

Interconnections

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Here in Rome

Flying the flag of Peace

In the days preceding the second Gulf War the rainbow flag of peace began to flutter over the streets of Rome. It appeared on apartment windows, shop fronts, newspaper stands, souvenir stalls and over political posters. Its colours were taken up in t-shirts, hair-bands, scarves and other items of clothing. It was held high in demonstrations by people from the whole social spectrum - children and pensioners, students and trades union militants, teachers and religious, opposition politicians and peace activists.



All anti-war protests have now died down in Rome and most people seem to have rolled up their flags, stored them in the cupboard and are getting on with the business of living their ordinary lives. But the 'war for peace' has not been won anywhere in the world and there is still a need for the 'rainbow warriors' to continue making their point in the cause of peace by whatever means they have at their disposal.

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Brief news

◆ General Community

After completing their itineraries planned from March to May, Margaret and the General Council are now back in Rome for the month of June.

◆ Annual SEDOS Seminar

From 19 – 23 May several members of the General House community had the opportunity to participate in the annual SEDOS (Documentation and Research Centre) Seminar on Inter-religious Dialogue. The aim of the seminar was to enable the participants to

come to a new vision of others and themselves, to grow in awareness of the importance of inter-religious dialogue particularly focussed on Islam.

This was done with the help of theologians, researchers, and people with practical experience of working on the ground in that area. The process was one of listening, reflecting, analysing, and learning from personal experiences of dialogue in the concrete life of local inter-religious communities.



Among several points that emerged from the meeting was the importance of engaging in an ongoing process of intellectual formation and conversion with regard to Islam, learning how to discern the real Islam from the politicised version often portrayed by the media, and seeing what particular contribution religious communities have to make in this regard.

A reminder: The no. 34 edition of AGAPE was dedicated to the theme of Inter-religious Dialogue. The questions following the leading article are relevant to the present state of the dialogue.

Coming Events



◆ **Second European Women's Synod**

It will take place in Barcelona (Spain) from 5 – 10 August. The theme of this second synod is "*Sharing Cultures, Daring Diversity*". At least two *Holy Family* sisters will be attending: Teresa Florensa (Rome) and Anxos Renieblis (Spain).

For more information on the Synod see: www.synodalia.org.

◆ **Training for Justice and Peace**

The Asian Institute for Missiology is organising a workshop in Sri Lanka from 29 July to 11 August for those involved in the apostolate of Justice and Peace. Their goal is to create a new spirituality and a new motive force for involvement in the ministry for justice and peace. They have invited 35 participants, 20 from Sri Lanka, 10 from the rest of Asia and 5 from other parts of the world.

Sri Lankan participants include *Holy Family* sisters Ramani Fernando and Matilda Lazarus. Among the international participants will be Angelina Lekhotla hfb from Lesotho.

The programme could be the group's contribution to a new chapter in *Gaudium et Spes* on "Justice and Peace". If networking continues for three years, and with subsequent follow up programmes they might be able to come up with a model document (or a chapter).

Our visitors



Redenta luculano from the Delegation of Cameroon-Chad spent some time with us before going to her family in Sicily. We wish her a pleasant and restful stay.

Administration of Goods Team

Joining Françoise Aubin (*General Bursar*), M. Carmen Vilardell (*General Councillor*) and Gertie Peiris (*Assistant to the General Bursar*) for the team meeting from 5-9 May were:

Bernadette Tauriniya (*La Solitude*)
Carmen Gurrea Gonzalez (*Spain*)
Maria Pernet (*Belgium-Antwerp*)
Teresa O'Condor (*Britain & Ireland*)

The Holy Family in the World

Statistics 31 December 2002

AFRICA



Province/Delegation	Pre-Novitiate	Novitiate	T. Professed	P. Professed	Communities
Cameroon-Chad	2	7	1	19	6
DR Congo	19	8	22	26	8
Lesotho	4	0	16	69	16
Rwanda	0	1	1	6	1
South Africa	0	0	2	59	11
Uganda	1	0	0	5	1
Total	26	16	42	184	43



AMERICAS

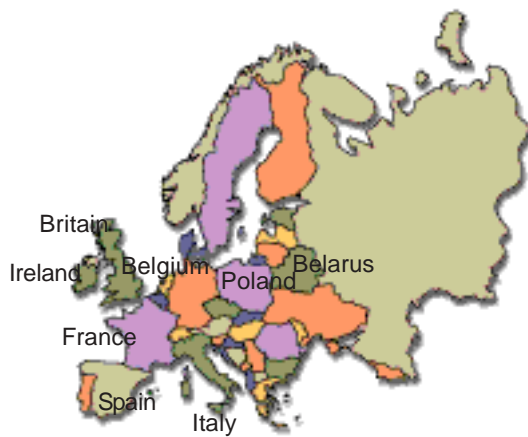


Province/Delegation	Pre-Novitiate	Novitiate	T. Professed	P. Professed	Communities
Argentina	1	0	5	15	6
Brazil	3	1	2	22	5
Canada	0	0	0	90	9
Paraguay	2	0	1	16	5
Peru	2	0	3	13	4
Total	8	1	11	146	29

ASIA



Province/Delegation	Pre-Novitiate	Novitiate	T. Professed	P. Professed	Communities
India	3	5	22	32	8
Pakistan	7	3	7	25	9
Philippines	0	0	1	10	3
Sri Lanka - Colombo	7	6	29	295	61
Sri Lanka - Jaffna	14	5	31	221	41
Total	31	19	90	583	122



EUROPE

Province/Delegation	Pre-Novitiate	Novitiate	T. Professed	P. Professed	Communities
Belgium-Antwerp	0	0	0	27	6
Britain & Ireland	0	0	0	176	30
France-Liège	0	0	0	255	26
Italy	0	0	0	65	5
Poland	0	1	10	41	7
Spain	0	0	2	585	58
General House	0	0	0	25	1
Total	0	1	12	1174	133

VICARIATE



Community	Pre-Novitiate	Novitiate	T. Professed	P. Professed
La Solitude - Martillac	-	-	-	16*
Oteiza (Spain)	-	-	-	16
Nagoda (Sri Lanka)	-	-	2	12
Posadas (Argentina)	-	1	-	5
Total	3	1	2	49

*Including the Vicar for the Contemplatives

Comparative Figures (1999 - 2002)

Year	Novices	T. Professed	P. Professed
1999	61	139	2346
2000	53	145	2264
2001	42	159	2204
2002	38	158	2146



AFRICA

Before entering Botswana the sisters had to have work permits. Four members of the new community, Rathiny, Rajeswary, Mahali, and Victoria, obtained theirs and went to Botswana on 6 June somewhat later than expected. Brigitte was still waiting for hers at the moment of going to print. She was, however, fortunate in getting an

extension to her visa for South Africa where she remains.

The message opposite was brought from the community by Hyacintha Moopisa (General Councillor) when she and M. Carmen Vilardell returned from their time with them in South Africa.

Botswana foundation delayed

Dear Sisters

One of the first things we teach a child is to say "Thank you". It is an excellent foundation for human and spiritual life. Gratefulness is a sure way to happiness. In the gospels we see Jesus frequently giving thanks to his Father.

There is so much we owe you; we do not know where to begin. Your love, prayers, support, blessings, wishes, thoughtfulness, family spirit, communion and encouragement are numberless. Who can count them?

Thank you for all that we have, all that we are.

Really we felt all our dear sisters are with us. We are not going alone to Botswana. Thank you for such unspeakable love and prayers. Accept our words, our helpless silence, our whole being in thanksgiving.

Be sure to continue to pray for us in our new mission.

Signed: Rathim, Victoria, Rajes, Mahali, Brigitte

Cameroon-Chad

Your sons and daughters shall prophesy

For Agnes Ongwisa it seemed as if the words of the prophet Joel were being heard again in the diocese of Pala where the *Holy Family* sisters work. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the first proclamation of the Good News by the Oblates in the area of Banana of Gounou-Gan. A half century of patient

labour is bearing fruit in priestly and religious vocations.

On 28 December 2002 two young men, Jean Gankounzu and Gaspard Njunumbi, were ordained priests in the presence of a huge crowd of men, women and children of all ages. The joy of all was great. Although there were already two young Banana priests, it

seemed that this time the people were suddenly made aware of their own call and empowerment to proclaim the Gospel. "Our sons also can become messengers of the Good News. It is no longer the secret nor the business of the white people," they exclaimed.

As one who is working for the pastoral care of vocations,

Agnes feels that things are moving. Many young girls and boys are expressing the desire to give themselves to God. "We are called," she says, "to work as gardeners, watering, pruning, weeding and covering these young plants. They will be our future pastors."

From sorrow to joy

To celebrate his 20th anniversary as leader of Cameroon, President Paul Biya granted an amnesty to many prisoners. Ines de la Hera hfb writes that in the prison of Mokolo, where our sisters have been doing pastoral care for a long time, 38 were pardoned. Among them were Marie and Tchivette, wives of the same husband who, in April 1996, had each been sentenced to 15 years in prison. They both wept bitterly when sentence was pronounced and only God knows what they suffered. On appeal, their sentence was somewhat reduced.

In 1998 Tchivette became pregnant. The Director, a very humane man, did not want the child to be born in prison so he asked Yvonne Joly who worked there as a nurse if the sisters would be willing to take her in. They were very happy to do so. She came to them in November and worked at the mission during the morning. She then went to her brother, Robert, who lives nearby. He is the Associates' leader. Tchivette's child was born on 3 February 1999. It seemed appropriate to give him the name Bienvenu.

Marie, meanwhile, remained in prison. When Sr. Lucia needed help in her work of preparing embroidery, washing, and ironing Marie seemed the right person. Permission was

granted immediately. She used to come in the morning but had to return to prison each evening. Under the conditions of their freedom, they could not go beyond a certain distance, even to the market, but they were always very pleased and cooperative with the word 'thank you' ever on their lips.

On 21 November 2002 all those who enjoyed this kind of

freedom were called together. They were told to present themselves the following day at sunrise. Yvonne and Pauline represented the sisters.

At about 2 p.m. Yvonne came to tell the community that Marie and Tchivette had been freed. They gave thanks to God for this grace because both women still had two years of their sentence to serve.

Novitiate News

Apostolic experience

With great enthusiasm two 2nd year novices, Mèdène and Adèle, relate their first experience of life in an apostolic community. They were welcomed by the community of Sir, which is situated among the Kapsiki people.

Living an integrated life

The sisters helped them to see how personal and community prayer can be integrated with an active ministry. They discovered the meaning of community where each one is accepted and welcomed as she is and where support and confidence is drawn for the apostolate.

The health centre was the main focus of their activity. As well as learning much that was practical they were able to create relationships with the nurses and personnel who did all they could to help them. At parish level, the pastoral team allowed them to take charge of various youth activities.

Their participation in the life of the parish earned them the gratitude of the people and raised the hope that some of their own children would give themselves to God in the service of their brothers and sisters.

Conclusion

The experience helped the novices to evaluate their prayer life and intimacy with God and their active life. They tried to keep Jesus at the centre of their lives and witness to his presence in their work. For the time remaining to them in the novitiate they feel they will be able to deepen what they discovered.

An experience of Inculturation

For Mèdéne and Adèle, their stay among the Kapsiki was also an exercise in inculturation. They were able to see how the economic situation conditions other aspects of life. The principal occupation of the people is working in the fields. Children are initiated into this at an early age to the detriment of their education. Because large families are considered a benefit early marriages are the norm. This also means a limited time is spent in school especially where girls are concerned.

The feast of the LA among the Kapsiki

Adèle gives an account of this traditional feast.

It is a harvest festival which combines many other events. Everyone celebrates this feast except some protestants who refuse to do so.

The feast takes place in every village in turn for a period of three days. There is a time lapse of two weeks between the celebration in one village and the next. The start of the feast is announced in the village market place by the chief. Adèle names six villages that are concerned.

What happens?

On the first day oxen are slaughtered. Each family

enjoys a large quantity of meat washed down with the local brew, tea (red wine), and mbeldi (white wine typical of the Kapsikis). People from the other villages may also come. It is an opportunity for them to visit their friends and relatives.

The third day is reserved for dancing. In a large open space prepared for the occasion groups display their dancing talents.

Women who have been snatched from their husbands and re-married come out of hiding to show off their new clothes. They are accompanied by their second or third husband or their co-wives. Unfortunately, this practice

influences women to change husbands in order to get gifts. Young boys between 15 and 18 who are at the end of their initiation also take part in the dance as well as young girls between 14 and 18 who are preparing for marriage. The festive atmosphere fills everyone with joy through sharing and welcoming.

We are thus invited to know our traditions but to re-read them in the light of the gospel because this feast is beautiful and well organised. It does, however, lead some to infidelity and so breaks up homes. We must, Adèle concludes, be witnesses to Christ in our way of being and doing without forgetting our traditional values.

Uganda

Keeping up the momentum of the African continental meeting

Sally Fiore reports on the efforts of the two communities at Buhara (Uganda) and Rushaki (Rwanda) to deepen the experience of the African Leadership meeting.

On 28 March the Rushaki (Rwanda) sisters came for a follow-up meeting on Inculturation. In the evening they had a jolly celebration speaking French. The next day they shared on the process of inculturation in their respective communities. It was also an

opportunity for Joaquina Gonzalez to share the input she had given on *Inculturation in the Holy Family* during the leadership meeting.

Method

They chose four questions to reflect and share on separately

in the two communities. Then, each community reported back. They made some practical suggestions on how to continue this process of inculturation in their communities.

The Questions and attempts at Answers

◆ *The Good Father invites us to be a presence at the heart of extreme situations. How do we flourish in the midst of ruins and tombs? What is the secret?*

The secret is being contemplative women living the Incarnation, the spirit of GOD ALONE and the kenosis. It is also being relational women.

◆ *What will be the fruits of an authentic Holy Family religious life?*

We will be people-centred, building family spirit, discerning and building bridges and being a presence among the people.

◆ *What are the African values to be promoted in Holy Family Religious life?*

- A deep faith and sense of the sacred
- The deep value of the spoken word that can bless or can kill. It demands patience in listening and allowing everyone to have their say.
- The values of hospitality, respect and endurance in the poverty, both spiritual and economical, that we live in.
- Their sense of celebration and simplicity.

◆ *How will we live them?*

By committing ourselves to deep listening, observing, researching, learning and experiencing the people with whom we live and work; then to have a sharing in community and dialogue and discern what we are experiencing. They feel they need to face their fears and allow for reconciliation and purification of their own culture and the culture of others.

Further follow up

The two communities plan to meet again in July, when they will evaluate what they have lived and focus on inculturation in basic formation. They ended their assembly with a celebration of pork and fish. All agreed it was a worthwhile experience and look forward to the next.



Franca Leona hfb caring for a patient in the Rushaki dispensary.

A new diocesan leader

On 30 March the Uganda community shared in the parish celebration of confirmation. They had lunch with Bishop Robert Gay and said good-bye to him as he is retiring. It was bishop Gay who welcomed the *Holy Family* to Uganda and the diocese of Kabale.

The new Bishop is Callistus Rubaramira, who was the Financial Administrator. He will be consecrated on 8 June in Mbarara, the Archdiocese, together with another Bishop to be consecrated for Fort Portal.

LRA devastation in Northern Uganda

The rebels of the LRA (Lord's Resistance Army) continue to attack the villages in the Acholi region of the North, pillaging and abducting children. Since last July over 500 children have been abducted. The Ugandan army seems powerless to stop their advance and the humanitarian situation has reached crisis proportions. The rebels have rejected the mediation of the Catholic bishop John Odama. He sees his diocese becoming one big cemetery and refugee camp.

South Africa

Holy Family Communicators upgrade their skills

A group of six Holy Family sisters - Aileen Coyle, Denise Boardman, Kathleen Mitchell, Kathy Murugan, Roseanne Power, Meryl Foley - and one Lay Associate had two intensive training sessions in communications. They relate the experience below.

It is strange to believe that a simple, short writing course could enable so well. The newly found gifts and talents of our Sisters and Lay Associates empower us as a Family and, with our newly acquired skills, enable us to make *Holy Family* known. And as these gems come to light, what many other precious treasures of *Holy Family* can we and ought we to share!

We are also challenged to do something worthwhile with this tool which thanks to *Quo Vadis Communications* has been placed in our hands. It really shows us a possibility of what can be done, what new and innovative ways there are of communicating the Good News.

Aileen gives some reactions of Sisters who were at the presentation of work after the Quo Vadis writing course:

It is 5.00 p.m. when we arrive at Coronationville School board room. The team of *Quo Vadis Communications* whom we

have already met are there: Director, Theo Coggin, his partner and wife, Ruth, who is an expert in layout and design, and their co workers, Silvanus



L. to R. Kathleen, Cathy, Theo, Bunnie, Roseanne, Meryl, Aileen, Denise

Mabaso and Noelene van Niekerk.

More importantly for us, our Sisters and Bunny of our Lay Associates, who had done the writing skills course, are happily and confidently prepared to present their work.

They, obviously aware that their presentations are well worth listening to, are smilingly willing to explain their newsletters.

Yes! The participants had compiled their own newsletter, two in fact. We are amazed and as we examine their work and listen to our Sisters, we discover that our seven brave

ones had been divided into two teams and each team had compiled its own newsletter.

More amazed still, we listen to confident explanations of the use and advantages of the 5Ws (who, what, when, where) and H (how), inverted pyramid, pull quotes, and such journalistic obscurities as copy tasting.

Surprising and very impressive. Members read

extracts and/or whole articles from their newsletters. News, features, stories, interviews, obituaries, book and movie reviews, display gifts and talents that we did not even know existed.

A sense of surprise at what has been accomplished in a short course of two sessions (6-10 December 2002 and 21-25 February 2003) gives way to energising excitement.

The excitement of that evening of Tuesday 25 February 2003 was shared by a good number of Sisters from our Johannesburg communities and, little by little, it will be shared with *Holy Family* everywhere and with our many friends.



Argentina

Two Experiences of Mission

◆ **Atamisqui**

This is a city whose parish dates back approximately 1700 years. It is situated on what is called the Royal Road uniting Buenos Aires with Peru. It was from this place that the first Christian missionaries set out to evangelise Argentina. Sad to say, after having been the cradle of missionaries and evangelisers, the

area was almost abandoned because of a shortage of priests to attend to the Department of Atamisqui with its large population.

For about a year now the people have been able to count on a diocesan priest. In December 2001 the Oblates of Mary Immaculate arrived. They are aware of the need to know more about the reality of the area and its people, their faith life and popular religiosity. To clear the ashes and rekindle the fire of faith they invited *Holy Family* sisters Otilia and Ana Maria to take part in the mission. It took place from 20 – 30 January 2003.

Organising the work

The pattern was a familiar one. The missionaries spent the first three days forming an integrated team, getting to know one another, sharing their expectations and experiences. They also had a retreat that stimulated them to encounter God in their fellow Christians at Atamisqui. They divided themselves among six sectors and each group organised its visits to the families and the celebrations in agreement with the people. For this they relied on the collaboration of the leaders of each community.

The people were very happy because during that time the image of the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception, patron of the parish, visited the different communities. It was a reason to express their faith in song and dance.

At the closure of the Mission the group met in the parish to share and evaluate the experience that they will continue next year, God willing. They celebrated a moving Eucharist together with the people of the communities they had visited, followed by a farewell supper. The sisters are grateful to God for having been able to share this rich

experience with their Oblate brothers.

◆ **Ministering to the people of Picada Flor**

The Colony of Picada Flor (San Vicente) is in a remote area bordering on Brazil. Because of the immense geographic area it covers the priests can only go there once a month. When it rains, however, the journey is not possible because the roads become impassable.

A youthful missionary band

Rosita Rios hfb, of the Wanda community, was delighted when she had the opportunity to join the young Montecarlo missionary group who went on a mission to the Colony. There were about 20 people in all, the youth of Wanda, San Vicente and the priest, Fr. Oscar.

They departed for the unknown on 3 January 2003, their backpacks full of motivations, experiences and open hearts. They discovered a very hilly terrain with rocky roads. The sources of income in the region are growing tobacco and citronella, an aromatic shrub from which the essence is extracted to make deodorant.

They also discovered a variety of religions and sects. Catholics

are a minority group but have a clear identity and sense of belonging to the Church.

The plan

The little community of missionaries took as their motto: *Looking always for what unites*. Each day, prayer, communal sharing and the different activities drew them closer together. The theme of the mission was: *Let us join*

hands to build the community. The group devoted the mornings to visiting the families and the afternoons to celebrations with the community. Children, youth and adults were all convoked to the three centres maintained by the group: the chapels of Guadalupe, the Virgin Mary and the Virgin of Peace.

For all involved, the clergy, the

missionaries and the families, they were days when hope was revived after times of anguish. For Rosita, the warmth of the people, the dialogue, the kilometres they travelled in the suffocating heat with their children in their arms to come to the meetings, were stimulating and renewing. *“It was like touching the depth of our lives, the Treasure that enriches us.”*

How relationships change our outlook

In *Interconnections* no. 7 there was an account from Argentina of how a relationship developed between the *Holy Family* community of Resistencia and the people of a shantytown that grew up close to them. The shantytown became the suburb of St. Joseph the Worker. The close contact and friendship with the sisters continued.

Little by little they see their mission there taking shape. It began with listening, then to visiting. From there it was another step to creating bonds, facilitating, channelling the people's desires and projects, sustaining the dreams of young families who expect much from life.

Some examples

- Several families came from the interior, about 500 km away. They were all young couples with three or four children. They organised themselves little by little. Now they produce homemade bread and sell cakes to have a little money. How else can they manage to go to school and get medical help?

- On 1 May, the feast of St. Joseph the Worker, they wanted to inaugurate a little grotto. They went to see the parish priest and the deacon of the sisters' parish who sent seminarians to work with them.

- There is a family that owns a horse and cart that serves as school transport. It is a great pleasure to see it going to or coming from school full of children. Looking at that cart, the sisters say they can see the future of the district in it.

- Another activity they are happily promoting is the accompaniment of a group of children and young people who are searching for their way in life. Some are working and studying. A few of the youth are in the process of discerning

their vocation. For a year now the community has had retreats, convivial and prayer meetings with them and their families. Their parents come and share their preoccupations.

For the community it is a matter of praying for all these intentions, being present, attentive when people call, foregoing siestas, inviting them to spend a day in community. The sisters are happy when they hear them say the *Holy Family* is a community where they feel welcomed. For them the life of their community, with all its contact with the neighbours, the youth, and the associates, is a real sign of hope and a cause of joy that stimulates them to live their consecration with enthusiasm.

Pastoral care of Vocations Team

The members meet regularly to provide mutual support for one another. They have also worked out a clear programme for their meetings with young people in search of their vocation. They stress the crucial importance of attentive, non-judgmental listening in this work.

Brazil

Looking forward to a Golden Jubilee

The *Holy Family* College of San Paolo began preparations for the celebrations of its 50th anniversary, to take place in June 2003, during the second semester of 2002. They held a *Holy Family* Vocations Exhibition where everything relating to our origins, founder and foundresses, charism and works was clearly portrayed.

A special Eucharistic celebration was held on 29

August at which commemoration was made of all those dead who had been in some way connected with the school. The school's past pupils are actively involved in promoting the celebrations.

Penaforte Community

Dining-room

Sr. Luiza describes her work of feeding the hungry and homeless. About 380 people are welcomed each day. For morning coffee they can expect about 160 persons.

Organisation

There are 11 helpers for the different tasks. Some take charge of preparing the dining-room, receiving and serving the guests. They also offer workshops each day from 2 p.m. onwards and, twice a week, literacy classes.

People from many different places and with a variety of backgrounds come to the place. They find relief in telling their stories and finding a listening ear. It helps in some measure to restore their sense of self-worth and dignity.

Paraguay

When destitution dehumanises

The parish of Ñemby gave the Holy Family Novitiate community that resides there the ministry of accompanying a Christian community situated in the urban district called "3 May". The families living there are, in general, very poor. The community's role is to accompany the catechists who have recently been organised to visit the families and the sick.

The story of Edward

related by Cleide Vieira

Among the families we visited was a little boy of 13 years called Edward, the eldest of six children. His family was very poor and his parents were separated. Edward drew the attention of everyone in the district because he was dumb. He could only manage to pronounce a few words with great difficulty. His mother went out each day to work with her companion and it was Edward who took care of the other children like a mother.

Such was Edward's life until last November when we began to notice he was becoming very

thin. We were told he had a pain in the chest. We could not manage to speak with his mother but the neighbours told us that he had tuberculosis and was being treated by a herbalist who had prescribed a rigorous diet consisting only of soup. That was why he was so thin.

On 19 December Edward was so ill he could not get up. As he was alone with his little brothers and sisters they went to the neighbours to tell them their brother was going to die. The neighbours had him brought to the hospital. Examinations showed he was severely

malnourished and had heart trouble. An operation was necessary.

That was when the drama became really serious. During his first week in hospital his mother did not go to see him, stating as excuse that she had to work to feed her other children. His father also had to work. Edward therefore remained alone in hospital and when I went to visit him he said he wanted to see his mother. I did my best to meet her and transmit her son's request. His mother said she did not want to see him again. I tried to

explain that the child was certainly going to die and went on insisting. In the end his mother agreed to go and see him, a promise she never kept.

Even if Edward's family did not visit him there was no lack of sympathy and support from the people visiting the other

patients in the ward. The last time I visited him I found him very sad because his mother had not kept her promise even though I had gone a second time to urge her. When I went on 7 March I was told that Edward had died. His father had been with him but not his mother.

This experience convinced me that we cannot consider as the will of God things that are often the consequence of human choice and dehumanising poverty. What grieved me most is that Edward died without seeing his mother, something he so longed for.

A rocky road

In January Ana Maria Alcalde had to go to Peru so she took the opportunity to make the journey by bus. It was not just for reasons of economy but to experience more closely something of the reality in which her Bolivian, Peruvian and Northern Argentinean brothers and sisters live and to know better the beautiful and suffering land of Latin America.

The journey to Peru was uneventful. The welcome accorded by the sisters there and the week spent doing the spiritual exercises helped them all in their efforts to live together more deeply.

The return journey through Bolivia was, however, full of incidents. It coincided with the beginning of the protests organised by the rural people, or subsistence farmers, against the government of President Sanchez Lozada. Ana Maria travelled through the country on the 24th and 25th of January and, as some will have come to know via the media, there were disturbances in La Paz on 12 and 13 February that led to the death of 27 people.

There was tension in the air. Groups of farmers were camped beside the junctions

and roads. They had set up roadblocks along the route from La Paz to the Argentinean border at Villazón passing through Oruro and Potosí in what they called "Operation Pulga".

Towards dawn on Saturday the 25th the bus suddenly stopped. The passengers thought it was a flat tyre as they had already had two. But in the silence they heard the sound of a horn. They looked in the direction of the sound and saw with dismay a group of about 40 or 50 people on top of a hill who were hurriedly rolling down huge rocks to block the road. In a few minutes they and the other vehicles that had arrived were completely blocked. When the farmers saw the vehicles could not move forward they returned to the top of the hill and kept watch. A small group approached the bus and their spokesperson told the travellers they would be detained for a few hours. They then withdrew.

After three hours two representatives of those detained went to ask the farmers to come down and negotiate the unblocking of the road. A group of about 20 descended, all obviously very poor and undernourished. The

leader of the group spoke in the name of all and explained the reasons for their action. They were asking the government for more land. The surrounding region was very hilly and steep and unproductive. They also wanted better means of transport and communication.

While the spokesperson was talking, surrounded by a large audience, a detachment of police arrived, some of them armed with machine guns. They had come with the intention of unblocking the road by persuasion or force. The encounter was charged with tension and expectancy. Because of the rather large group of onlookers the captain began to dialogue with the representative of the farmers in an attempt to dissuade them without the use of force. Once more the travellers had to listen to the grievances, this time directed towards the representative of the authorities.

After a period of heated arguing the travellers were allowed to unblock part of the road and pass between some large rocks. Each one also had to pay a small toll to be liberated. They met the same type of roadblock four more

times during the journey. The only difference was that the negotiations were carried on directly with the farmers without the presence of the police. In each case they could see the same signs of poverty, the same grievances, the same

firmness, the same organisation and the same resistance.

Looking at the faces of those men, Ana Maria's reaction was one of deep compassion and solidarity. There is no doubt

that they have the right to demand a more dignified life for themselves and their families. She asks: "When will they succeed? How many rocks will they have to place on the roads before we listen to them and look at their situation?"

Peru

New life in the desert of Lima

The School of Life is a therapeutic community in Lima where substance abusers can gain a new lease of life. A definite process is prescribed and those who submit themselves to it can become new people. Isabel Camino of the Holy Family Carmen community (Lima) is part of a team of religious from eight Congregations and twenty professional laypeople of different religions who give their services in the community. She describes the work from the inside.

The process

The patients themselves are the main actors. They start out from a personal decision to change, a realisation that they cannot achieve this of their own accord and a willingness to accept help. They are received like members of a family and the community is, in fact, a family where all are brothers and sisters, from the Director to the last one to arrive. There is no discrimination on grounds of race, religion, age, or political or social standing. For the moment it is not possible to accept women because of a shortage of facilities.

Isabel's work in the community is to be what she is, a religious sister living a spirituality. She shares with them, as a Christian woman and *Holy Family* sister, her experience of relationship with herself, with God, her sisters and others.

She feels it is the Spirit of God, of Communion, that makes it possible for them all to work together at a common purpose. During the year 2002, 96 people, the majority between 18 and 35, underwent the process.

A Holy Family community ministry

The *Holy Family* community of Comas (Lima) is situated in the hilly part of what used to be called "The Pampa of Comas". It was to this area that people flocked in the 1960s in search of a better life in the city. It now has a population of more than 500 000. The people are still struggling to create homes for themselves among the hillocks. Regina Goossens hfb describes how the community and postulants interact with their neighbours.

They support various humanitarian organisations such as communal first-aid posts, community-managed dining-rooms and the Parish Social Service that works especially with the mentally ill and those living with HIV/AIDS. They are also involved with the Christian communities of their

district and with pastoral care of the youth.

At their community meetings they felt the need to have a place where they could be 'on mission' together as community. They included it in their community project convinced that if it was from God the desire would be fulfilled. In October 2001 they were invited to start a communal dining-room and organise catechism classes in one of the sectors of the growing Christian community. It has about 100 families. Their joy was great when they went there for the first time. It seemed the Lord was awaiting them there as a Community.

Much ground has been covered in a year. Cenina, a postulant, prepares the children for first communion following the programme of

Family Catechesis. Regina works in the dining-room while Pilar talks with the parents about the *Holy Family* faith experience.

They feel very much at home in this precarious place and among its people in a situation not unlike that of Nazareth. Recently a plot of land was set

aside for a chapel. For the time being, Mass is celebrated outdoors among the rocks and hills of Comas.

Canada

Services acknowledged

◆ *Empowering through language*

Odette Fillion hfb, an experienced teacher, returned from Africa in 1992. After spending some time updating herself she became involved in literacy work among the immigrant population. She is at present working with an organisation for the betterment of immigrants (in French, *Le Mieux-être des Immigrants* or MEI). She finds the work fascinating and loves her pupils, their values and way of life.

MEI is a community organisation created in 1998 and directed by an energetic group of people very involved in the immigrant milieu. It offers part-time courses in French, literacy courses and opportunities for upgrading educational standards. All of

this is done by teachers on a voluntary basis. The teachers of French as a second language have been working since 1975 to integrate thousands of immigrants into Quebec society and are often their first link with this society.

On 17 March 2003, the Minister delegated for relations with the citizens and immigration, Mr. André Boulerice, presented three awards to collaborators of the ministry for their work in teaching French to the new arrivals in the country. Among them was the MEI with whom Odette works.

◆ *A surprise Congress*
Bishop Douglas Crosby OMI, of the vast, sparsely populated Diocese of Labrador-Schefferville, holds an annual assembly to which he invites a broad spectrum of the people who are doing pastoral work in the diocese. Down the years

certain veterans have become well known to one another and it is always a joy for them to meet again. It is a time to refresh themselves, review what they are doing and make innovations in the application of the diocesan directives.

This year, 2003, the bishop had a surprise for them. He wished to mark the long service of some of those who had worked many years in the diocese. Among them was Oblate Fr. Jules Dion who was celebrating 50 years of service among the Inuit people, and three *Holy Family* sisters:

Marcelle Pauwels (37 years),
Lieve Bosman (35 years)
Martha Groffen (42 years).

They received an honorary mention from the Holy Father. An emblem was also to come from Rome in acknowledgement of the missionary work in the diocese.



SRI LANKA: The Road to Recovery

(Information and photo from REFUGEES)

Asia

After two decades of civil war, when the beautiful island known as the Pearl of the Indian Ocean became the Teardrop of Buddha, Sri Lanka is on the mend. In spite of the inevitable difficulties facing the peace negotiations there is hope and people are returning to their homes.

More than one million people – one in every 18 Sri Lankans – including Tamils, Sinhalese and members of the country’s Muslim community fled or were forcibly uprooted from their homes. The great majority became internally displaced, moving between temporary welfare shelters, friends’ or relatives’ homes, sometimes as many as 10 or 20 times during their prolonged wanderings.

Around one million people left the country altogether. Many established themselves in Europe, North America and Australia. Others fled as refugees across the narrow strip of water to neighbouring India in several waves during the 1980s and 1990s. The number in Indian refugee camps was estimated at 64 000. Many of them are now returning home.

The UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) is committed to helping the re-integration process. Its representative in Sri Lanka says: “The organisation will continue to spearhead international efforts to enforce

its traditional mandate – offering legal and physical protection for war-affected civilians – as well as financing a range of special projects to provide new temporary shelter,



Returning by boat

health and sanitation facilities, kick starting various community services and cheap and quick income generating projects to enable returnees to become self-sufficient.”

From Colombo Province

Disastrous floods hit Sri Lanka

The communications media have given graphic accounts of the flooding that caused tremendous loss of life and property in the southern districts of Ratnapura, Kalutara, Galle, Hambantota and Matara. It happened in mid-May when the people there were preparing to celebrate the great Buddhist festival of Vesak. We are indebted to Kumudini Desanyake, Provincial of Colombo, for the information contained here.

Holy Family involvement

- *Collecting essential goods*

There are two *Holy Family* communities, Embilipitiya and Barawakumbukka, in the affected region each belonging to a different diocese. They

have not suffered damage in any way and the sisters are actively cooperating with the relief work organised by the diocesan Caritas. In their

schools and parishes they have collected food, clothing and medicine – the most essential needs – and directed them to the proper channels for distribution. Further urgent calls are coming in, Kumudinid says, for food to be sent to the South.

- *Visiting affected areas*

Some sisters, staff and pupils from the *Holy Family* schools of Kurenegala and Nugegoda have visited the affected areas to hand over their collections. The more fortunate children were very moved by the plight of those other children who had been waiting to start the new school term but became victims of this disaster. It seems that

150 schools were completely destroyed. Some of the *Holy Family* children took the initiative of collecting school material for them and of forming a network among the pupils in order to share their notes and books with those in the affected area.

Long-term help

The sisters have volunteered to be involved in the long-term programmes the two dioceses are proposing to implement. None of the victims in the rural villages has insurance coverage or any other financial protection. All five districts affected by floods and landslides are major

agricultural districts. The people's harvests, lands and houses have been washed away. It is believed that about 1 000 000 people have lost their entire livelihood and that about 50 000 houses have been destroyed. The long-term plan will, therefore, require the following:

- Rehabilitation of the people
- Rebuilding houses
- Restoring agriculture, food security, nutrition and health.

Kumudini ends with a request for prayer as the people struggle to rebuild their lives.

India

With Refugees in Tamilnadu

Viyakulam Joseph hfb is working with the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) in refugee camps in Tamilnadu. They are particularly involved with the Sri Lankan refugees who have been displaced by the war. Viyakulam is in charge of 10 camps and her main work is in the area of education.

The first task in each camp is to get to know the people, their history and needs. Many of them are without hope, unhappy and bereft of peace. It is important to listen to them and encourage them to share their problems and difficulties.

Each camp has a nursery school for little children. Viyakulam helps the teachers

with suggestions on how to keep the infants active and happy, as well as taking an active part in the work. The situation of the youth in the camps is a cause of much concern. Some have become dependent on drugs and are very disturbed. The young women and girls, married and unmarried, have little hope and need counselling. They also

need encouragement to do something like hand work to keep themselves occupied.

Through listening, prayer, counselling, acts of kindness such as finding places in school for youngsters, Viyakulam is able to give some measure of joy and hope to people who have lived through many bitter experiences.

Society's shame

"Once I saw a naked child crying of hunger and shivering with fever. I felt so angry that I said to God, 'Why do you permit this to happen? Won't you do something?' God did not reply immediately but that same night he said in my

dream, 'I certainly did do something. I made you.'"

This story was related by the founder of Sri Krishna Chaithanya Vidhya (SKCV), a street children agency. Dr. Manihara is an Englishman

who spent many years in India studying the culture, the value system, the behavioural pattern of the people and the many problems that affect the country. SKCV is a shelter for boys. During the day there are nearly 70 boys and at night many street children come to the home for protection.

The information related above comes from Jayamary Arokiam hfb who is doing social studies at Marie Stella College, Vijayada. As part of her programme she is putting in some time at the agency for practical experience. She is expected to be creative in her approach so that the children may be attracted to the place.

Why street-children?

It is becoming a familiar tale. They are children who have run away from home for a variety of reasons. Some come from

broken families and leave because of ill-treatment or are even driven away. Others are attracted by the city and just leave. Having done so they



Child labour in India

face many problems. They live under the bridges, on the streets, in railway stations and eat from the dustbins or by begging. They acquire bad habits of smoking, drinking and drug abuse.

Winning their trust

It took time to get them to respond but after some time Jayamary was able to give

them instruction on hygiene and morals and even get them interested in education. She conducted games and organised a Children's Day celebration on 14 November which included games and competitions.

There was also an awareness programme on Child Rights. Her classmates assisted her by acting a street play about the life of the street children with all its hazards. They brought out the rights of the child according to the Indian constitution. The performance was very much appreciated and earned the students the congratulations of the chief guest.

Her work with these children has made Jayajary aware of the many social evils that prevail in her society and the oppressive structures that promote such evils.

Pakistan

Calm in a tense situation

As war was about to break out Sr. Dominic Perera, leader of the Delegation, sent this brief report on the situation in Pakistan:

These days Pakistan is very quiet. Only the protest rallies are going on to stop the war. Government has given a lot of security to foreigners and to Christians. Every Sunday the police are there during the service. Our sisters are safe in all the places. Only Sheila (Griffiths) and Brigid (Davis) are not going out and keep a low profile. From yesterday they asked all the foreigners to move out especially those who are housebound.

An assessment by Fr. Bonnie Mendis, April 13, 2003

The Church in Pakistan is nearly two percent of the 140 million people. So it is not a small number. There are nearly three million Christians in the country. The people are generally poor and socially deprived but the Christians tend to be robust and are willing to die for the faith.

The war on terrorism after 11th Sept. brought its backlash. Christians praying in churches in Bahawalpur, Islamabad, Daska and Taxila were attacked and some were killed. Institutions like Christian schools, Murree and J&P office Karachi, were attacked and some people killed.

Hence Christians were afraid that the Iraq war would have its toll on Pakistani Christians. However I am happy to report nothing like that has happened. Christians, thank God, are safe in the country.

The reasons are:

- The appeal of Pope John Paul II for peace.
- The stand against war of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Catholic Cardinal of England.
- The position of France/Germany in the war.
- The demonstrations for peace in the west.
- Countries refusing to break diplomatic ties with Iraq.
- The Arabs are divided.
- E-mail efforts for peace led by people in U.S.A.

Locally these are reasons for the prevailing peace:

- Inter faith harmony efforts are bearing fruits.
- The Christians have demonstrated for Iraqi's with the Islamic groups.
- The **Ulema** have toned down their militancy and are pursuing peace.
- Bishops wrote an open letter to George W Bush appealing for restraint and exploring avenues of dialogue with the Iraqi government.
- The Government is giving Christians full protection.
- Christians are saying this is not a holy war.
- Fear in Pakistan that the country may be attacked next.

The situation is tense but calm. Christians are not afraid but are prudent. Foreign missionaries

have kept a low profile. The Bishops (Catholic and Protestant) have issued instructions to all Christians to be prudent, to pray for peace and intensify inter-Faith work.

Ulema([Arabic](#)) are the community of legal scholars of [Islam](#) and the [Sharia](#). Their organization and powers vary from [Muslim](#) community to community. They are most powerful in [Shiah Islam](#) where their role is institutionalised, In most countries they are merely local power figures. The ulema are in most Muslim nations a conservative force, and stand in particular as the bulwark of orthodox thought against [ijtihad](#), or 'independent thought' on religious law (the *sharia*).

Philippines

In prison and you visited me

"Behind high walls, barbed wire, iron gates, guns and guards, checkpoints and barriers, stern faces and hard looks human beings are living in fear and uncertainty in a world of their own, isolated from their fellow human beings, yearning for deliverance, freedom and dignity."

This is how Ida Joseph hfb begins the account of her experience of visiting the Correctional Institute for Women in Mandaluyong City in the heart of Manila. She was shocked to discover that there are 900 inmates in the prison of whom 25 are on death-row. The visit was organised for 19

March by the Women and Gender Commission together with the Commission for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation. They wanted to meet the women on death-row during March, the month of women. The group included about 30 women from different religious congregations.

They were welcomed by the Woman Superintendent of the prison who stressed the need for groups such as theirs to support the women inmates. They were able to have one-to-one conversations with the women who found it hard to articulate their suffering. They are there for such crimes as

drug-trafficking, kidnapping, murder, illegal recruitment for employment abroad, and theft. Often they are given the death sentence because of one-sided information and poor legal representation. Sometimes lawyers who take up their cases are attacked.

There are cases where both husband and wife are on death row. The children are scattered in the care of relatives. All are badly in need of friends, people to listen to them, care for, support and forgive them as well as to be a link between them and their families. They plead with the visitors to join in the appeal for the abolition of

the death penalty, the defence of the rights of the poor and voiceless and to uphold the dignity of women.

The visitors had organised a Eucharistic celebration, gifts and an agape for the women. It was very much appreciated and brought everyone close. In fact, Ida notes, there is great solidarity among the inmates on death-row. In their great mental suffering they have learned to journey with one another as companions. Uncertainty is their greatest nightmare. They do not know the day or the hour when their last moment will come. In the eyes of the world they are labelled and condemned. God is their only hope.

Vocation Youth Congress

"Calling all families to holiness; let's make it happen."

This was the theme of the Vocation Youth Congress held in Sorsogon city from 3 - 5 January 2003.

It was a live-in congress for 130 participants from the different parishes and schools of the diocese, supported by the vocation promoters of the religious congregations and the diocesan seminarians.

The bishop of Sorsogon presided at the opening and closing Eucharist. He called on the youth to listen to their hearts and offer their love

freely and generously to the one who calls them.

Vivian Fernando hfb said how impressed the animators were at the silent, prayerful attention of the youth as they were addressed on the importance of living the Christian values together with the Filipino values. They also had a talk by Dr. Teresita Borromeo on Loving Relationships, one that raised a host of questions in the young people. The speaker challenged them to dream and to follow their dreams to the end.

No to the death penalty



The campaign organised by the Sant'Egidio community for a moratorium on the death penalty and its eventual abolition at the beginning of the 21st century has not ended. At the beginning of April 2003 the signatures collected for the appeal had reached nearly four and a half million.

Some countries have abolished the death penalty, including Chile and Yugoslavia. In the USA executions have diminished. In China they have increased considerably since last year.

Just recently the Kenyan president ordered the release of 28 long-term death row inmates and had the sentences of 195 others commuted to life imprisonment. The last execution carried out in Kenya was in 1987. It is likely that the death penalty will soon be abolished in the country.

Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation



Founded in 1976, Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation is a national organization of family members of both homicide and state killings who oppose the death penalty in all cases. Our mission is to abolish the death penalty. We advocate for programs and policies that reduce the rate of homicide and promote crime prevention and alternatives to violence. We support programs that address the needs of victims, helping them to rebuild their lives.

Reconciliation means accepting that you cannot undo the murder but you can decide how you want to live afterwards.

MVFR is a non-religious organization that includes people of a wide variety of faiths and belief systems. Because violent crime cuts across a broad spectrum of society, our members are geographically, racially, and economically diverse.

For more information see: www.mvfr.org.



Britain and Ireland

EUROPE

Sowing in tears, reaping in gladness

The fascinating story of the Holy Family beginnings in Britain and Ireland has been serialised in Voices, the provincial bulletin. The narrator is Francis Pemberton hfb.

The story began 150 years ago so it would not be surprising if most sisters in the Institute today were ignorant of the special circumstances surrounding the origins of our Family, first in Britain and later in Ireland. The first sisters originally belonged to the Oblate Sisters of Mary Immaculate, a congregation founded at the Shrine of Notre Dame de l'Osier in Dauphiny by Fr. Guiges O.M.I., who later became bishop of Ottawa.

Their first mission was in Leeds where they arrived in February 1853. They experienced all the hardships associated with a new foundation at the period. Added to that, they were the first religious women to be seen in the city since the reformation. In their pale blue habits and stiff white gimp they attracted amusement and ridicule. The Catholics, however, always regarded them with respect and affection.

By 1863, the little community had increased to fourteen. It was about this time that the sisters heard rumours of a proposed amalgamation with the *Holy Family* of Bordeaux. The proposal had first been made in 1861 by Fr. Fabre, the newly appointed Father General of the Oblates. Our chronicler does not say why. It was a severe blow to the sisters who loved the Society in which they had chosen to give themselves to God. The superior, Mother Xavier Geddes, wrote openly of their sadness and inner struggle to the Good Mother Mary of the Cross Hardy Moisan in 1870.

After much anxiety, prayer and reflection the Oblate Sisters decided to accept the invitation to join the *Holy Family* of Bordeaux. The letter sent to Fr. Fabre and signed by all fourteen sisters is a beautiful example of abandonment to the will of God and a heartfelt desire to live for the glory of God and the good of the



Church. The kindness and consideration they received from the Good Mother contributed much to ease the pain of the break and cement the union. They were allowed to keep their own distinctive habit and were absorbed into the Branch of the Immaculate Conception.

Francis concludes her narration:

“One era had now ended and another begun. The little seed sown in poverty, generosity and dedication by the Oblate Sisters during fifteen years had grown and was now grafted onto the tree of the *Holy Family*. There it multiplied and spread its branches throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland and even to far off lands.”

For more information see the Provincial website : www.holyfamilybordeaux.org.

France-Liège

A positive response to vandalism

The *Holy Family* Community *de la Charité* in Angoulême reside in an apartment block. The stairway had just been repainted. It was clean and bright and everyone was happy with it. One fine morning, however, the residents found the walls covered with offensive graffiti. They expressed their indignation and sadness at the lack of respect shown them and their property.

They went to see the caretaker and on the following day the painting began again. But it wasn't enough to repaint; some sort of response was called for. A person or persons had spoiled the stairway. Well then, supposing the residents decorated it! Christmas was coming.

The next Saturday the children, young and old, assembled. Giving free rein to their

imagination they produced bright, colourful drawings. On the Saturday before Christmas the stairs vibrated with the shouts of children delighted to hang up their drawings and garlands. They ran from top to bottom to see that no storey would be forgotten.

The sisters enjoyed sharing the joy and enthusiasm of the children. Coming into a decorated building gives the heart a lift, they said, because it is beautiful, clean and welcoming. From that time relationships among the neighbours are different. People greet and speak to one another feeling that something has changed. They say it should be done more often.

In fact, the drawings and garlands remained unspoiled for 15 days. Everything is possible if you believe.

Italy

Parish mission at Bitonto

From 15 – 23 March, Srs. Giuseppina Martelli and Emilia Gasparri of the *Holy Family* community at Campobasso had a wonderful experience in the parish of San Leone in the town of Bitonto (Bari). They were part of the missionary team directing the parish mission organised by the parish priest on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of his priestly ordination.

For this reason, perhaps, the keynote of the whole mission was joy. The team itself became closely knit and were able to give a witness of close communion and collaboration. It was as if they had known one another for a long time and worked together enthusiastically.

The theme was: *Setting out again, from Christ*. There were

Senior sisters benefit from a *Holy Family* Retreat

It was doubly a *Holy Family* retreat. It was based on *Holy Family* spirituality and directed by *Holy Family* sisters, Andrée Gaspard and Anne Guillet. Two communities of senior sisters, Pau and Cauderan, were the beneficiaries. The Provincial Council, concerned about those who are unable to leave their communities for a retreat, arranged for one to be given to the housebound in both communities.

The chosen theme, "*Seeking God in the school of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, becoming a disciple*", was subdivided into three points, one for each day: *Listening, the Contemplation of Nazareth* and *Becoming a disciple*.

A simple outline of the programme

On the first evening the retreatants reflected on the essential attitudes for entering into retreat. The special text chosen was Elijah's encounter with God.

Each day there were three short meetings. After a presentation of the day, three complementary texts:

- in the Word of God,
 - in *Holy Family* writings
 - an illustration of the particular topic,
- were suggested for reflection, meditation and contemplation.

The theme of the retreat was integrated into the Office and the texts of the Mass.

60 in the team including eight Franciscan priests, religious brothers and sisters, novices and postulants of various congregations.

The work was organised in the traditional way with time for catechesis, family visits, and reception centres, but with a touch of novelty. There were outdoor celebrations in various parts of the parish and festive pilgrimages.

The final day of the mission was dedicated to the sick to whom they brought Holy Communion. They divided into groups and went from house to house where they knew they

would find the sick. As they went they sang in the streets, in the stairways and the apartments arousing joy, wonder and curiosity.

In one palazzina (apartment block) a woman opened her door to see what was going on. Finding the door open and thinking the patient they were looking for was in that apartment they entered, still singing, and filled the room. When the proprietor asked, "What can I do for you?", they realised their mistake.

When they were together in the little chapel of Mary, one elderly person of 93 responded to their

singing with great joy and vivacity, beating time energetically and joining in the praise of Our Lady. The same lady told them she was waiting to "go home" and would prepare a place for them all. Among the many beautiful things she said was this: "I have no longer any teeth but I have a mouth to sing and praise the Lord. What I have I use."

Giuseppina has many other happy memories of the mission to relate. Most important is the gratitude that spontaneously arises in her heart when she remembers that experience: "Great and wonderful are your works, O Lord."

Spain

Now I know

It all began for Teo Garcia of the Holy Family community of Coín when Mari Carmen, a social worker, asked her if she would like to give a course in dressmaking to a group of 12 young gipsy women. It did not take long for her to accept the proposal. She was pleased to do so because it was an opportunity to put into practice our Corporate Commitment to affirm the dignity of woman and acknowledge her value. Here is the story in her own words.

The beginnings were difficult. Everyone wanted to sew, to cut out and make herself a dress but hardly anyone knew how to thread a needle. It was necessary to teach them such elementary principles in a sewing workshop. Some of them caught on quickly and

were soon managing nimbly; others found it more difficult and could not bear to be sitting for more than an hour. Among them was Angela, who was ignored by all - her family, her husband and the others.

Her husband tried to convince the social worker that his wife would learn nothing and he did not want her to go to the workshop. She herself said: "I'm too stupid and I can't see myself doing anything." Nevertheless, she showed much interest in what was being done. She came regularly, she made and unmade things and said to me, "No, Teo, I don't see myself being able to sew like the others."

There were three courses of six months each. Angela hardly missed one. When she did not know what to do she said that she could not see but, little by little, she began to gain confidence and make up for lost time. Everyone applauded her progress on every level. She dressed with more taste and took greater care of her appearance. She expressed herself better and her self-esteem began to increase.

Thanks to her own efforts and to the two teachers who were constantly near her to thread the needle, to guide and help her in her task, Angela began to do the same work as the others. What was my surprise when, in the last week of the

course, Angela asked me to thread the needle for her and, as usual, I wanted to help her continue with her work but she said to me, "Don't help me because now I know."

having achieved a job of work by themselves. I believe it was not so much the variety of work done but all that we had accomplished and experienced together during that time.

Angela was interviewed and she answered the interviewer's questions without faltering, encouraged others to begin the same task, and thanked those who had helped them. She was

applauded by her companions.

It was a lovely experience. We had difficult times and pleasant times. I believe we can say that the work done with these women was an integral effort. We made use of every opportunity to stimulate, to direct, to correct models that were sometimes out of proportion, and help create good relations.



Teo with her group of students.
She is third from the right.

Finally we were able to have an exhibition of the work in the Cultural Centre. The television crew came to film the scene.

It was a great pleasure for me, concludes Teo. I went through this period with hope, seeing them progress and managing to continue to the end with something positive on every level. The perseverance, the effort and the patience we had to exercise was worth the trouble.

Some of the apprentices showed their satisfaction at



Hospitality - a Monastic Trait

Vicariate

“The communities welcome simply and sincerely those who seek the Lord in silence and solitude.” (Const. art 199)

The communities of the Vicariate continue the monastic tradition of welcoming and giving hospitality to visitors.

La Solitude: Many of those who come are housed in the Pavilion Notre Dame, run by the Apostolic community. They often visit the Contemplative community and take part in their liturgies and

celebrations of the Divine Office as well as adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

For example, when 99 deacons and priests of the Bordeaux diocese met a Martillac the community gave them the use of their library. After another clerical meeting Archbishop Ricard of Bordeaux spent an hour with the sisters in their community room. He presided at Vespers and then dined with them. The conversation touched on a number of topical issues including his many interesting journeys, his relations with the Jews, the Muslims and the French state. They also spoke of developments in the Church in France.

A groups of about 40 couples (*Foyer Notre Dame*) came for a few days' retreat. They prayed the Office with the contemplatives, something the latter found stimulating.

Oteiza: At Christmas the choir of the Cathedral of Pamplona gave a concert in the sisters' chapel. They and the invited guests very much appreciated the beauty and harmony of the mixed-voice choir.

The community reports that there are constant requests for retreats and recollections in the reception area. Groups such as seminarians, catechists with their groups, secondary school pupils with their religion teachers ask to share the sisters' personal experience. On 1 May a group of Apostolic *Holy Family* sisters with their collaborators, Associates and monitors who help them in work camps, in pastoral work with youth or the formation of Associates came from different parts of Spain. They arrived at Oteiza at 6.30 a.m. After breakfast and a short rest they were ready to take part in the Eucharistic celebration and benefit from the availability of the community.

Another very much appreciated visitor was Andrée Gaspard hfb who came to give the community a session on *Growth in Consecrated Life*. The chronicler is full of praise for Andrée's gift of animation that enabled all to share their personal experience.

Nagoda: As well as having two temporary professed sisters in their community, Srs. Catherine Pilethiran and Agnes Christelda Lourthurajah, they also have two young girls in the first period of discernment. Several others, who are doing exams at present, are interested in the life of the community and will come to spend some time with the sisters to see “from within”.

Inter-community support

Several of the communities of the Vicariate have been tried by health problems brought on by illness or accidents. Needless to say, they always support one another by prayer. When possible, as was recently the case with La Solitude and Oteiza, they 'lend' one another a sister or two. All of this builds up communion.

Corporate Commitment

To affirm, by standing against

Our Corporate Commitment calls us, not only to engage in action that affirms human dignity, but also to take a stand against anything that undermines the value and dignity of the human person. Our Constitutions state: "...we denounce whatever disfigures the human person and we announce the values of the Kingdom (art. 122). To do this we need to be informed about situations that dehumanise.

At the recent SEDOS Seminar (see p.1) the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Commission (JPIC) Working Group on Trafficking in Women and Children (a Commission of the UISG/USG) launched an *Information and Workshop Kit* for the purpose of raising awareness of this modern form of slavery.

The Kit is presented in a folder containing loose sheets of different colours for the different sections. Just now it is available only in English. Translations into French, Spanish and Italian are in progress and copies in these languages should be available by September.

The Foreword to the Kit given on the next page explains its purpose and content.



Trafficking in Women and Children
Information and Workshop Kit

Foreword

Trafficking in women and children constitutes a grave violence against women and children, and is a breach of their fundamental human rights. Trafficking is increasing in many parts of the world. The members of the Working Group on Trafficking in Women and Children became aware of the problem through direct experience and through contacts with other religious who work with women and children who have been trafficked. We felt that there was an urgent need to mobilise religious worldwide in the areas of prevention, rehabilitation and political action. It is hoped that this material will help to raise the issue of trafficking with male and female religious congregations, church groups and networks of NGO's who collaborate with religious orders.

This kit provides an overview of some of the main issues regarding trafficking in women and children and outlines possible strategies for religious congregations to network together and with others to combat trafficking. It also offers

- an opportunity to bring this serious and urgent issue into the open
- specific information from official documents from the United Nations including a joint publication of UNIFEM, UNDP and SEAwatch'; reports and articles from various organisations who work in the field of trafficking
- resources for theological reflection
- workshop ideas at the end of each section and in a separate appendix

The working group hopes that this kit will serve as a catalyst for further study and action at local, national and global levels.

UNIFEM East and South East Asia, *Trafficking in Women and Children. Mekong Sub Region*, 23 September 1998 (Accessed at <http://.unifem.eseasia.org/Resources/Traffick2.html>).

UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women), UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), SEAwatch (South East Asia Watch).