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English

Italian

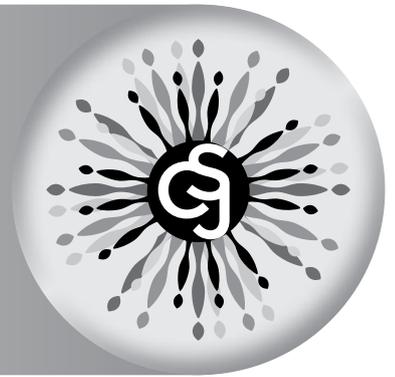
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GENERAL COUNCIL

Youth: Hope for the Future



Young women from the hostel in Majhapara, Orissa

S. Philomena Pazhurupambil
General Council

During the 2017 Extended Council in Oslo, one of the calls we heard was to work with youth, being a resource to help dropouts and drug addicts, and also to be with

them for evangelization, their spiritual development and understanding the impact of growing up in a digital society. This call was brought into focus for me during my recent visit to India. As I was visiting different areas where our sisters minister, I was looking for something new in their ministries: a new

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emphasis, a new approach. I became very aware of the fact that our sisters are very focused on youth animation, be it in our schools or in social projects. The students and teachers in our schools in the cities are more aware of the values of sharing their talents and time with the needy. Each big school in the city helps out a poor village school nearby. This has been going on for years, but more recently the weaker students from the village school are brought to the larger school in the city, given accommodation in the convents and special teachers are appointed to teach them or give them coaching on the more difficult subjects, Moving into the interior villages in Orissa, I saw many schools with fewer opportunities. I was highly impressed to visit one, a hostel in Majhapara, Orissa, where our sisters minister to 106 girls studying in 1st to 10th grade. Smart, intelligent and interested in learning, these children come from distant

villages. I saw sisters from an established school, like St. Joseph's School, Sambalpur, regularly going on a weekend to teach the hostel children in Majhapara. It is a new venture, the response to a need, which is making a difference in that particular hostel. Another area to which we are responding is that of school drop-outs. According to the latest survey, 47% of students drop out of school before completing their secondary education. As a result, they have very few opportunities and work for very low wages. They need an opportunity to improve their skill levels, and there are a growing number of programmes to address this need and our sisters in Bhopal and Ratlam have become involved. Sisters Sarita and Rani were trained and now collaborate with two other congregations working in Don Bosco Tech Society centres for skilling India. Since 1st January 2017, both S. Sarita and Rani are working as state

co-ordinators for Madhya Pradesh, a challenging and time-consuming task, requiring regular updating. They identify students and with the help of other trainers, provide various vocational training. They work together for optimum utilization of government funds to get the best outcome in terms of jobs, wages, improved quality of life and productivity.

These efforts are very important for India, which, unlike most of the developed world, is poised to be the youngest country on earth by 2020. With young people constituting nearly 40% of the total population in India, youth have a tremendous role to play in nation building.

Clearly, we need to build up our youth for the future by channeling resources that are available for them and being channels to guide such resources to the right person at the right time. This is one way of answering to the call of our time.

Building Community in an Intercultural World

S. Sally Hodgdon

General Council

Approximately 60 Superiors General, with representatives of UISG constellations from each continent, gathered in Manila, November 5-11. Hosting the meeting in Asia offered the possibility for more sisters from the Philippines, Korea, Vietnam, Japan and the Pacific islands to attend, for many of whom this was their first meeting. In her opening address, Sister Carmen Sammut, msola, President of UISG, quoted Brian Swimme, asking: "Did you think that the universe went through twenty billion years of work to create you if there was not a particular function



S. Sally at the UISG constellation assembly in Manila

that you – and you alone- could do?" She continued: "Yes, the earth, the world,

the people to whom we are sent, . . . , the Creator, all are expecting something of us

and we are the only ones who can make it happen.”

With this opening charge, we spent the following days discussing some critical issues for religious life today, including intercultural living. While multicultural living means simply co-existing side by side in the same community, intercultural living is more demanding. It requires respect for other cultures, which means allowing the different to be different. Interculturality also promotes healthy interaction among cultures, recognizing that there is no threat because of differences.

In Manila, several congregations have international communities for initial formation. Two sisters who coordinate such communities, offered their experiences of living with 6 or 7 different cultures. As expected, the isolation caused by a lack of a common language and the need to learn one, was a challenge mentioned by both.

Another issue we addressed was the

new guidelines from the Vatican to try to offer better protection for all children and vulnerable adults, an issue which is still critical for all congregations. The importance of communication skills was also discussed. As we collaborate more and more, the need to learn well how to use different forms of technology to communicate on a regular basis is critical. We were very fortunate to spend one day visiting some of the ministries sponsored by local congregations. Each ministry was focused on working with the very poor on the peripheries of society, meaning 80% of the 1.5 million people in metro Manila. We visited a day clinic which sees hundreds of children from the various neighborhoods each week. One sister and five lay women collaborators from the poor neighborhoods operate this clinic with the help of some doctors who come on different mornings each week for 3 hours.

One area that we were not able to

visit was the Payatas Landfill in Metro Manila, which is home to over 80,000 people. Some make a living scavenging the debris in the landfill and get paid about \$5.00 a day for what they find. In the neighborhood of this landfill more than 100 people have been killed by the police for alleged involvement with drugs as part of President Rodrigo Duterte's drug offender's policy. At times women and children have also been killed. Each Sunday a priest from the seminary goes there to offer Mass for the people. The people say that having the priest and some sisters with them, helps them to live in the spirit of the resurrection.

We need to pray that the Bishops in the Philippines will have the courage to join with the religious and laity in speaking publicly for the human rights of those being persecuted by the government. They and all of us must become a stronger voice for the voiceless victims of the President's violence.

PROVINCE/REGION/MISSION

Initiatives for Solidarity during Advent and the Christmas Season

S. Maria Cristina Gavazzi

Italy

The Italian province has arrived at the seventh edition of the Christmas campaign, “Panettone for Solidarity”, and all this is possible thanks to the active collaboration of all the communities in the Province, the families of Sisters and lay friends. The Christmas campaign, CSJ Missioni 2017, intends to finance scholarships for young women at the St. Joseph Hostel in Songea, Tanzania. The goal is to



Sisters in France preparing Panettones for local distribution

promote education as much as possible, by offering assistance at various levels and in different ways. It endorses the second Millennium Development Goal pursued by the United Nations, i.e., “to ensure universal primary education by guaranteeing elementary education to all boys and girls”. With the funds raised, the attendance of so many poor girls of the Mateka district will be assured in Songea, and their integral human formation can be sustained.

This solidarity initiative has been extended at the European level to other provinces (France, Denmark, and Norway) and the region of Ireland, which responded with great generosity, buying panettone or sending money to support scholarships for the young people of our hostel in Songea.

The invitation is to participate, because sharing can continue to provide futures that are different and better. The time to offer new opportunities is now, and it is up to each of us!

Not only that. The Italian province offers a further initiative, aimed this time at all the communities of the province. In response to the call of the 2015 General Chapter, the international JPIC Commission presents to the whole Congregation a few issues that touch the lives of people and the planet, among which emerges the plight of migrants and refugees. Migration is a worldwide phenomenon that continues to grow and touch all continents. Our charism calls us to build bridges between civilizations and cultures, between local people and migrants. Applying the wealth of our

spirituality, JPIC wants to give witness that unity is possible through hospitality, desiring to help people - Sisters and lay people - to grow in awareness capable of sustaining generous assistance to migrants and refugees, so that their lives become more humane.

For this reason, the Provincial Council together with CSIMissioni encourages all communities to become acquainted personally with some refugees or immigrants, coming directly in contact with them through organizations and associations that already deal with this phenomenon. All Italian communities, therefore, are invited to create an event during the Christmas season – a meeting, lunch, dinner - that will mark the beginning of a journey of discovery with refugees in its territory.

Rebuilding the Lives of Refugees and Immigrants

S. Irmã Maria Sizilio

Brazil

The Sisters of St. Joseph of Chambéry in São Paulo are seeking to respond to the needs of the times, helping to rebuild the lives of refugees/immigrants in Brazil through professional training courses. The “Rebuilding Life” project had its beginning in 2016, through the Saint Joseph Learning Center, one of the entities of the Association of the Sisters of St. Joseph in São Paulo. The goal of the project is accomplished through a network in which each organization does its work with the refugees through screening and accompanying women. These groups include Caritas of the Archdiocese of São Paulo, Peace Mission, and other organizations in the Church and society. Thus, women are prepared for the world of work. For its implementation, the project has partnerships with other



Refugees receiving certificates

organizations, including the Global Missionary Fund of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Chambéry. According to the National Commission for Refugees, Brazil has currently 8,863 official refugees, of 79 different nationalities (28.2% are women). The

refugees welcomed in the Saint Joseph Education Center, are from several countries: Cuba, Venezuela, Angola, Nigeria and Congo. Far from their country of origin, the process of becoming inserted into a completely different society is painful and

slow. The challenges in this new reality, added to the lack of appropriate public policies, lead to instability which hampers their resuming life in the receiving country. The sense of loss, uncertainty and vulnerability are a constant for these people and reflects their lack of belonging in their new location. However, returning to the country of origin is still a non-option.

The “Rebuilding Life” project aims to assist and promote the integration of women and men refugees, specifically in the eastern part of São Paulo. The project helps them develop professional qualifications in industrial sewing and patterns so they might generate income during this difficult time and see to the education of their children. A course in

sales offers the possibility of integration into the labor market and hairdressing courses may generate short-term income. In addition to professional preparation, experiences during the courses enable them to strengthen bonds of friendship and the family, all yet so fragile. In 2016 and 2017, 132 refugees were served, through courses in sales, in the fashion area, techniques in African hair dressing; and industrial sewing and manicure.

Eucharistic spirituality focuses on the meaning of food, hunger and thirst. Developing a learning process with our sister and brother refugees as a path of Eucharist is to put their hunger and thirst at the service of their growth in the process of building them up. The

Association promoting this project is run by the Sisters of St. Joseph and emphasizes an educational process through a supportive environment, transforming and stimulating talent, favoring circular relationships, the formation of ties of solidarity and sharing, and allowing for the participation of volunteers and other partners who embrace this cause.

The words of the Pope are a reinforcement for our mission as Sisters of St. Joseph in the certainty that our charism will help to implement the actions that he proposes insistently: “I reiterate the need to promote the culture of encounter in all possible ways and share these verbs: welcome, protect, promote and integrate”.

Halloween: the Eve of All Saints

Eleonora Perna

Italy

Halloween isn't a party made up of pumpkins and candy, nor is it a ghoulish evening of escapism or the latest commercial gimmick. Halloween is the feast of All Saints, the night in which Christians are called to reflect on the most profound vocation of humanity: holiness. For several years, the Diocese of Acerra, Province of Naples, Italy, celebrates this particular evening as planned by the Office of Youth Ministry. On October 31, a large procession of children and older believers traversed the streets of the old town of Acerra all the way to the cathedral. The reflection on holiness had, as points of reference, the figures of Santa Giovanna Beretta Molla, Don Peppe Diana, a priest who was a victim of organized crime, and Pier Giorgio Frassati, a youth of Catholic Action who manifested his faith by serving the poor. However, the central moment of the evening was the adoration of the



Procession through the streets of Acerra (NA)

Eucharist. With songs, prayers and silence, the faithful expressed a desire to “be holy as God is holy”. A sign of this resolve was the water of the baptismal font with which priests blessed all who took part in the celebration. The real “magic” that makes this night of the Saints special

is the awareness of being loved by God as we are, because, “Holiness is not something that we gain with our qualities and our abilities. Holiness is a gift; it is the gift the Lord Jesus gives us when he takes us to himself, making us like him.” (Pope Francis).

An Intercultural Experience

Sisters Asha Prava Kujur, Preeti Kujur and Rani Utukuri

India

Twenty-five younger members from 11 congregations of St. Joseph and 12 countries gathered at the International Center in Le Puy from 09 to 19 September 2017 for a 'Cultural Diversity and Conflict Management' programme. We were three Indians from the Chambéry congregation: Sisters Rani Utukuri (Tanmaya Province), Preeti Kujur (Nagpur Province) and Asha Kujur (Pachmarhi Province), who joined this group gathered by the programme's mission statement: "Immersed in the Charism of the Sisters of St. Joseph and relying on the power of the spirit, we are committed to live unity in diversity." We learned that every Sister of St. Joseph has an inter-congregational culture, a congregational culture, an international culture and a local culture. It is important to know and experience these cultures whenever possible, because culture gives us an identity. The

way we carry ourselves in society and who we are as human beings, is highly influenced by the culture we belong to. "To take pride in the culture you belong to and to respect its teachings, you must first know it. It is important to know the past that has shaped your present and is going to influence your future." Often, Sisters of St. Joseph are living in communities that are intercultural. Along with the richness of this living together, come the conflicts that cannot be avoided. Living with conflicts can be stressful. "Conflict starts when our needs, desires, values and ideas clash with the needs, desires and values of others." The sessions that were conducted for the participants empowered them to live better in community and the world at large where the many possibilities are coupled with conflicts and chaos. The program introduced the participants to diverse ways of living in intercultural communities. As participants we also got an opportunity to see and experience the birthplace of the congregation in Le Puy. We also walked the path walked by

our founder Fr. John Peter Medaille, the foundresses and the early sisters and we felt their spirit alive in these places. Among the places we visited are: the tombs of Mother Felicité in Chambéry, Mother Marcoux at La Bauche, and Mother St. John Fontbonne in Lyon. We also spent time in the first kitchen in Le Puy and the churches where our founder, Fr. Medaille, prayed and celebrated the Eucharist. Our visit to the archives in Le Puy was a historic experience for all of us, as it showed how the "Little Design" of Fr. Medaille has grown into a huge tree and expanded across continents. After the programme, we had the great experience of meeting the sisters from various communities of the French province. We were touched by the hospitality of the sisters at Bois Joli, Jacob Bellecombette and St. Jean de Maurienne. Being in these places and also seeing the sisters and novices who are there from India was very encouraging because the charism of the congregation continues to be present in France, the place of origin of our congregation.



The group gathered outside the International Center in Le Puy

Festival of Nations (Kulturafton)

Sisters Beatriz Costa and Lila Bork
Sweden

We are in autumn with its short days, wind, rain mixed with snow and cold, a favorable time to stay indoors. That's why Caritas St. Olof offers activities that take place indoors. And that is how the traditional "Festival of Nations" (Kulturafton) took place on October 13. After 2 months of preparation, it can be said that it was a very happy day despite the provisional and uncomfortable location.

Fifteen nationalities, among the 30 present at the gathering, presented something of their country and culture with a lot of feeling and longing. Many of those who made presentations or were present are refugees who have not yet received permission to stay, and some of whom live clandestinely. We began with Sweden, whose participants wore typical national costumes.

A young girl from the Philippines, newly arrived in Sweden, began the presentation by inviting the entire audience to stand and then sang with great feeling, the "Our Father" in English. It was exciting to see all (Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, agnostics) listening and perhaps praying the prayer of Christians. A young teenager from Hungary, who lives here with his family, sang in his native language, nostalgically recalling



the nature and beauty of his Hungary. Denmark was also represented through a song referring to the first plants that grow in the spring in Scandinavian countries. From Spain came a beautiful national costume display, represented by a child accompanied by her mother. There was no lack of representation from Asia: a group from the Philippines danced with much grace in clothes of multiple colors and with beautiful smiles. They were followed by a group from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Syria dancing in the round to quiet and relaxing music. Then came Africa: (Burundi, Congo, Eritrea, and Ethiopia). Children and adults came together to sing, gesturing and dancing gracefully. Color, joy and harmony abounded.

Latin America also was represented with a variety of dances: Mexico, Costa Rica, Chile, Colombia, with their wonderful costumes and traditional music from each of these countries. We ended with a festive and tasty meal prepared and served by members of Caritas St. Olof. Coming home, and doing a quick survey, it was hard to hold back tears thinking about the tragic story of most of those present, living this event in peace, joy and harmony, happy to show something positive from their countries at war or oppressed for so many other reasons. And in prayer tonight we offer to God our efforts in "living the dynamism of reconciliation and unity in the peripheries of our fragmented world".

NEW
SAINTS

S. Luisa Maria Feronato (94)	Brazil	10.11.2017
S. Maria José do Nascimento (94)	Brazil	09.12.2017
S. Oneida Maria Ragnini Belusso (75)	Brazil	09.12.2017
S. Agatha Vadakanchery (90)	Nirmala	11.12.2017

Growing in the Unity Desired by Christ

S. Claire Combarel

France

For more than 27 years, we have lived in la Coterelle, a housing association, in Le Tour du Pin, 50 kilometers from Chambéry. During these years, there have been a lot of changes. Pluralis, the managing organization, had to accept the arrival of many foreigners among the tenants. Together, we have adapted to their customs, languages and religions, which has required patience and good will. With representatives of the Confederation of the Trade Union of Families, we have tried to build bridges, by means of sharing and meetings, not to mention celebrating the holidays of our neighbors. Everything was going well. However, in recent years, I found myself as the only delegate, since there have been a lot of departures and arrivals and changes to la Coterelle; chiefly, a massive influx of families with young children. These invaded the premises, and the elderly people, many of whom were accustomed to a certain peace, became upset and conflicts broke out. Tensions grew and at the end of June, friends approached me about a petition against the families! It was out of the question for me to create conflict between tenants and nationalities! This request for a petition shook me. Moreover, the caretaker of the building, very effective and esteemed, had resigned. So I asked Pluralis to attend a planned meeting with a few families, known for the problems they created.



This meeting took place in early July with a small group: two Moroccan families, a Turkish one, the manager, the custodian and me. The meeting was very well conducted. Families, initially very reluctant, or even aggressive, entered the discussion, and especially one father in particular, who even offered to participate with me in all possible actions with the families and Pluralis. What a surprise and what a joy for me! Pluralis agreed to install benches and playscapes for little children in one area. This project will be presented to the families concerned.

My August holidays allowed me some breathing space, and upon my return, I found a lot of tension and anger, because the weather was hot, and children shouted and played under the windows. I summoned my courage, and with a few neighbors, we prepared a petition and began going door to door. I am in awe of how many gave us a friendly and positive reception. One child explained it to his mom and wrote her name; another mother called her husband for an

explanation and to have permission to sign; others thanked us for the service.

The tenant who had offered me his services returned from Morocco and said he was ready to work. We brought the completed petitions to Pluralis which received them with interest and promised to summon us and the parents concerned, to respond to the project. In addition, Omar, an Algerian father of two small children, also offered to join the Confederation of the Trade Union of Families, which works to ensure that all families have access to their rights. I give thanks to the Lord for these gifts, which I did not expect. I followed the Enlarged Council of the Congregation with interest every day, and I was captivated by the theme, "Daring the mystery of the encounter: a compassionate journey". It helped me see my neighbors, "to share my own vulnerability and to take the hand of the other and move forward together", to where we are called. We continue this journey of faith, trust and love.

A Dream Fulfilled

S. Adelaide Canci

Brazil

The Nossa Senhora da Oliveira Hospital is administered by the Sisters of St. Joseph and serves the people in the city of Vacaria and the region, giving special attention to those most in need. Some time ago, we dreamed of expanding this service to the poor, and this was only possible with the help of the government, implementing a SUS wing (Sistema Único de Saúde, the government health plan). In this way, we continue the tradition of care for life that began more than 80 years ago.

In 1903, the Sisters of St. Joseph arrived in Vacaria to take on the mission of educating girls and women through family education. In 1935, the Sisters, assuming the mission of taking care of the life and health of the people of this region, opened a hospital, which was an aspiration across the region.

Vacaria is located in the mountainous region of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, a very cold and poor region, with 64,000 inhabitants. Their income is derived from the cultivation of apples, small fruit, and livestock farming. During the apple harvest, more than 20,000 workers come from other states, in search of employment. Many of these workers end up living in the city, thereby increasing poverty.

The hospital has always had the desire to give good service to the poor. However, the SUS, that is the government health plan, pays very little, and health care is precarious throughout the country.

The hospital is regional and is responsible for attending to more than 110,000 people in the nine municipalities in the region. The conditions of the hospital were very



From left to right, Sr. Adelaide, fourth, with other Sisters, doctors of the Hospital and government representatives



SUS hospital wing

poor. The Sisters had a great concern for service to the poor. In order to get resources to renovate the SUS wing, we saw the possibility of working with the community to bring to reality a popular referendum, (people decide by vote where to invest money the Government intends for this purpose). For three years, we managed to have the earnings from consultations be destined for the renovation of the SUS wing, a value of R\$1,110,000.00, but this was not enough. Working with the City Council and demonstrating the need for a more humane environment, an additional R\$500,000.00 was designated for this effort, and the Hospital also contributed R\$400,000.00 for the completion of the

renovation.

Today, we have a completely renovated SUS, with toilets in all the rooms, central heating, beds, and all new furniture. A parliamentarian sponsored an amendment for the purchase of beds, and the community is contributing to the purchase of linens and other materials that are missing.

Today the SUS wing of the Hospital Nossa Senhora da Oliveira is the best in the state. We are sure that with true partnerships, we can make our mission more humane and give the poor the service they deserve. We have worked with the wealthy to have resources to serve the poor. And so, our dream is being realized.

Ministry Continues through Many Changes

S. Emmanuelle Brüggemann

Denmark

Some years ago, we sisters of the Danish Province began to reflect on our future. We considered the mother house, built in 1904, our home, from which the sisters were missioned to their diverse ministries. But over the years, the building had become too big. We tried to find ways to use the space not needed by us. We decided to rent some of the rooms to female students, and for several years, we had 14 women living with us, with their own kitchen space. Some of the larger rooms were rented by the School for Pedagogy, which was situated right beside our building and needed more space for teaching.

A major issue was the infirmary, which was not up to date. Our staff faced increasing difficulties as our sisters grew older and needed more and more help.

The province leadership contacted the municipality of Copenhagen, who were interested in our mother house. They wanted to build a new nursing home for the older citizens of Copenhagen whose numbers are growing. Finally the formalities were completed and the mother house was sold.

The plan was that the infirmary, where the sisters had been, would be demolished and a new nursing home be built, with the main houses redone for senior living. The sisters would move to a nursing home in town, and return to the property when the new nursing home was completed. The other sisters would move to apartments close to the nursing home in town, while waiting to go into the senior living section.



Sisters and associates gathered for Mass

For us, we faced the important questions of: What about us as a community? Where could we continue to live our religious life? We were blessed in that the municipality began to understand that, as community, we wanted to live together as far as possible. And now that the sisters are in their new home, the nursing home in the town, 14 sisters are living in the same wing, on 3 floors. The last Provincial Assembly held at our Motherhouse, was on the day before the first sisters moved. We were blessed by the presence of S. Sally, our General Superior, who came to support us. During that Provincial Assembly we had a celebration, where each sister received a special blessing and was sent forth to her new mission. At that time, I thought to myself: to what are we missioned? Given how old we are, what mission can we fulfil? Since then I discovered that I was wrong. Now, we are living together, side by side, with other citizens, who are also living in the nursing home. We have many contacts. Often, they have

questions about faith, religious life or other topics. We can explain and answer their questions.

Of course, we are missing our wonderful chapel and the privacy it offered for our prayers. We also miss our staff, who were there on the spot, for only a few sisters. We have given up many things, but we feel very strongly that the Lord is accompanying us. Now we are in a public home, but everything is great. We couldn't dream of having much more.

We are lucky to have daily Eucharistic celebrations, except on Sundays, though we gather in the living room. Here, we feel our poverty, but are reminded that Jesus himself was born in a stable. And as often as possible, we gather for prayer and meditation. We are very grateful for the possibilities we have to live our religious life in a new way. We feel God's blessings in many ways. And if God wills, we will move back to our mother house and a new nursing home, where all our sisters can be together. And then we will continue our mission there.

The Community of Pisa: Open to the Interreligious Dimension

Maria Giovanna Titone
Italy

The community of Pisa is small, consisting of only three Sisters and a young woman in formation. For years now it has managed the St. Joseph Residence Hall located in the city center, close to the main faculty of the University of Pisa. Each year the residence welcomes young women from all regions of Italy, who choose the University of Pisa for their undergraduate and postgraduate education. The Sisters strive to live alongside these young women with discretion and cordiality, pledging to be a reference point for those who want to be accompanied during this part of their lives. And, understanding this, the community offers the students possibilities for getting to know themselves and opportunities for interaction among them and with other young students, in collaboration with the

local church.

Some years ago, among the young women, there was a young Albanian Muslim, a student of the Faculty of Engineering, with whom the community lived a relationship of simplicity and mutual availability. This year, St. Joseph Residence Hall opened its doors to receive temporarily a young woman from Togo, arriving in Pisa to complete her studies in economics and hoping to return to her country to help women become responsible for their own destiny and dignity, and two young women from Algeria doing research in a laboratory at the Faculty of Agriculture. The two young women are Muslim and wear the veil. Between them and the Sisters, there is a mutual caring and harmony, which has led to simple moments, sharing experiences. Sister Rossella Passalacqua, who is the Director of St. Joseph's Residence Hall, recognizes that, "this is really an opportunity for our community to live in a way that is both simple and active,

an intercultural and interreligious experience. The young women who choose our residence are a gift which allows us to experience, in daily life, the joy and hard work of becoming more open towards each other, which, in diversity, is a treasure that enriches us. It is a good opportunity for us to not stop learning and growing in authentic relationships among ourselves and with others, always respecting and accepting our differences. This is all the more true now that the community of Pisa is called to be a formation community for the novitiate!"

This new experience of the intercultural and the interreligious in which the community is involved in a simple way, reminds all of us that, beyond rhetorical speeches, peaceful coexistence among different cultures and religions starts from the base, weaving simple, ordinary relationships which contribute to create spaces of hope in our world torn apart by intolerance and indifference.



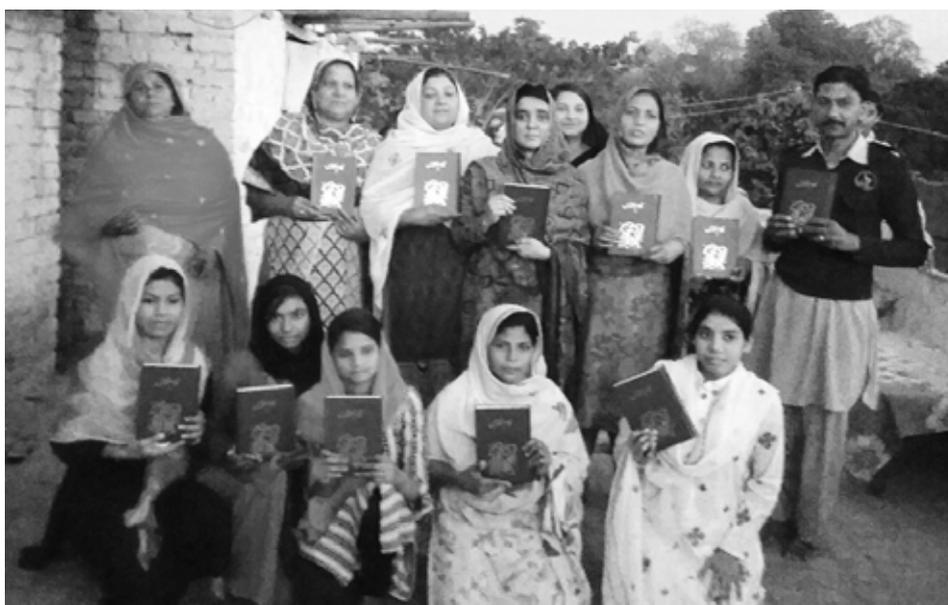
The women students with three Sisters: Sisters Lorenza (standing, 3rd from right) Rosella (seated, center), Alessandra (first row, right)

Planting Seeds of Faith

S. Saiqa Anwar

Pakistan

For the past three years the region of Pakistan has had a community in our own house in Lahore, in an area where nine other religious communities are living. As part of the Cathedral Parish, we participate actively in the Parish and serve the local community. The diocese has assigned to each religious community a geographic area for which they are responsible. Ours encompasses the Lahore Zoo and those whose work is caring for the animals. There are twelve Catholic families in that area and all are very poor because their salaries are very low. In the disturbing and corrupt society of Pakistan we, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Chambéry, have emerged as a sign of peace, love, unity and reconciliation for the people we are serving. As we see to the present needs and look toward the future, our focus is to strengthen the divided families we serve. The area entrusted to us by the diocese has families living far from the church and weak in their faith and education. In the beginning, people in this area were not cooperative and it was difficult to bring them together. They were divided and experienced no unity. Gradually they have come closer to the sisters. We focus mainly on the women and girls, stimulating them to know God and God's presence in their day to day life through scripture. We have begun



A member of each family with the Bible they have received

a youth group, called "CSJ Youth" and we share our CSJ spirituality with them. This group is a strength for the area and for one another. By sharing our charism, scripture and prayer with the families we have helped some to see how they can be more for others. One of the uneducated girls wanted to read the Bible. Finally, she went to school and with the help of a friend succeeded in doing so. Her success was celebrated by the people, the Catechist, the Sisters and the Parish Priest. At different times of the year we organize seminars and social awareness programs, and celebrations of International and National days. In preparation for Christmas we organized some Christmas programs, including



The Parish Priest, Rev. Father Jehanzeb, teaching a group of girls

tableaux as a means of faith formation. Through religious education classes we prepare them for the sacraments of Holy Communion and Confirmation. Since they do not have catholic Bibles in their homes we have given each family the gift of a Bible. In this and other ways we have planted the seed of faith in their lives. And we are helping them to care for the seed and, hopefully, bear much fruit for themselves and others.

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