

# Interconnections

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No. 12

March 2004

## Here in Rome

### United against Violence

Together with the whole civilised world we were saddened and horrified by the massacre of the innocent in Madrid on 11 March. We are grateful to Sabina, Provincial of Spain, for her quick communication about the safety of our sisters there. Providentially none of them was on any of the trains targeted although they use them frequently. We are united in prayer for the dead, the bereaved and the perpetrators of that terrible deed. We also see it as a call to examine and face up to the violence in ourselves.

### With the world we say 'NO' to war



Walking for peace in 2003

As on 15 February 2003, we joined the Peace demonstration held in Rome on 20 March in solidarity with the worldwide demonstrations being held to mark the anniversary of the invasion of Iraq. It again brought millions on to the streets. Three peace convoys set out from the North and South of Italy to join the crowds converging on Rome.

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*Interconnections* is published quarterly by the Holy Family International ComInfo Service.

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Four other convoys, with Italian and European participants set out at the same time towards Iran, Iraq, Turkey/Kurdistan and Palestine/Israel.



## Comings and Goings

*From the end of February the members of the general community and those members of the support community who had been in Asia for the continental meeting and that of the Priest Associates began returning. The house will be full for Easter.*

*Srs. Jenet Perera (Delegation of Pakistan) and Kathleen Ginanapragasam Pillai (Province of France) completed their 19 week mid-life renewal programme on 5 March. We are enjoying their presence for a short while before they return to their respective places of ministry.*

## Of interest to Women in March

*In the month of March there are two days for us to reflect on matters relating to Women.*

◆ The first of these is the *World Day of Prayer*. It is a worldwide movement of Christian women of many traditions who come together to observe a common day of prayer each year on the first Friday of March and who, in many countries, have a continuing relationship in prayer and service.

The origins of the *World Day of Prayer* date back to the 19th century when Christian women in the United States and Canada initiated a variety of cooperative activities in support of women's involvement in mission at home and in other parts of the world. Through the *World Day of Prayer*, women affirm that prayer and action are inseparable and that both have immeasurable influence in the world.

The *World Day of Prayer* worship service has a special



Logo for this year's prayer

annual theme. The selection of themes and writers is made at the quadrennial WDP International Committee Meeting. Then, women of the selected WDP National Committee develop a common worship on the theme.

This year it was the women of Panama who prepared the service on the theme: *In Faith, Women Shape the Future*. Next year it will be the WDP committee of Poland

who will prepare it on the theme: *Let Our Light Shine*. They also usually design a special logo.

Several members of the Generalate community are in the habit of attending the prayer service annually in Rome. This year it was held in the Baptist church and attracted quite a large group. Women religious are usually conspicuous by their absence.

◆ The second event is the International Women's Day established in 1977 by the United Nations and held on 8 March. This special day provides an opportunity to reflect on the progress made to advance women's equality, to assess the challenges facing women in contemporary society, to consider future steps to enhance the status of women and to celebrate the gains made in these areas.



# AFRICA

## D.R Congo

### Two self-help Programmes

#### Pastoral Year of Development

On 27 September 2003 the diocese (Idiofa) organised a "catechetical day" during which the bishop set out his pastoral plan for the diocese with *Development* as the key issue. The theme was the choice of the majority of the

dioceses in Kinshasa province and of several other dioceses. There is a real need to do something because the country is falling more and more into a state of under-development.

#### How is this to be done?

The diocesan agency for development drew up a plan of reflection around three axes:

- ◆ knowing how to conserve and protect,
- ◆ knowing how to maintain,
- ◆ trying to increase or change so as to be able to take wing by oneself.

L'**AILES** (aile = wing in French) is an acronym for basic human needs: Food, Infrastructure, Housing, Environment Health. (In French: **A**limentation, **I**nfrastructure, **L**ogement, **E**nvironment, **S**anté)

The first thing is to become aware of the necessity to live

otherwise. The members of the diocesan agency will help with an awareness campaign, then identity what is already there. Finally, they will apply the principles, *Conserve* and *Protect, Maintain, Increase* or *Change* according to circumstances.

"In this way," Micheline Kenda says, "we will be able to grow by our own efforts and develop in our mentality as in our way of treating material things."

#### Governmental Initiatives

The Ministry for Social Affairs and the Central Office for the Coordination of Projects held a workshop on 13 December 2003 at Kikwit to make the population aware of the projects devised to try and improve the lot of the most deprived in society. It was attended by Srs. Georgine Mufogoto, Christine Beneke and Anne Nkumunde.

They used the workshop format to explain the overall programme of rehabilitation and reconstruction. The acronym used by its authors is PMURR in French. Its principal aim is to begin the process of social protection and economic reconstruction of the D. R. of Congo for integral development.

PMURR cares for vulnerable people especially street

children, children and adolescents who are prostitutes, children whose parents are under the age of 16, the mentally or physically impaired, victims of natural calamities, those living with AIDS, widows of victims and their children, single mothers, elderly people, immigrants and the undernourished.

The speakers aimed to help their listeners draw up a project to help those falling into the categories named. The Central Bureau of Coordination (BCECO) laid down certain conditions for accepting to finance a project. Those directing it should have juridical status and be able to show they have some experience in helping the vulnerable.

During the workshop they asked questions relating to the harassment of the state for taxes and other matters. The government now appears to be encouraging all those who are working for the benefit of the poor and is inviting them to present their projects to BCECO for analysis.

Anne concludes by thanking Agathe Nzeba (the Delegation Leader) and her council for their concern for the social reality of the country. They are grateful for the opportunity to participate in this campaign and open their minds.

## At the School of the Deaf

*How can you dialogue with a deaf person? This what Srs. Marie Cecile and Dolcita Kalema tried to do for two months at the Centre for the Deaf at Kingabwa in Kinshasa.*

As soon as they arrived the Principal introduced them to the classes. The pupils looked at them and asked their names of the teachers in sign language. The teachers wrote on the board and they were able to read quite easily.

The following day they asked many questions and wanted to know where Marie Cecile came from. She did not know how to reply but eventually thought of writing all the answers on the board. The children read and understood them and started to explain their sign language.

They continued like this and gradually Marie Cecile began to grasp it. When she had difficulties she asked the teachers for help.

During her stay she discovered the deaf have the same intellectual abilities as others. She also saw the solidarity that exists among them and the love and support the Centre provides. The question that may arise in people's minds is, what is to become of these children at the end of their primary education in the Centre?

There is another Centre at Matete, also in Kinshasa, where they learn a variety of trades such as carpentry, sewing, shoemaking and gardening. The girls' activities are usually restricted to sewing. In the future the people of Kinshasa and the Congo in general will benefit economically from their produce.

Cecile Marie concludes, "It is not easy to teach the deaf because it requires much understanding, humility, and self-forgetfulness."

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## South Africa

### **Ahanang contributes to job creation**

*Small is Beautiful is the title of a book on ecological economics by E. F. Schumacher (Hartley & Marks, 1999). It is sub-titled, Economics as if People Mattered. The following account of small economic projects made possible with the help of the Holy Family in South Africa illustrates the author's point.*

From the mists of Table Mountain, to the great Drakensberg of KwaZuluNatal, the mine dumps of Gauteng and the Highveld of Limpop Province, there are people who have found new hope through the small businesses they have started with the funds they got from *Ahanang*.

*Ahanang* (Let us build one another) is the name given to the project started in the *Holy Family* South African Province for the Jubilee Year, 2000. Funds are made available to

people for job creation through small projects.

Chickens are being raised in Elandskop (Zamo Kuhle Project). Locks are being mended and installed by Fabian in Mitchell's Plain. Welding and educating others as welders is the interest of Christian in Cape Town. All this is a result of the sharing of funds from *Ahanang*. Fr Shunmugan's work with alcoholics in KwaZulu/Natal has also benefited. Creches were started in

Pietermaritzburg and in Freedom Park, Gauteng. Miggels Mobile Carwash, which goes to the customer instead of the other way around, house-shops, the Fraternity Cafe, basket-making, trading in fish and chicken parts, takeaways, baby napkins, soap making, a bakery, a butchery and a funeral parlour, owned by D. Dlamini, have come into being and have given their owners money to feed the family, to build decent houses and to give them back their dignity.



All are part of Ahanang's outreach. Frustration is lessened and depression lifts

as people form themselves into sewing and knitting groups, a market gardening group in Elandskop, a *Holy Family* care givers group who bring home nursing and spiritual aid to people with HIV/AIDS, a group running a laundry at reasonable rates, a business college set up to teach computer skills.

Those who have received also give help to others like the butcher who organises a soccer team and the Stepping Stones project that helps others find employ-

ment. Young people have been given the opportunity to learn a trade such as brick laying,

carpentry, motor mechanics, computer skills and nursing. A fish licence for Joseph gave him the chance of employment at I&J. An ex-policeman who was boarded because of depression is doing paralegal studies part-time to supplement his pension while also advising the poor on legal matters.

These are the people, young and old, male and female, South Africans and refugees from other parts of Africa, for whom a light has been lit and who will be able to light up the lives of others.

Thanks to Ahanang and all those who made it possible, from the many people who have benefited from this generous scheme.

### Two quotes from *Small is Beautiful*

- “(A modern economist) is used to measuring the ‘standard of living’ by the amount of annual consumption, assuming all the time that a man (sic) who consumes more is ‘better off’ than a man who consumes less. A Buddhist economist would consider this approach excessively irrational: since consumption is merely a means to human well-being, the aim should be to obtain the maximum of well-being with the minimum of consumption... The less toil there is, the more time and strength is left for artistic creativity. Modern economics, on the other hand, considers consumption to be the sole end and purpose of all economic activity.”
- “Ever bigger machines, entailing ever bigger concentrations of economic power and exerting ever greater violence against the environment, do not represent progress: they are a denial of wisdom. Wisdom demands a new orientation of science and technology towards the organic, the gentle, the non-violent, the elegant and beautiful.”

## Holy Family Schools Cultural Day

There are five *Holy Family* schools in the KwaZulu/Natal region of South Africa. These schools, Elandskop, Maris Stella, St. Anthony's, St. Augustine's and *Holy Family* College, were formerly completely controlled by the *Holy Family* sisters and provided education for the various designated population groups under the old apartheid system.

Racial segregation in schools is now a thing of the past in South Africa but schools situated in a predominantly Indian or black African area would have a majority of pupils from these ethnic groups. Integration is most obvious in the towns in what used to be the all-white schools. The schools are now staffed and run by catholic lay

people while remaining under the management of the *Holy Family* Province. By means of a Schools' Council it seeks to further the *Holy Family* spirit and ethos among staff and pupils. The Cultural Day is a way of promoting good relations among all. The last one took place on 13 September 2003 at *Holy Family* College, Durban. Here is an account drawn from *Weavings*, the Province bulletin.

This has been an event for the last five years, in order to get the young people to know one another. Each year the venue changes so that the young people can experience the various school environments. The programme for the day allows each school to present two or three items for

the assembled guests. This has been a huge success. As the various items were presented it was obvious that the variety of talents was appreciated by all.

At the end of the programme Mr L Samuels from the Catholic Institute of Education (CIE) thanked all the participants. He quoted the Founder's dream of the tree with various flowers, birds and fruits all singing and working in harmony and stated that this had been evident in the programme presented that day.

He thanked the *Holy Family* Sisters for the initiative taken to found so many schools and asked that they would continue to do the great work that was started so long ago.



Pupils of Wennappuwa *Holy Family* school welcome Margaret and companions on arrival during their visit to Sri Lanka for the Asian Continental meeting

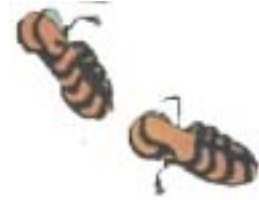


A troupe of dancers escorts the visitors to the school hall for the cultural entertainment given in their honour on 22 February



AMERICAS

Argentina



Preparing for Mission

In Argentina and other Latin American countries peer missions - youth to youth - often take place in the summer holidays, early in the New Year. Preparation of the 'missionaries' usually happens in the weeks or months beforehand. From Córdoba, Graciela

Barrios tells us of their preparation this year.

We the young people of Córdoba are preparing for a mission to take place in the New Year in Atamisqui,

Santiago del Estero. A short time ago we had a get together for about 30 young people from three different groups accompanied by Oblate seminarians, seminarians from the Immaculate Conception Fathers and Sisters of the Holy Family.

The aim of the gathering was to get to know each other and share what each group was doing to prepare for the mission. There was a real family climate.

In the mornings we began with creative presentations of each group followed by a prayer celebration that used the following symbols:

- Heart - to go on mission is to give my heart

- Hands - to go on mission is to offer my hands
- Feet - to go on mission is to set out

Then there was sharing about the current situation in Atamisqui, the organisation of the mission and a reflection "What is Mission?" which was discussed in small groups and a plenary session.

The afternoon was a time for recreation: volley ball, basketball, etc. The young people also learned some games and group dynamics to share with children and young people during the mission. The day ended with the Eucharist prepared by them in which they presented all that they had lived to the Lord.

Silent March

From Resistencia we hear how Holy Family Associates and Community reacted to the murder of one of their neighbours during an attempt to steal her handbag as she went to work in the local health centre. She was well known for her active participation in social and political affairs. She managed

her home and brought up 8 children practically alone.

The authors of this crime are youths that have grown up here, our reporter tells us. It showed the insecurity in which they and the whole community live. Silent marches through the area were organised with her relatives to demand justice and

peace and more security. In the beginning there was a large attendance that later diminished. At the same time relatives of other victims of unresolved crime from other parts of the city began to meet to discuss their problems and look for ways to keep the demand alive. The meetings were held in the parish where

the *Holy Family* is present and from the beginning the parish priest attended. He asked the Social Pastoral Team to accompany the meetings of the families also. Thus their legitimate social claim was not allowed weaken or disappear.

Four months after the death of their friend they marched through the streets of the neighbourhood. There were several symbolic gestures along the way, young trees were planted and each stop was marked by a reflection on a biblical quotation related to

their current situation. They committed themselves to care for the growth and flowering of the saplings as signs that, in spite of everything, hope is possible.

So there are some who do not resign themselves to accepting that things cannot change. They are convinced that by joining forces they can change and improve the conditions that their children and grandchildren will live in tomorrow. To finish there was a brief celebration. Torches were lit and balloons released on

which were written the various values the group wanted to recuperate.

“On the way home,” writes our correspondent, “we commented what a good demonstration of neighbourliness it had been, as well as an opportunity to join together and express what we wanted. We said it was a way for the neighbours to reclaim places and situations that we had lost through indifference, causing our insecurity.” They promised they would be there a month later for the next march.

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## Peru

### Struggling for Education

*Pomahuaca in Peru has a secondary school, founded a year before the Sisters of the Holy Family arrived in the town. Recently, after 27 years of existence, the parents and people of the town have had to stand up for its continued existence. Remedios Zubeldia sfb, a member of the Pomahuaca community tells us the story of their struggle.*

About this time the Education Minister declared a state of emergency in education in the whole of Peru. For several years the decline had been noticeable in Pomahuaca. The community provided a listening ear for the parents who were very concerned about what was going on; they complained of exploitation of the pupils by

teachers, teenage pregnancies among the pupils, absence of teachers in class time and more, without knowing what to do about it.

Their Vicariate of St Francis Xavier has an agreement with the Ministry of Education and that was the door that opened on to a new and arduous path. The Education Council, whose ultimate authority is Mgr. Pedro Barreto, took on the project of setting things to rights.

#### **A Convention College**

This is a non-fee paying State College in which the Church, with its experience of education, offers support to the Ministry of Education. For its part the Ministry leaves the choice of staff to the Vicariate and there must be a

representative of the Church, a sister, seminarian, priest or committed layperson as the link with the Vicariate. This latter commits itself to accompanying and training parents and teachers through its Education Council.

The board of the Parents' Association began to take the necessary steps to set things right. The majority of the teachers felt the ground moving beneath them and reacted accordingly. Their anger was vented on the Sisters of the community and a courageous group of parents. One of the teachers heading the opposition bought off the president of the Parents' Association and so divided it. The struggle went on for months. A meeting of parents

was called and the Education Council was asked to send someone to explain exactly what a "Convention College" was. Two Sisters from the executive committee of the Council came to what was a very tense assembly. A commission of three parents was elected to put together a file on the situation and gather signatures of those in agreement with the Convention. The vast majority of the parents signed. The time came for the election of a new board of the Parents' Association and these three were elected along with three parents more, all of them in agreement that the college should remain within the Convention.

When all the documentation was ready it was decided to hand the file to Mgr. Barreto on Confirmation Day. The Sisters acted as intermediaries and the time was fixed for one hour before the ceremony, when not only the parents but the town dignitaries, the headmaster, teachers and anyone else who wished, would be present.

The "opposition" organised a rally for the same day inviting the town authorities, those from the outlying country houses and others. They canvassed

against the Convention in every possible circumstance and moment; used the pupils to demonstrate through the town with placards that said **NO TO A CONVENTION COLLEGE**. Their arguments were that a Convention College was fee-paying; children of those not married in Church were not admitted; children of other religions could not attend it, etc. A confrontation was feared.

For its part the Parents' Association was organising a takeover of the College during the week and asking the Education Management Unit to dismiss the head and the teacher who was leading the "opposition."

### **Resolution**

The response of the people to such confusion was overwhelming; the whole town gathered in the square to await the Bishop. They were anxious to hear him and he was greeted by loud applause.

First the Mayor spoke, (he had been supporting the opposition) and in his speech he called for quarrels and rancour to be set aside and support given to the majority of the parents. His tone, unlike anything heard from him up to that, surprised many.

The bishop explained in detail what a Convention College was and how the Church (the Vicariate) offered its support to improve the education given. Several times he mentioned the respect due to the parents who thought differently. His serenity, simplicity and clarity calmed the tensions on both sides. The rally was a failure and the College was not taken over.

### **How did the Community feel through all this?**

"It was not easy," Remedios tells us. In decision-making they were on the sidelines because that was the responsibility of the parents. However, they were not silent when it came to guidance, insisting that everything must be done to avoid violence. "We prayed hard," she says, "and our hearts cried out 'Affirm the dignity of the human person...'" They felt the strength of our charism and how they were penetrated with it.

"It all helped us to value our community life as we supported one another and worked together. During this time, we had mixed feelings, fear, loneliness, confusion, insecurity, lack of trust and anger but in all that GOD ALONE kept us strong."

## ***Pacem in Terris* Forty Years On**

This anniversary was celebrated in the VII Social Week, which had the central themes of Truth, Justice, Charity and Freedom that are the pillars of peace. In the words of John XIII, “*Peace must be grounded on truth, built on justice, vitalised and integrated by charity and brought about with freedom.*”

Maria Narro hfb, who was there with the Communications Team, tells us how they became aware of the socio-political changes they have lived, the injustices in our history and globalisation that has broken through national borders but at the same time crushes people today.

Mgr. Castro (Vice-President of the Colombian Bishops Conference) addressed the meeting and pointed out that when the four values mentioned above were missing

RECONCILIATION is indispensable at four levels: spiritual, social, political and cultural. Communion must be restored to be able to reorganise human relations and live forgiveness. Maria went on to quote a long list of requirements for reconciliation at all four levels. They include:

### **Spiritual Reconciliation**

- Openness to others
- Facilitation of “double vision”, that of victim and victimising,
- Standing back from a violent context for fear of becoming violent.

### **Social Reconciliation**

- Looking for truth, justice and forgiveness,
- Memory of the facts, redeeming what is positive on both sides,
- Channelling of energy towards the future.

### **Political Reconciliation**

- Overcome revenge because it destroys politics,
- Moral Judgement of what has been done and asking publicly for forgiveness through Truth Commissions.

### **Cultural Reconciliation**

- Rise above the ‘demonising’ and wanting to do away with the Enemy,
- Rebuilding the moral conscience of those affected,
- Commitment to ethnic minorities,
- Promotion of civic education in church, school, family to create sensitivity to other aspects of life such as ecology.

Reconciliation happens as a process or processes beginning with personal attitudes finding ways to build a world of peace.

## **COMMUNICATIONS TEAM – *PACEM IN TERRIS***

Some time ago the ComInfo team came together for a short retreat to discern what the Lord was asking of them at this particular time in the history of their country and Delegation. The three members also agreed to take part in the VII Social Week organised for the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of John XXIII’s encyclical *Pacem in Terris*.

When they came together to prepare their Bulletin *Chasqui* they continued the process of listening to the

Lord and found in the first four articles of our Constitutions that they must continue to revive the spirit of the first Christian communities, “being of one heart and one mind” as Jesus, Mary and Joseph were. They lived Trinitarian relationships at Nazareth.

John XXIII not only dreamt of a world where Trinitarian relationships were possible, he practised them himself and set in motion the necessary changes to bring this about for everyone. He convoked Vatican II and wrote *Pacem in*

*Terris*. Isabel Camino hfb tells us they renewed their commitment as a team with Jesus, Mary and Joseph, P.B.N. and Juan XXIII

- to make the Family of God a reality;
- to work for reconciliation in the spiritual, social, political and cultural domain to bring about a world without discrimination;
- to do everything they could on their part for Jesus to be born in their hearts, their community, the Church and Peru.

# Canada

## A Missionary Day in the diocese of Quebec

In September 2003 the diocesan missionary commission invited the missionaries of the diocese and others to participate in a meeting for the launching of the missionary year. Among the *Holy Family* sisters who attended were, Cecile Gonthier, Alida Bouchard and Colette Lambert. The chosen theme was, *Church of Canada, your life is Mission*. The following is from Alida's account of the day.

The first step was a reflection with Mary, model of contemplative faith from the Annunciation to the cross when Jesus commended his spirit to the Father. Mary kept all these things in her heart and remains

the power helping us to live this mystery in today's world.

They continued with the gospel for world mission day (Mark 10, 35-45). The heart of mission is service and requires a community effort. Through our baptism we are in communion with the life of God and commit ourselves to proclaim the gospel as witnesses of his light.

Some mimes with gospel personalities prepared them for a group reflection. Among them were the words of Jesus with the Samaritan woman, "If you knew the gift of God." This was a decisive meeting with Jesus and an invitation for her to propose it to those she would meet.

Using missionary testimonies they reflected on various experiences of church throughout the world. The vitality of our church depends on its missionary openness and its capacity to be at the service of the community. Mission is a visitation; it is present where men and women meet to give thanks to the Lord and proclaim the joy of Easter.

The church exists for the world and not for itself. God who gives life sends us in turn to spread that life beyond all borders. In that way we contribute to the mission of the universal church.

The day concluded with a missionary sending-out.

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## A first glance

In October 2003 Monique Chalifour arrived to join the small *Holy Family* community at Petite Bourgogne a district to the south of Montreal where Aline Perron and Paulette Lambert are already well established. The *Holy Family* sisters have been there since 1967 and she could readily see how our charism has become rooted in that multi-ethnic area. As a new arrival, she spent time looking at all the projects underway and participating in various meetings before becoming involved.

Building community appears to be a priority. One of her first

experiences was to participate with 40 others in an input on the importance of the community spread over three parishes. It was led by Ms Sylvia Latreille of the Dominican College and provided a good opportunity for Monique to get to know the area. Using the account of the multiplication of the loaves (Mk. 6, 30-44) they shared on the meaning of community, their motivations, on what is already being done and what the community needs so that they might be true missionaries.

### Diversity of projects

The Christian community collaborates in a great diversity

of projects, all with the aim of promoting the well-being and dignity of the people while living communion in the diversity of cultures. Aline and Paulette have set up programmes of catechesis for the youth and for the formation of catechists. As pastoral care agent, Paulette is involved in different projects with the parish priest, among them the formation of young people from the age of 12 to 20. This includes training them to be future Christian leaders. A biblical camp was planned for November and the sharing of the Word group set up by Aline is ongoing.

There is a Centre called "Amitié-Soleil" for women offering them courses in sewing and knitting. Immigrant women frequent it in great numbers. While they are busy, their children are also cared for in a formative environment.

### **An ambitious project**

For more than a year those responsible for several organisations have been struggling so that a large piece of land belonging to *Postes-Canada* should be allocated for the integral development of the area. It seems that this site has

the potential for social and economic development to the benefit of the community. It would respond to the needs of the residents for affordable housing, job creation and services. It would counteract the effects of urbanisation that brought about a 55% decrease in the population since 1960.

On 8 October, Monique relates, the sector of the Coalition of Petite-Bourgogne organised a meeting to give information on progress. The struggle is ongoing and those involved need to be encouraged in

whatever way possible, including prayer.

#### **A tragic event**

That there are serious problems to be overcome in the district is evident from an event that took place during the festival of Petite Bourgogne in September 2003. A young man of 21 died as a result of a brawl in Campbell park. It was a reminder of how difficult it is for the youth to live together in peace and a call to help them to improve their living conditions.

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## **Celebrations in Schefferville**

*In a previous edition there is a brief account of the recognition given to three Holy Family sisters for their work among the Innuits in the diocese of Schefferville. The following fuller account is adapted from the local newspaper, The Monitor, of December 2003.*

**O**n the weekend of December 5-7, Bishop Douglas Crosby, O.M.I., the diocesan staff of Labrador City Schefferville and Sister Francine Dore, Provincial Superior of the Sisters of the *Holy Family* of Bordeaux were in Schefferville for the blessing of the new, renovated church and to honour Sister Martha Groffen, Sister Lieve Bosman, and Sister Marcelle Paywells who work in the Community.

The church and offices were moved from Matimekosh and

placed on a foundation in the centre of the community about 3 km away in the summer of 2003 and was completed in early December. The church is warm and beautiful. The cedar ceiling, the stations of the cross (carved from caribou antlers), the tabernacle (in tent form and placed in the company of a drum, a paddle and snow shoes), the altar linens (crafted by skillful hands), and the simple cross created from cedar boards provide warmth and peace to all who come to pray.

The blessing of the church took place during the evening of December 6. The Chief of the community and his wife assisted Bishop Crosby during the ceremony which was celebrated mainly in Innu. The homily, given in French, was translated into Innu Immun.

The singing was also in Innu Immun and was led by a very talented elder. Before the final blessing, the Bishop presented each Sister with the Cross, *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice*, and a framed certificate. The entire community applauded their agreement with the papal honours. These sisters have spent most of the past 40 years working with the native peoples in Davis Inlet, La Romaine and Schefferville

Later, at a reception in the school gym, (which was prepared by the people and served by the young Rangers) the Band Council presented the Sisters with return tickets from Montreal to Belgium, a gift from the entire community. The Chief noted that it was a "return" ticket referring to the sisters as "the mothers of the community".



## Pakistan

### Asia

#### A New Experience

*Four Pakistani Postulants, Saira, Rehana, Bernadette and*

*Farsana, relate with refreshing simplicity and honesty their emotions when faced with an aspect of life hitherto unknown to them.*

*The Franciscan Missionaries of Christ the King in Karachi run a home for mentally handicapped children. It was to this home, Dar-ul-sukun, that the Delegation sent them for a new experience of life. Here is their personal account.*

“The moment we heard we would be going there we felt a kind of fear. The moment we stepped into the premises we felt very unhappy and frightened. In our minds we began to ask ourselves, Why here? What for? What are we going to learn?”

At first no one knew what the others were feeling. It was only later that they learned that each one had gone through the same process. The feelings of fear did not last long, however. Living with such unloved and unwanted children, day in and day out for about ten days, changed their way of thinking and feeling. It gradually

dawned on them that, though abnormal, those children are also a part of our human family, that they are God’s loved ones and they too need love, care and special attention. They saw how the sisters made them feel loved, wanted and important. The postulants came to love, accept and see God in them. They also learned to accept the children’s love.

They conclude, “This is an experience we would never have got anywhere else. We learnt to understand ourselves, for God’s gifts come to us in different forms. Also, we learnt to be grateful to God for all the gifts he has showered on us.”

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## Philippines

### Vocations’ Ministry

#### Journey to Mindoro

Living in a country made up of hundreds of islands must be fascinating, challenging and even daunting especially when one has to travel to places totally unknown and different from one’s home place. This is what Bernie de Silva discovered when she

undertook to travel with Maria Goretti Peries to Mindoro to introduce the *Holy Family* to another part of the Philippines.

Mindoro is the next big island to the south of Manila. It is divided into the provinces of Occidental and Oriental Mindoro. The sisters visited the

latter part. There the natural resources are protected and the people are very simple and friendly. The indigenous people there are the Mangyans. They are dark in complexion and have curly hair.

Before departing Bernie had contacted people from

Mindoro. The responses were positive so they felt encouraged to continue with their plans. They set out on the journey without knowing anybody from the place or even what sort of place it was but with complete trust in divine Providence.

Arrangements had been made for them to stay at the Benedictine monastery near to

the bishop's house. The bishop was the first person they met. They describe him as a very simple person who sat down to chat with them quite informally. It was his first meeting with *Holy Family* sisters. When he discovered they could converse in Filipino he said repeatedly, "Sisters, you stay with us."

According to the bishop the

best vocation promotion is "presence". He gave them permission to go to the parishes and colleges to introduce themselves.

The trip was a little tiring but the two pilgrims were happy to be able to make the *Holy Family* known in Mindoro for the first time. Having sown the seeds they "trust that God will continue to nurture them".

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## Pastoral care of vocations in Sorsogon diocese

*Vocation month, vocation campaign, vocation jamboree, vocation congress.*

They all bring the youth together every year for discernment on their vocation.

November 2003 was designated vocation month in the diocese of Sorsogon. The chosen theme was "Download with the Lord". The bishop, with the vocation promoters of the

two Associations of Women and Men religious, launched the month's activities at a Eucharistic celebration in the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul.

The programme was extended to the end of February 2004 and will include visits to every school and parish in the diocese by the vocations promoters team. The purpose is to help the youth to discern

their inner call and goals in life. Vivian Fernando writes that these events have helped some youth to follow the Lord by choosing priestly and religious vocations. The sisters also seize these occasions to meet young people "to have simple and gratuitous relationships listening to them and accompanying them in their search for God and a meaning in life" (Decree on Pastoral care of vocations).

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## Sri Lanka

### Religious Tension

*Sr. Matilda of the JPIC for the Province gives the following information on rising religious tension in the country.*

There are about 200 Sects such as Jehovah witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists, Calvary Church, and Light House. These sects were very much involved in converting the Buddhists and Hindus here. With the sudden

death of a famous Buddhist monk, Soma Thero, certain groups of politicians came out against Christian Churches and also attacked some church buildings. This created unrest in the whole country. In order to stop such disputes Her Excellency, President Chandrika Bandaranayake Kamarathunga of Sri Lanka, visited the Maha Nayakes of every Buddhist Temple,

#### Polling Day

On 2 April there will be parliamentary elections in Sri Lanka. Let us pray that the will of the people will prevail in free and fair elections.

requesting them not to disturb the Christians but to encourage the Buddhists to live up to their Religion. So now the situation is under control. The people, tired of 20 years of war, do not want another kind of war.



## EUROPE

### Blazing a Trail

Marie Power hfb, a member of the Engaine Drive community in Milton Keynes (England), has been appointed Pastoral Worker for People with Special Needs in the diocese of Northampton. Her appointment is with the St Thomas à Beckett Foundation and her mandate is to make it possible for people with special needs to play a full part in Catholic life. She sees her new post as an opportunity to be an advocate for people

with special needs by helping them to negotiate with statutory and voluntary bodies.

Another aspect of her work will be helping parishes to meet the pastoral needs of the disabled, supporting schools and catechists in the preparation of children for the sacraments. Marie also takes over the work previously carried out by the Diocesan Pastoral Worker for the Deaf. When the Beckett Foundation achieves its dream of providing long-term and respite care for those with special needs she will also offer

support to their families and to the disabled themselves, before and after their stay.

This type of work is not entirely new to Marie. Having trained as a social worker she has spent the last 20 years working in the field of social justice. She has been co-ordinator of the Social Justice Desk of the Conference of Religious in England and Wales. For a while she was Social and Pastoral Action Worker in the Archdiocese of Westminster and councillor with the Irish Chaplaincy.

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### Revving it up for Bosnia

In past communications we have had occasion to write about the tireless efforts of Margaret Duncan hfb to raise money for Bosnia. She has even travelled there with a convoy of aid and aid workers.

She is still doing her bit. A local newspaper, the *Evening News*, sponsored an appeal to save the Christine Whitcutt Centre in Bosnia. A group of motorcycle enthusiasts offered members of the public a ride on the back of their motorbikes in return for a £3 donation to help keep the Centre open.

The *Evening News* reported that “an 86 year-old nun was



treated to an adrenaline-pumping ride on a Harley Davidson to raise money for the Centre”. Margaret’s own account of her adventure was typical, “It was fantastic to ride

pillion on the bike. I really had a ball. We were all over Leith at quite a speed.” The event raised £750 for the charity and was described as a rip-roaring success.

# Italy

## Celebrating with the Roma (Gypsies)

For a year now Olga Saccoccio hfb, with some companion volunteers, has been visiting the Roma people in their encampments in Rome. She describes how, during that time, her feelings towards them changed from wariness and diffidence to openness and acceptance. Now, she finds them waiting expectantly and cordially for her beside their caravans, sheds or containers. It is good to be with them, she says.

Having walked with them for some time now she is able to enter into the feelings of this people “without land or state”, who were expelled from their homeland, especially during the Bosnian war, and condemned to be nomads leaving behind a part of their history, their well-being and their families. They are a people without roots but their memories are anchored in the places where their ancestors are buried.

### A special feast

That was how the group of volunteers found themselves celebrating the feast of Saint George with the Roma people. George is their patron saint but they do not celebrate his feast on the same day as the catholic church. Orthodox, Muslims and members of other Christian denominations all prepared together with their families and friends for the gathering. At about 4 p.m. the volunteers arrived at the encampment to find almost every family lighting

a fire to roast a kid. Going around the camps, Olga thought of the Hebrew people preparing the Paschal meal. At about 8 p.m. the head of each family invited them to share their supper. They tried to taste a little of everything so that no one would feel slighted.

For the occasion the women were dressed in traditional festive attire. The young girls had their most precious jewels and brilliant clothes. They had threaded sprigs of multi-coloured flowers through their hair. Even the children were there to celebrate and amuse themselves by throwing water on one another while the more adventurous brought the visitors around to introduce them to their parents.

It was a festival where lights, dancing and colours mingled with the sounds of music and singing. But not everyone was taking part. In a little space of about 300 square metres, joy and sorrow overlapped. The people there were in distress; they were not eating the roasted kid; the children

restricted themselves to watching what was taking place in the neighbouring ‘house’. This was because they had family members in prison. So strong is the family bond among them that they could not rejoice in such circumstances.

### Practical help

Late in the day Olga and her companions met with the area’s town councillor to get him to bring to the Council’s attention the matter of equipping a less fortunate encampment nearby with running water, lighting and containers so that in winter the dwellers might have better shelter. It was also necessary and important to avoid the appearance of discrimination between the new generation of Roma and those who had been there for ten years. The following day they went to the Town Hall to press the case. It was a favourable time as local elections were about to take place.

The councillor they had spoken to was re-elected and is busy organising a Pilot Centre. The first step is to identify leaders

## Proclaiming the Holy Family Good News

With great dedication and enthusiasm, Amata Melillo continues her work among the youth and also the *Holy Family Associates* in Italy. She is indefatigable in

organising study camps, weekends and meetings of all kinds where the *Holy Family* spirit and charism is reflected on and spread among young and not so young.

in the zones to counter the signs of hooliganism and intolerance among the ethnic groups. It is not easy get all the members of the clan working together responsibly. That is a task for the coming year.

Olga says the volunteers are

placing their hope in the new generation. In them they see a fruitful field to sow the seeds of family unity because the youth do not have the prejudices of their parents.

They try to insert them into the world of work, the sporting

events of the zone and the theatrical activities of the prison for minors where some of their friends are held. It seems the youth will be able to overcome some of the causes of conflict such as intermarriage among the various ethnic groups. *Love knows no boundaries.*

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## Spain

### Bring out the wine and let the feast continue!

*In December 2003, Sisters Carmen, Manoloi, Maribel and Marian hfb took part in a CONGRESS OF YOUNG RELIGIOUS organised by the Union of Religious of Catalonia and CONFER, the national conference of religious. Maribel Cortes of Jaen community shares with us some of her reflections.*

The best wine of religious life was brought out at a meeting of young religious (men and women) and the feast goes on. The long-awaited weekend of 8 December came and went very quickly. It brought together 263 young religious (from 61 congregations both apostolic and contemplative) in the Jesuit Professional Schools in Clot in Barcelona.

The form of the meeting was novel and the risk taken was worthwhile. Instead of a Congress where all present are spectators we had a Meeting with active participation in all the events – workshops,

prayer, cultural and social visits, and a party.

Under the title “*Bring out the wine and let the feast continue*” we were able to reflect on our own situation as young religious and the future of religious life, a future that concerns us all, sisters, because we are ALL sowing it in the present and this will be what we harvest tomorrow.

Following the theme of WINE, we began with a wine tasting that led us to drawing up the ‘wine label’ for our own congregation (as a way of presenting it): origin, composition, properties, qualities, flavour, taste and for whom it is intended. As you will guess I said that it was intended for joyful people ready to follow Jesus in *Holy Family* style. It was not difficult. However, ‘flavours and colours’ was another story. Strangely enough, nearly all the congregations present in the workshops (called ‘labour wards’) were in agreement in

their analysis of the present situation.

Since we were trying to give wings and feet to our dreams, there was a workshop (another labour ward) to identify the most significant challenges in our life and the life of our communities and congregations.

This whole process of birthing the life that is in us and in religious life was assisted by three professional midwives: Montserrat (a Benedictine abbess), Concha (a Teresiana) and Toni Catalá (Jesuit). Our ideas and group reflections went to them and they returned them in the form of challenges for what they saw was at stake. The child is born already but must not stay in the incubator; from the ‘perfection’ virus of the past we have now moved to that of meaningfulness. When we are significant by what we live, it is not ourselves but the people we live with who become significant. We must not be afraid to be ourselves.

We entered religious life to serve, so enough of moaning. We were not called to religious life to be happy but to follow the crucified Christ. (An interesting statement that gave all present food for thought.)

The times of prayer, creative and carefully prepared, favoured the vitality and depth of the meeting. Other elements such as the cultural outing, the visit to social projects and the festive evening aided relationships and dialogue.

The older members of our houses in Catalonia were also able to follow what was going on through housing the participants or sharing in the Masses, and the final supper and party. After all that some of them, too, asked *to bring out more wine*.

We saw that we are equal but different; and although we are not too numerous, there is a great wealth to share. There are no longer any colours that distinguish us from one another

and it is obvious that it is the Lord who unites us. This is how we experienced it and we want to continue living this way.

In this meeting there were no final conclusions or statements as in the past. At the moment the conclusions are just the intuitions and words that we shared there. May all of us begin to put them into practice! Have you noticed the feast continuing?

Well Sisters, that depends on each of us.

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## Standing against all kinds of Discrimination

*Rosi Garcia sfb, a member of the Jaén community, talks about her work in the local prison.*

She asks have we ever stopped to think about how we can affirm the dignity of our sisters and brothers. Every day in the Penitentiary she sees gestures, words and acts that pierce her soul. A person is treated as an “inmate”, someone not worthy to look at in the face or treat with respect simply because he/she has committed an offence. This is a cold place where the opening and slamming of gates and doors reminds us of where we are, a place with a particular smell - that of depersonalised humanity.

Have you ever thought what they might feel, Rosi asks us, when they are thrown into their cells under lock and key? One of the lads in the part where she works told her, “When they close me in at night I feel like a locked-up lion.” She believes him. We can stop at times to

gaze at the horizon, to look into the distance, to admire the countryside. All they see is a few square metres of the yard.

She is grateful to be there because she is learning to put herself in their place, to be happy with the small achievements every day, because in spite of so much misery there is joy and hope, and because she believes in people’s ability to change.

Once a prison officer accompanied her during some group work in which ‘the lads’ were sharing their inner feelings and experience. At the end, Luismi (the prison officer) said he would like to speak. His words left them very shocked. He said, “After 18 years working in the prison this is the first time I have discovered that prisoners are people and have feelings.”



Rosi continues that this is for her the essence of affirming another’s dignity, not just to be aware that it is a great value, but also that others discover that whatever situation one is in, (s)he is a person even if the biggest delinquent in the world. *We do not judge the person, but the act, and how many times do we do the opposite?* So let us be careful with our words and expressions so that we do not unwittingly harm anyone.

She concludes reminding us that when we hear expressions such as “they have increased the penalty”; “make them pay”; “they deserve it” and more, that we should remember that behind the deed there is a face, a family, a name, a brother, and probably an unjust situation that makes them carry out what we call justice.

## 18 December 1903 – 2003 Celebrations around the World

### Vicariate

#### La Solitude - Martillac

In the afternoon of 17 December 2003 the two communities of Martillac had the joy of spending a quality prayer time together in the very place where the Good Father wrote the first Rules. They entered the Hermitage by the main door. The first part of the celebration took place in the large room downstairs. Referring to Margaret's letter they recalled the meaning of the celebration while Therese Segretain put it into its historical perspective.

The words of the chosen hymn, *Peuple de Dieu* (People of God), were particularly apt: "Go, draw from your heritage and without counting, share it..."

We are called to live our Constitutions in their entirety. However, fidelity to one or other article can keep us particularly alert in our vocation as sisters of the *Holy Family*. For this reason they placed in a basket held by their eldest sister, Marguerite Lecoq, that article of the Constitutions they had carefully copied. At the same time they moved towards the room containing the portraits to the music of the opening hymn.

Under the benevolent gaze of the Good Father and the Mothers whose portraits were there the assembled sisters shared briefly a trait from the lives of their ancestors that spoke of their fidelity to the charism and is an inspiration for today. They also spent a while at his desk before the Blessed Virgin. It was under her gaze that he wrote our Rules. Some passages from the



Founder and his contemporaries were read and bore witness to the importance of the Constitutions for the Good Father. They then listened to what he had to say in the Preface to the General Rules of 1851.

The next step was to draw an article of the Constitutions from the basket (the same one into which each one had put her chosen article) that had been placed on the Good Father's desk. The one drawn out would not necessarily be the one a sister had put in but it was a word addressed specially to her by the Founder and received with joy and faith. They concluded with a prayer and the singing of the *Salve Regina*.

The thanksgiving Mass was celebrated on 18 December. After the entrance hymn and a few words of introduction, the constitutions and the sceptre, held in the hands of Our Lady of All Graces in the island chapel, were brought to be placed on the altar. The sceptre had been donated to ask for the protection of Mary during the period of anticlericalism in 1903. Before

leaving for Rome to obtain the approbation of the constitutions, Mother Mary of the Nativity Lionnet placed the names of the *Holy Family* communities inside the sceptre to entrust them to Our Lady of All Graces. After the Eucharist, apostolic and contemplative sisters shared a festive meal where they continued their conversation on our history.

#### Oteiza

The community gathered on 17 December to recall the important stages that mark our 'sacred' history as an Institute. Margaret's letter and Áine's background notes were used to guide their reflections. In a simple sharing they expressed their thanksgiving and confidence in the Lord "who is always with us".

The Eucharistic celebration of the 18<sup>th</sup> took place almost at the same time as that at the tomb of Saint Peter. After communion they read the papal blessing accorded for the occasion. The same blessing was shared with the congregation present at the Eucharist for the feast of the Holy Family.

## **D. R. Congo**

Convinced that our Constitutions continue to be a way of life, a spiritual heritage and an evangelical path traced out by our Founder, the Delegation prepared itself for the great event reading and meditating on the Constitutions as requested by Margaret in her centenary letter.

On 18 December, the date of the approbation, the sisters renewed their vows, some in their respective parishes and others on retreat. A special Eucharistic celebration was organised by the Delegation to give thanks for God's protecting hand over the past hundred years. It was also the celebration of the golden jubilee of Sr. Leontine Fernando.

For several days, the radio and TV networks had been announcing the event and inviting the people to join with the sisters in their prayer of thanksgiving. The bishop of Idiofa gave the homily and exhorted them to remain faithful to their Constitutions to keep the spirit of the Founder alive.

## **Philippines**

The Delegation decided to dedicate their community meetings to reflecting and sharing on the first four articles of the Constitutions. It energised them, writes Daniela Muzzachi, because through the reflection they felt something had been awakened in them, "something that is 'ours' as *Holy Family* making us realise anew that our charism is a life-giving one". Its relevance for our times was once again confirmed.

As the sisters participated in the "Simbang Gabi" (Dawn Mass for nine consecutive days before Christmas) they had leaflets printed with the picture of our Founder and some of his

prayers. On the day itself the Eucharistic intention was for the Family. It was a joyful occasion for all and they felt welcomed by the ordinary people who live in the slums just two streets away.

As a Delegation they agreed to have a common prayer service for the Renewal of Vows at the same time in all three communities as a symbol of unity and communion. At 6.30 a.m. the prayer began in Rizal, Bulan and Manila.

## **Uganda and Rwanda**

Raphael writes for both communities who came together on 5 December for two days of prayer, reflection and celebration. Their prayer and reflection was centred on Margaret's letter with the emphasis on our 'common mission' and 'traditions'.

The reflections on our Traditions, animated by Joaquina, was interesting and informative with a touch on the meaning of our past. It was a revealing moment to our younger sisters and even to the older ones who have lived many years in the *Holy Family*. The Founder's dream, the tree with different branches, reminded them of how some branches had to be lopped off but how they sprung to life in newness. The tree is flourishing today with its different vocations; the branches have grown again but with a novelty of their own.

The photos of our former leaders since the foundation were displayed. Each sister had to choose one to speak about and share with the others the influence and impact it had on their lives. It was a joy to see how they still live with us down the years!

The sharing was rich as we spoke of our common mission

and the ways of living it. Our mission was variously seen as:

*"a continual movement.."*

*"a joyful giving of each one in the service of the other"*

*"Trinitarian life, a sharing"*

*"if we cannot share in community we cannot help the poor"*

*"welcome all, no discrimination"*

*"live with a sense of community"*

*"respect the dignity of each one"*

We still have to work on a "common mission" specific to Uganda and Rwanda.

## **Buhara Community**

The celebrations in our community of Buhara began on 10 December with prayers of thanksgiving and adoration of the Eucharist in our chapel. On the evening of 17 December we joined the priest and the parishioners at Adoration and Benediction in the Parish Church. The Parish priest spoke of the significance of the event. There was a short explanation about our Constitutions and our Charism. After the Benediction, the priests and parishioners joined us for a drink in our house. They danced and sang.

On 18 December we renewed our Vows at the Parish Eucharist. The message of the Holy Father to Margaret was read out and explained to the people as we realised that the blessing extended not only to the members but also to all who collaborate with us and also those whom we serve. We had a celebration supper in the evening.

The celebrations and reflections continue with posters and photos of our first sisters and our leaders displayed in the parlour. It is a way of making known our *Holy Family* to those interested in our Institute.

# Corporate Commitment

## Another World is Possible

World Social Forum 2004

*Srs Rosilin and Bernetta of the Delegation of India and Srs. Sunith and Chandani of the Province of Colombo participated in the World Social Forum (WSF) held in Mumbai, India from 16 - 21 January 2004. Here is Rosilin's account of the experience.*

It was a great privilege for me to observe, reflect and experience the whole global meeting in the local NESCO ground at Mumbai, India. The entire programme of the WSF was certainly a golden opportunity and challenge to people's movements and to all civil and political organisations all over the world, especially to the people of Asia and Africa, to become a global force for social change. It called all those opposed to imperialist and neo-liberal globalisation, war and sectarian violence to envision a world created with human dignity, freedom to live in peace, health and hope.

The theme of the WSF 2004 was ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE. One million people, including 15 000 delegates from more than 100 countries participated in this forum. It was a symbol of unity and democratic space for people to assert their rights for peace and dignity. It was a space of freedom to think, to open, to propose and to be heard. There, nobody was a stranger to others. It was a wonder to see so many people with great enthusiasm, conviction, commitment, vitality and vision trying to contribute their part in building up the new world.

The fourth WSF began on 16 January 2004 at 4 p.m. in the NESCO ground, Mumbai, with a grand opening ceremony. Tribal, Adivasi and Dalit dances with meaningful symbols were staged fantastically. On the main stage a song about *Friendship, Thank you, Mumbai* was sung by Pakistani youth. The wonderful South African traditional dance by the Qura Suloo Dance Group from Sivela Sonke Dance theatre was performed. Green and white Peace Balloons were flown in the sky.



The welcome address was given by Dr Shanti Patel, chairperson of the Reception Committee, Indian freedom fighter, former mayor of Mumbai and a member of Parliament. She welcomed the delegates from all over the world and invited the speakers, Ahmed Ben Bella (Algeria), Abdul Amir Rekaby (Iraq), Arundhati Roy (India), Chico Whitaker (Brazil), Jeremy Corbyn (UK), Shabana Ammi (India), Shirin Ebadi (Iran), Mustafa Barghouti (Palestine) to the main stage erected for the occasion.

I would like to share with you a few points from the address of the chairperson and from some of the speakers.

◆ *Shanti Patel* spoke on the theme *Another World is possible*. Globalisation is the main issue. It has several aspects, economic, social, cultural, environmental, and human, embracing human life in its entirety. In this imperialist globalisation, profit is the guiding force. Its motivation is not the good of the people, the removal of poverty nor human dignity. Instead, inequalities, competition among the nations and societies, unemployment and starvation have increased.

The whole purpose of this globalisation and privatisation is to extract the maximum possible work from the individual worker at minimum possible cost. The worker can be hired and fired at any time. The worker is treated, not as a

human being, but as a commodity. Economically developed countries like the USA, the World Bank (WB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) rule over the developing countries.

◆ *Arundhati Roy*, author of *God of small things*, pointed out the imperialistic policies of the American ruling party and she compared Iraq to a black sheep of this imperialism of America. She also explained how the world market put down the poor countries through taxation. Bangladesh was taxed 22 times when it had to enter the world market. She invited everybody to turn against imperialism and neo-liberalism and to create “a new world” to combat these forces.

◆ *Shirin Ebadi* is the first female Iranian judge, lawyer of women and children’s rights who fought for the women in Islam. She was forced to resign her position as judge. She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize last year. She said, “This Forum is a symbol of inequality, injustice, violence and inhumanity. Extreme poverty is the violation of humanity. We have to struggle against the patriarchal culture that is against women. Islam must not be the instrument to destroy human rights.”

◆ *Mustafa Barghouti* explained about the Palestinian situation. “The world is complicated and confused by military power. It is so powerful that it controls 80% of the world. The poor people like the 3.6 million Palestinians are suffering because of militarism. The world cannot change on its own; it can change when all unite together. We have experienced 36 years of military occupation. Once Israel shut off a village in Palestine for 22 days. Sixty six pregnant women were suffering agony in front of the soldiers.” He said, “We are not against the Israelis; we are against militarism. We need the people of Israel. Israel and Palestine must live in peace. Israel has more nuclear power. It is supported by the USA. Palestine is poor without any great weapons but we have human power. We have people power.” His speech moved the hearts of the big crowd. Great support came from the audience.

◆ *Shabana Ammi* was a member of Parliament. She mentioned that “this fourth social forum is about non-violence. The country is manipulated to create injustice. The media

hides the reality. Over seventy two per cent of the population lives below the poverty line.”

The WSF of India focussed, not only on imperialist globalisation, but also on the issues of religious fundamentalism, privatisation, racism casteism, militarism and patriarchy. It was open for all sections of society to come together to discuss, share their struggles and plan a vision individually and collectively against the threat of neo-liberal capitalism.

The Youth Forum also conducted many camps on peace, security, overcoming violence, fascism, gender, media, culture, health and education, human rights and child rights.

The WSF shone with a variety of debates, street plays, seminars, panels, round tables, cultural events, film festivals, stalls and exhibitions with various topics, theme and views. All were about the one reality, human lives.

Every day, from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m., the NESCO ground was filled with different programmes. Five main halls were full with so many events. There was no place left empty. Everywhere people were full of enthusiasm and commitment, vision and views, conviction and confidence participating in most of the programmes. All facilities were provided for the people who came to the Forum. In every nook and corner there were assistants appointed to guide the people and to make them feel comfortable and happy.

In between the conferences there were rallies and protest marches going on. On 19 January, from 3 to 5 p.m. all the catholic religious priests, brothers and sisters, about 800 people, went on a rally around the NESCO ground in order to express their solidarity, support and encouragement to all the NGOs and movements, with slogans such as:

“Imperialism down down”,  
“IMF out of the South”,  
“We need a better world”,

Through this fourth WSF we are invited to become aware of our world situation and try to change the possible into reality, at least in our milieu. The WSF says to us all to bring the reality into our community, into our family to affirm the dignity of human beings and bring the scattered children of God into one Family - God’s Family.