making good Swiss housewives out of our girls you [the Sisters of Menzingen] turn them into ailing and crippled pious nuns.*" The sisters may be understood to stand steadfast by doing the will of God, as they understood it, in the midst of such objections.

² Moos, *Zukunft aus dem Glauben*, S. 92

³ Ludwig Feuerbach (1802-1872) stated that the attributes ascribed to God belong to the human being; therefore, belief in God debases human nature.

Fifth, the Menzingen founding sisters acknowledged the good in human beings and the grace of God as support. Evil could spoil or damage but never totally destroy the image of God in men and women. They believed in the capacity of the people in the 'Innerschweiz' for Christian faith and education, because a magnanimous God gives specific gifts to each person (Matt.25:15). This commitment stands in contrast to a *restoration* theological and spiritual stream of thought in the Church of that time, which depicted God as holy, strong and far away in the heavens. Human beings were seen as sinful, weak, puny, low and continually in danger of temptation. 'World air' was viewed *'as poisonous and very destructive to the soul.'*⁴

Mother Bernarda distanced herself from the German Enlightenment, which played down sin and the need for God's grace. She acknowledges her own sinfulness and, in faith, she knew that she was forgiven by God. But she was at the cutting edge of the Catholic Enlightenment, a pioneering and reforming movement in the Church of that time which brought faith in the Christ Event and the new knowledge together. Mother Bernarda shared its belief that the Church must engage with a complex world, rather than retreat from it. Furthermore, the Menzingen Institute was supported by the Bishops of Basel, in its work to bring fruit for the Kingdom of God through its purpose of evangelization and education. Expressed in nineteenth century terms, Bishop Salzmann of the diocese of Basel records that the Menzingen mission impacted the local people as Good News, just seven years after its beginning.

[...] Because of their daily eagerness and their zeal, through their devotion to duty as teachers,

their complete self-sacrifice of themselves in order to promote the life of the young, their exemplary ability, their love for their subject, their distinguished pious form of life, their true religious sense, the catholic youth receive an education and a formation of blessed effects from the sisters, one which holds the promise of happiness, holiness for their present and future lives.⁵

CONCLUSION

This reflection has examined some of the documents revealing how Mother Bernarda was rooted in Christ. In an important manner it shows how the Menzingen founding event (1844-1863) is a continuation of the Christ Event. As such, and because it was simultaneously a new form for European generations in a radically changing nineteenth century, it developed into a transforming presence under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

MOTHER BERNARDA HEIMGARTNER 1822 - 1863



“Our weak prayers need only to be truly blessed by the benevolence of the good Father, God.” M. Bernarda

^{4 4} Alphonsus Liguori, *The True Spouse of Jesus Christ*, 1835

⁵ AIM. Mappe 2.4. Fasz. 168.



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“Uncut Diamonds”

Formation for Transformation

Together with CLT each Province, each community and each individual sister is planning and organising communally as well as individually how to live radically the message of GC 2019, “**Rooted in Christ be a Transforming Presence.**” As a formator I too am reflecting how can I become a relevant formator by living this message. How can I help the Formees⁶ understand and live our Chapter Message?

My challenge is to become a transforming presence to this new-gen of Formees. A help line to attain this goal is to direct the growth of my roots towards Jesus Christ.

There is no genuine and integral human development without proper formation. Positive change happens when one is ready to collaborate with God and others. The role of a

Formator is to stand as a link who can connect Formees with God and with human kind. We help them to have an intimate love towards God and to have a passionate love for human kind, especially for the poor and neglected.

The effectiveness of my ministry as a Formator depends on my connection between God and His people. Formation is never a finished act, rather it is a lifelong process. Therefore, the Formator too is a Formee, who strives to become a transforming presence.



From the beginning of the Church there were men and women who set out to follow Christ with greater liberty and to imitate Him more closely by practising the evangelical counsels (cf. PC 1). In the Second Vatican Council, the Church gave doctrinal principles and general norms for the formation of religious (LG ch VI & PC). Down the centuries the “*following of Christ*” has taken different forms. The study of the eremitical life and coenobitic style monasticism draws our attention to how they gave importance to the formation of their members. The formation they received helped them to live as a community with a specific title. Through formation the way of life, spirituality, rules and the heritage of the Congregation is handed over to the younger members and thus the Charism remains ever burning.

⁶ Formee refers to a young person engaging in religious formation.

CONCERN OF FORMATION

In every vocation God's encounter happens. The dream of God for His suffering humanity is being communicated and the role of saving act is being shared. It is like the call and commissioning of Moses to save the slaves of Egypt (Ex ch 3). Every vocation is for a saving act of God. God calls those who are ready and willing to cooperate with Him to give life to someone who is crying somewhere for "life" (cf. Ex 2:23-24; 3:7-8; Jn 10:10).

When God entrusts us whom He has selected for His purpose, it is the will of God that the saving act has to be lived through our daily life. Therefore, it is our responsibility to support, care, understand, motivate and form those who come to us saying "yes" to God's invitation. While addressing the plenary of the Congregation of the Clergy on 3rd October 2014, Pope Francis had spoken of the need to guard and foster vocations so that they bear mature fruit.



He called formees as **"UNCUT DIAMONDS"** who needed to "be formed both patiently and carefully, respecting the conscience of the individual, so that they may shine among the people of God."

We are wounded healers. The young people who come to us are also wounded. From the Scripture, both OT and NT, we understand that God calls wounded people, forms them for His mission and assures them of His presence and sends them out. The wounded Moses, crooked and sinful David, grumbling Jeremiah, greedy Matthew, unfaithful Simon Peter, doubting Thomas, murderer Paul, cheating Judas and the list goes on. Calling them to Himself and by allowing them to experience His love, God transforms them into great missionaries. An attitudinal change happens as a result of formation and it helps them to become zealous missionaries.

Pope Paul VI wrote in *Marialis Cultus* modern man is *"torn as he often is between anguish and hope, defeated by the sense of his own limitations and assailed by limitless aspirations, troubled in his mind and divided in his heart, uncertain before the riddle of death, oppressed by loneliness while yearning for fellowship, a prey to boredom and disgust."* When this person comes to us, we have to have the heart of Mary who *"shows forth the victory of hope over anguish, of fellowship over solitude, of peace over anxiety, of joy and beauty over boredom and disgust, of eternal visions over earthly ones, of life over death"* (57).

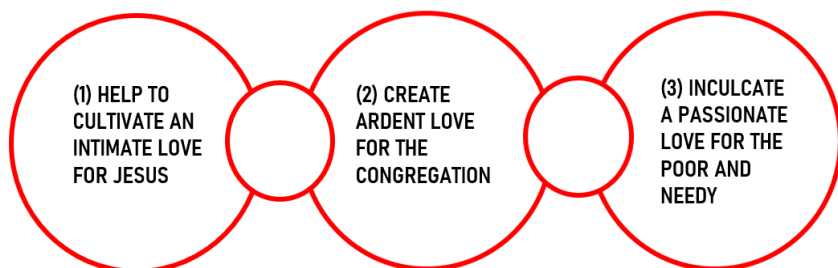
PURPOSE OF FORMATION

The proper renewal of religious Institutes depends chiefly on the formation of their members. In the instruction *Renovationis Causam*, the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes recommends *"to make a better adaptation of the entire formation cycle to the mentality of younger generations and modern living conditions, as also to the present demands of the apostolate, while remaining faithful to the nature and the special aim of each Institute"* (1969).

We the Holy Cross Sisters are the disciples of Jesus Christ. Therefore, we have to adapt the lifestyle of Jesus which He taught His disciples. The Holy Cross way of formation, both initial and ongoing, helps each sister to make this adaptation of life possible. The initial formation introduces first to discover and later to assimilate and deepen religious identity. Formation has to help a person to dedicate oneself to God and to insert oneself into the world as a significant, effective and faithful witness (cf. John Paul II to UISG, 1985).

A convinced Religious is ever ready in all the circumstances to offer oneself as a sacrifice to God. If the formation helps the Formee to attain these goals then that person will be able to witness Jesus in her context living the spirit of the Congregation. When one undergoes a personal conversion, then that person becomes an agent of transformation.

During the initial Formation we focus on:



In conclusion, unless one is drawn by the love of Jesus no one can enter into this way of life. The spark of love for Jesus in them has to be fanned and kept burning night and day till it joins with the eternal fire of love. Indeed, vocation is for mission. It is a call to become a prophetess, a visionary, a mystic, an animator, a healer and a reconciler. Formation helps the Formee to bear witness to Jesus. When God calls someone, nobody else can replace that person. Therefore, each person who said “yes” to God’s invitation is precious. As Holy Cross Sisters, wherever we are, we bear witness to Him. In His Apostolic Exhortation, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, Pope Francis exhorts, “My brother, my sister, the Lord expects from you a testimony that no one can give in your place. May you come to

realize what that word is, the message of Jesus that God wants to speak to the world by your life” (24). Each sister has the responsibility to nurture the vocation and religious spirit of the other, especially of the younger members.

Therefore, the other may always cherish “*the love she had at first*” (cf. Rev 2:4). Formation facilitates the seeker to discover the inner self and become an integrated human person and thus an emissary of Christ to witness, bless, console, raise up, and radiate the peace, joy and love of Him.



Sisters who attended the Congregational Formators Meeting: Bangalore 2015



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"What remains when we walk away...?"

I have found the topic on which I was invited to reflect and share an intriguing and also a challenging one. How do I experience religious sisters rooted in Christ and in what ways would I see that as transformative? Are the two parts to be seen together or can they be dealt with separately?

I have concluded that probably my most meaningful response to the topic is to share some reflections on my own experiences and insights about religious sisters and in particular the Holy Cross Sisters with whom I have had a long and varied relationship.

My experience of the Holy Cross Sisters goes back over 60 years, almost a whole lifetime. My sister and I were sent, out of necessity, by my mother to boarding school in Aliwal North, where we remained from 1955 to 1961. After leaving school, apart from an occasional contact at Victory Park, I had very little contact with the sisters for many years. From the 1980s, becoming active in marriage and family ministry I did have a few working relationships with various sisters. However, I have always felt a warm sense of belonging, being an Aliwal girl and by extension a member of the Holy Cross family.

My experience is made up of many different, small or larger, experiences, and one that from early on was an overall formational and

transformative one. Some of the sisters at boarding school were nicer, kinder or just more relatable and many did make a large impact on my life, certainly a transformative presence, but not necessarily always sensed as rooted in Christ. Even as an adult, working alongside a number of sisters the spiritual or religious aspect has not stood out for me strongly in most cases.

I was comfortable in the very Catholic religious environment at school with Mass, Benediction and the Rosary as a normal part of the daily routine for us, pupils, by choice.

Sr Virginia and Sr Salome, our music teachers were personal mentors, but also as the choir leaders, the experience of both my sister and I, as hugely committed choir members, was spiritually uplifting and long lasting, transformative without a doubt. Music is still part of my life and I have continued to be an active member of a church choir for all my later years. Together with my husband we led our parish choir for a long time and took our liturgical contribution very seriously. I find that reflection on the texts and the spirituality of the music is still growing for me.

Probably, as children, the spiritual side of the sisters' own lives was a mystery and almost kept away from us. Their chapel was out of bounds. However, as a choir member I distinctly recall once being allowed to participate in a Profession of Vows ceremony.

The words of one hymn still stay with me, *"My Lord and my God take all from me that keeps me from Thee. My Lord and my God give all to me that brings me to thee."* So, this is what religious life is all about! I would sing the opposite in my head, as these words were challenging and at times, I did consider a possible religious vocation. When I raised that question with Sr Luitgard, a particular favourite, she suggested I go and get married and have children and they might consider it. That came as a relief!!!

However, it certainly didn't happen like that. I did follow a religious path. Having received my very good religious formation from the sisters, I became a catechist until both my husband Chris and I experienced Marriage Encounter and chose to follow a different religious calling to promotion of marriage and later of family life more broadly. I have also become a strong proponent of the role of the laity, in church life but also in the world through my ongoing work in MARFAM, a Marriage and Family Life Renewal Ministry.

I did share aspects of my faith journey with some of the Holy Cross sisters I had become more involved with through church projects. Sr Boniface Borsch, however, remained a friend even from our school days and I was happy to visit her from time to time and happy too that she supported my work.

Sr Aine Hughes was more a colleague but a mentor too. We both worked in the Johannesburg diocese in different departments for a time. Her work in human development and mine specifically in promoting family life did have parallels and some collaboration. A short period during which I was involved in a faith sharing group with her and various other religious helped me to deepen a sense of spirituality. In that context I could experience their being rooted in Christ, for Sr Aine a liberating Christ. I

could also identify strongly with her suggestions to conduct a biblical reflection and sharing to start a meeting of Catholic church committees, rather than the usual quick Our Father and Hail Mary that most often opens meetings. As this deeper reflection is not common it makes me think even now that maybe the sisters and priests have had their prayer time and want to get on with the business, while some of us lay people don't quite fit into that mould. I certainly tend to pray on the go.

I also had a good relationship with Sr Bernadette Duffy through the South African Catholic Bishops' Conference and the Education for Life programme for youth which was also loosely associated with AIDS awareness. I was happy to collaborate a little on elements of family life and spirituality.

Other and more recent contact with a number of Holy Cross sisters mostly at Church gatherings or in working contexts still always gives me a warm sense of belonging. In recent years through a friend in Aliwal I particularly enjoyed meeting Sr Tarsilla, who had managed and worked on the farm at Mount Carmel, for many years even into her old age. In some way she epitomized good old-fashioned sense of a religious and spiritual vocation.

However, I am a lay person with a strong and sometimes regarded as fanatical passion for promoting and supporting family life and importantly the particular spirituality of family life, marriage and, in the last 20 years, also of widowhood. While the sisters are always friendly my perception tends to be that they are concerned mainly about their focus ministry. Just as I am of course, and I believe our different contexts appear in our way of rootedness in Christ.

On consideration I am aware that my perception is also based on the fact that my contact with the religious has been mainly on a working level. I do recognize an inherent

spirituality in religious life – *the rootedness in Christ* in a particular form related to their charism and have experienced this powerfully in some of the sisters. Personally however, I have had little contact with sisters on the level of personal spiritual growth and also do not attend prayer or faith sharing groups where we could meet.

With regard to a transformative presence I would say that this occurred most powerfully for me during my school years and no doubt set a foundation for later growth. I can add that only days ago I had occasion to be in Aliwal North for the ordination of the new bishop Right Reverend Joseph Kizito. I made a point of visiting my old school and taking a walk down memory lane. Although much has changed and it is now a primary day school

there were still meaningful memories. The entrance, the passages, the hall, the smell of floor polish reminded me how much this place was a very real, important and formative part of my life.

In summary, my soul-searching leads me to conclude that I recognize that the religious sisters have their rootedness in Christ of which I have not been particularly aware. The transformative presence appears to be on a more practical level. However due to the nature of our contacts, to me a link between these has not generally been clearly observable, or should I say noticed, or should I say I have maybe taken too much for granted. The religious vocation of the Holy Cross sisters is still a valuable witness to the families of the Church and the world.

THE MYSTERY OF WIDOWHOOD

We were once a couple, dedicated to one
another and to God yearning to be one,
in good times and in bad.

You my beloved now are dead,
Gone from my house and gone
from my bed.

Yet living still in my mind and heart
we need never fully be apart.

Life is calmer now, but emptier.

We don't fight or make up,

We don't play our own silly games,
have private jokes,

No longer argue about

our kids or getting up time,
give or receive compliments,
feel close or distant or passionately loved.

Widowhood is made of memories

that make you cringe, or laugh or cry,
eternally thankful for the gift that was.

New memories grow from new experiences
that are not ours to share.

But we believe in the communion of saints.

So rest well saints who has passed on.

God help us saints who still remain
may we find rest and peace for our souls too,
God's peace, until we meet again.

Toni Rowland, 2002



SR ISIDORA DAMANE is the coordinating manager at Radio Maria Lesotho. As a key figure in the association she laisses between top-level management and operations staff.

Connect ~ Evangelize ~ Transform

Radio Maria Lesotho (RML) is a daily radio station based in Maseru, Lesotho where I manage and supervise the organizational area of competence. I am the link between the President of Radio Maria Lesotho and and operations staff (technical, administrative, etc). Our motto is: ***“UNA VOCE CRISTIANA NELLA TUA CASA - SPES NOSTRA”*** translated “the Christian Voice in your home – Our hope.” We seek to feed the spiritual hunger of our listeners with prayer, scripture, live celebration of the Eucharist (Mass) and sound Catholic teaching.

Evangelization is at the heart of every broadcast we make.

As Pope Francis urged in his message for the World Day of Social Communications in 2019, we should responsibly make use of the Social Media, saying *“it should be used to liberate not to entrap.”* He says Social Media should *“help us to better connect, rediscover, and assist one another.”*

In his 2016 message for World Communications Day he said: *“Emails, text messages, social networks and chats can also be fully human forms of communication. It is not technology that determines whether or not communication is authentic, but rather the human heart and our capacity to use wisely the means at our disposal.”*

“Social Media should be used to liberate not to entrap.”



In line with the thinking of Pope Francis it our aim at Radio Maria Lesotho (RML) that Social Media be used as a powerful tool for evangelization. The RML reaches thousands of people daily and it has proved positively the spread of the Good News expressing Gospel values of forgiveness, love and hope.

RML is used to invite people to daily Mass, Adoration, Rosary, Pilgrimages and other Catholic events. Social Media can be used to transform and support evangelization by various forms of Communication of different groups and individuals in parishes, communities and sodalities by providing and updating each other on quotes from scriptures, videos messages that help to encounter Jesus Christ and sharing Catholic Tradition. Social media helps to discuss and understand current issues. Used as a tool for evangelization, Social Media helps to deepen understanding in scriptures, e.g. the Stewardship of environment as a moral issue and climate change discussions.

Our radio station is being a transformative presence to our listeners through what we broadcast and teach on air. Our mandate is inspired by the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to broadcast and proclaim God's love to all, to proclaim effectively, the Good News through media and to strengthen the Church's presence in society. Through our daily programs, we assure people of God's love for them. In similar ways our radio station broadcasts educational programs for children, youth and adults based on the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church. RML is very conscious of people living on the margins, the elderly, the sick and disabled. Hence, we have created a special slot for them. Every Thursday a spiritual director comes on air to present the

status of marginalized people. The slot enables them to voice their concerns about what it means to live with disabilities, growing old in society and being marginalized. We also provide space on air for individuals and groups to share and impart their knowledge and expertise. This has impacted a lot on individuals and has deepened the spiritual lives of our listeners. Additionally, our listeners are exposed to live daily rosary from Kibeho, Rwanda, which takes place every Friday at the shrine of Mary the Mother of God, which the Holy See declared, is the only place in the continent of Africa where apparitions of Our Lady took place.

Our radio took part in the Radio Maria's whole world to pray the rosary with one million children. She also aligns herself to global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from the perspective of the values of the Catholic Church as per the Catholic Social Teachings maintained in our programs.

The radio staff is made up of 80% youth. They are coached and mentored to lead programs. To help the nation's youth we invite on air psychologists, councilors, business men and women, professionals and experts to motivate them. The youth have a platform to respond and share their realities as young people in our society today. We assist them to remain faithful to their faith. They have the opportunity to address their peers and share their talents. As part of our missionary outreach we visit schools to motivate students and to celebrate Eucharist with them. So far, the reactions have been positive.

The criticism we receive are constructive and

help us improve our station. We also visit parishes. In a nutshell RML is used positively to spread the Good News of the Gospel and the Catholic teaching of the Church. It keeps

listeners up to date with current issues in the church and society and uses its voice to respond positively with love and hope.

Our listeners say:

“RML revives the tradition of the Catholic Church in Lesotho. It is giving our youth confidence to stand for their Catholic beliefs. Through means of evangelization people feel hopeful even in the midst of social injustices and political upheaval as the station promotes peace and justice.”



The radio station is made up of 80% youth!



SR PAULA MARIA PALACIOS is an Educator in Basic General Education and leadership. Currently Enrolled in a Master degree in Neurosciences of Education.

"EDUCATE TO TRANSFORM"

Challenged in HOPE, we are called to give meaning to life ...

Santa Cruz School of Freire is an Educational Community that works with Pre-school, Elementary, and High School Education levels, developing integrally the Person in Gospel Values. The educational project gathers the concerns, perceptions and representations of the Institution as a whole. Therefore, the commitment and the identity of the members of the Community are implicit, which strengthens the achievement of objectives, goals and actions.

From its inception 1953 Santa Cruz School of Freire keeps empowering individuals in their integral formation, renewing through an innovative educational organization through areas (Pastoral, Formative and Academic).

All this, to create better conditions for integrating the learning to be, to know, to do and to live together, strengthening the learning experiences that allows to transform every dimension of the human person. The innovative approach to educate through Educational Coaching and Neuro-coaching in the classroom enable the teaching staff, the teaching assistants, parents, guardians and each member of the Educational Community to prepare tools that support the integral process of learning.

Thus, encouraging a better body awareness, emotional management, finding good ways of living together and community learnings, contributing for effective and critical dialogue with the culture for the spiritual formation of all. In a world in which the education is at risk of getting dissolved into a set of competences, intelligences and skills, appeal to an education for the Person sounds revolutionary. In a world that seeks the curricular contents to be effective, useful and efficient, it is also innovative to unfold the spiritual dimension of education and enable learners to become integrated whole persons.

Having always in mind our motto **"TO BE A TRANSFORMING PRESENCE"**, in our school we focus on educational leadership as a driving force for personal and social change. As part of a Santa Cruz Community, our Leadership stresses our Founders' Spirituality, Charisma and values so as to transmit them to the students and to the Educational Community in general. Through small learning communities, formed by teachers and others on different occasions, and through mixed communities, a collaborative self-learning work and personal growth emerges, keeping in view personal and collective transformation in all areas, so as to

make differences in the lives of the students, their families and in their social context.

PASTORAL AREA The Gospel Values are the core of the Holy Cross Spirituality and our Educational Community. We are watchful to discover the needs of our time, being bold and being conscious of who we are called to evangelize today: the poor and under-privileged, from our Pastoral pedagogical and formative practices. We collaborative with the learning communities and youth for strengthening the catechetical and missionary development.

FORMATIVE AREA our educational goal is to form good individuals and citizens. This means to promote gospel values, to educate for life, that is; to educate for knowledge, love and work, to promote a formation for the internalization and full realization of rights and duties of the individual specially all our students.



ACADEMIC AREA our aim is to make visible the educational vision established in the Santa Cruz School of Freire's Educational School Project (*Proyecto Educativo Insitucional, PEI*). It is implemented in the classroom through the inter-disciplinary and collaborative work of the

different subject departments at all levels enabling a wholistic educational formation for all. In addition, we adopt methodologies that help the students to reach their full personal development. They also impact on the students' transformation, producing changes in their perspectives, increasing their motivation, commitment and responsibility in their self-learning process, under excellence and quality standards of the Sisters of the Holy Cross charisma. In the academic area, we strengthen our students, teachers and guardians through learning communities, teacher's meetings, civic educational program, Expo Educa (an annual learning fair), We Xipantü (native indigenous new year celebration), Englishpalooza Festival, learning working networks, pedagogical seminars, different subject training, subject Olympiads, theater, after-school activities (ACLES), recreational cultural sport activities, championships, revitalization of Mapuzungun (culture and language of native indigenous people in the region), educational talks, lectures by professors, etc.

Proper coordination of these three areas do have an influence on effective integral education from pre-school to high school. This formation is centered in every person's dimension not neglecting any of them and strengthening each of the gifts given by God. In order to achieve this, training programs and seminars are organized throughout the year, where common guidelines are worked out for the Santa Cruz Schools of Cunco Province. To portrait our working methodology of the integration of different areas previously mentioned, we present a diagram with the services from the Pastoral, Formative and Academic Area. This allows us to assume a major commitment in the Apostolate of our Cunco Province and invites us to have an open mind to new perspectives of the person's transformation and growth.

O Mary, you shine continuously on our journey
as a sign of salvation and hope.
We entrust ourselves to you, health of the sick.
At the foot of the Cross you participated in Jesus' pain,
with steadfast faith.
You, salvation of the Roman People, know what we need.
We are certain that you will provide, so that,
as you did at Cana of Galilee,
joy and feasting might return after this moment of trial.
Help us, Mother of Divine Love,
to conform ourselves to the Father's will
and to do what Jesus tells us:
He who took our sufferings upon Himself,
and bore our sorrows to bring us,
through the Cross, to the joy of the Resurrection.
Amen.

We seek refuge under your protection, O Holy Mother of God.
Do not despise our pleas, we who are put to the test
and deliver us from every danger,
O glorious and blessed Virgin.



Dear Sisters this particular period cannot fail to touch our hearts, our call to offer the world, marked by so much suffering and fear, our life, our presence. People need us, our faith in Jesus words that give light in the midst of so much darkness. I, you ... we are all here for them. Together.... God bless and keep you with His great love. Sr Dorina



Commitment Finds Its Supreme Expression in Availability. May God bless and reward the Health Care Teams for dispensing compassion to all those who are suffering at this time when everyone is house bound in different parts of the world. Trust in Him and have faith. Sr Fatima

Banabeso ba ratehang, ka ho tidma maphelo a boa re phelang le bona e seka re ka thola Lesedi ho a Rona maphelo kea rapela hore Selemong sena, Selemo se mokgelo ho tse ding, Tshepo ya rona etle e tihe hore ke tshwanelo le toka hore re shwe pele re ka tsoha botjha. Selemo se tla fetola lefatshe ho ya pheletsong ya nako. E seka re ka dumella mmopi hore a bope letsopa la dekelello le dipelo tsa rona. Morena a ke a re hlonolofatse hammoho le malapa a rona le lefatshe la rona. Ka lerato.

My dear Sisters as we read each other's stories may they bring to light our own story. I pray that the Paschal Mystery becomes the hope we rely on during this year. A year like no other year. A year that will transform the world forever. May God bless each of us, our families and the world. Sr Bernadette

"Consecrated Life" Good News of the Kingdom". From this foundation life acquires a special meaning. It becomes a sacred place. We were created in the image and likeness of the Creator God (Genesis 1:26). So we have been given the stamp of being co-creators for the dignity that it has been conferred on us. Expanding to an ecological dimension. Let us live with joy and enjoy this gift. Sr Matilde

"I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life that you may live (Deut. 30:19). What will I choose to have a transforming presence in the situations where I serve?"

As the rain which falls on the ground and does not go wasted but lets the seed grow and bear fruit; so also, with the life of each one of us, my dear Sisters. Sr Rose Paul





Holy Cross Sisters, Menzingen