

# SOCIETY OF THE SACRED HEART PROVINCE OF INDIA NEWSLETTER



December 2018

## ***NEWS FROM THE SANTA CRUZ (PROVINCIAL HOUSE) COMMUNITY***

### **Making Things New**

At the time of the budget Malvan and Harigaon communities showed great concern about the repairs and maintenance of their houses. I decided to visit their communities, as we had not done major repairs of both the houses for a long time.

In the beginning of June, Sr.Rita and I visited the Malvan community to see what had to be done. We called a civil engineer and asked him to inspect the structure of the house. We realized that repairs and maintenance of walls, toilets, carpentry work, kitchen platform, painting etc. needed to be done. I met the civil engineer, carpenter etc. and the details of work were discussed and finalized with them. I had to visit a second time to inspect the work of the painter who had quoted half the rate of the previous quotation from another painter. It almost took two and a half months to complete the work.



As we were doing the Malvan repairs, we also decided to do the maintenance work of the Harigaon house. I had to visit Harigaon for consulting an architect for structural inspection. We had to re-do the plastering of the inside and outside walls and toilets of the house as per architect's advice. We called a contractor and discussed with him all the work and asked him to give us quotation. We also had to redo the false ceiling of the community rooms as the condition was bad. After the repairs, we realized that we needed to do the painting and the kitchen platform. We contacted an agency and the house was painted. Now everything is done, only the kitchen trolleys need to be fixed. With the help of Sr. Jyoti we could complete the Harigaon work on time. I hope the houses are strengthened and looking good.



This was possible because of the help of our sisters in these communities and the finance office. I was happy that these repairs were completed on time before our Central Team's visit.

In the spirit of Advent we hope that each one of us renews her attitude and responsibility towards caring for the properties of the Society.

*Jokina D'Mello rscj*

### **Pastoral Work**

I continued my pastoral visits in zones 11 and 13 of Sacred Heart Parish, Santa Cruz. This comprises poor and higher middle classes, i.e. people living in slums and flats. I have found it easy to contact the slum people where houses are always open, whereas in the flat system one finds it difficult to approach and also not easy to find the places as they are spread over in different avenues. In the beginning I accompanied Sr. Marie to her zone, number 12, as she was new. Most of my visits were for SCC (Small Christian Communities) meetings, to the elderly and homebound. There were funerals and condolence visits too. I have a variety of experiences of my pastoral work. One in particular I would like to mention here is that of Mr. Willie Correa's family in my zone number 11. It's an experience of how this family as a whole body has crossed the frontiers to be human with their homebound maid-servant. Miss Angela, aged 85, sacrificed her whole life for the Correa family from the age of 9. Most of the Correa family whom she served has gone to God except Mr. Willie Correa and his children who are settled in Australia. Though in Australia, their hearts are with their maid-servant Angela who is in India. They not only connect with her on phone, but send their father Willie every now and then to India to take care of Angela who is unable to walk. Willie is 82 years old and looks after Angela with a maid who attends to Angela's needs. Angela has served this family for 76 years like a loving mother. Now the Correa family is caring for her lovingly. She is being looked after like a princess during the last few years. They are very grateful to her for her love and don't want to leave her alone in the house in her last days. I am inspired by the depth of their true loving family spirit – one Body – Living true humanity crossing the boundaries of inequality!!

*Irene D'Souza rscj*

### **My reflections on my ministry**

And who are you at our door?

During the visit of the Central Team to our community, Sr. Barbara said to me at one point, "So you don't have a designation," a sentence that comes to mind as I begin to share on my ministry here in the Santa Cruz community. I wonder ... 'What am I doing here?' Of the many answers that I could give, I want to explore just one here.... my involvement in the pastoral ministry ... who I am, what am I doing? As I go up and down lanes, sometimes with Sr. Irene or with a sister from the next door convent who wears a habit, sometimes alone, as I walk up stairs and ride down lifts, visiting and

getting to know parishioners of this SCC, I have to begin by identifying myself, sometimes on an intercom and the simplest thing to say – “A sister from the Sacred Heart Parish,” no convent or school or name of a congregation would help to explain who I am in this situation. And this experience has set me thinking. ‘*Who am I?*’ What is my identity as a person, as a religious, in this parish, that will explain why I am at their door?

The Sacred Heart parish is a very active and involved parish. Name any Church organization and they have it: Legion of Mary, St. Vincent de Paul, Prayer Group, Prison Ministry, Senior Citizens group, Couples for Christ, the Parish Council, with its Core Group and Steering Committee, the Youth group, the well-attended Sunday school, with a majority of lay teachers, the Confirmation Youth and the twenty plus SCCs, are all active in many ways. Each group of seasoned adults, has a well-organized schedule that it follows weekly, monthly or according to the season.... regular meetings, two hours of Legion work, weekly prison visiting with much preparation – collection of toiletries and other articles or arranging of health and other check-ups for the prisoners, the CFC arranging for accompaniments of younger married couples and conducting weekly session for young kids and their parents, lectors and cantors regularly present for their role in the liturgy, and so it goes on; and what is very impressive is the amount of spiritual accompaniment that is taken care of in each group and in different way – prayer, reflection days of recollection and animation that accompanies the members of the groups. The Parish Council, where I represent our rscj community, had a whole day of input, prayer and reflection as we began the year. In all this, Sisters are on the fringes, just three in the Sunday School, help in the Sacristy and the Liturgy or as spiritual directors of the SCCs mainly involved in visiting people.

More than ever in this situation, different from Haregaon and Prerana, my last pastoral involvements, I am beginning to experience a Church where the Laity is at the Centre, their rightful place, after the dramatic changes of Vatican 2 and, I, as a religious, am in search of a meaning, a place and an identity. It is indeed a right about turn or even a reversal of the earlier situation in the Church. Today it is a Church of many and different charisms, in which consecrated life is one charism, not the main one, in relationship with and complimenting the others, where the Laity, the majority of Jesus’ followers, are at the Centre, living what is understood as the ‘normal’ way of Christian life. Theirs is the call to “build the future world and answer the call of the Kingdom by marrying and raising families, by their work, by engaging in socio-political activities, by involvement in the arts, culture etc. Theirs is to generate life and make history....” But Jesus spoke of another alternative that “not all men will or can receive,” that will involve a great deal of renunciation. It is the Holy Spirit who inspires “the extreme prophetic options of Christian celibacy, radical poverty and committed obedience, which manifest and intensify the transcendent and eschatological dynamism of creation and rectifies the world’s tendency to close in on itself and halt the progress towards the future that God has planned for it.”

I experienced something of this new perspective that points out to me a new style of religious life. When I came here to this community in June, I tried to involve myself in the Small Christian Community that we here are part of. It happened to be a Community that had just lost its very active, dynamic Coordinator (leader of the Community). She had been helped by a number of very active, seasoned animators. These latter when approached were not ready to take on the responsibility, as they had spent many years in the service, and now had problems of age or health. I almost lost hope as I went round, and even the parish priest said when I asked for help, “You have all the expertise,” referring I suppose to our Malavni community.. A ray of hope dawned when a young man became ready to take on the role of Coordinator. He is very new to the role and would need the help of animators? “It’s not your responsibility”, Sr. Irene said. But I felt responsible because I was attending the Parish Council meeting and the information given there had to be shared with the group. It seemed a hopeless task till a fairly young women who, despite being a working mother, said, “I feel I need to begin to give some time to the Church,” the desire was there, waiting for the touch of the Spirit and she was immediately available to visit and pray with a blind elder in our community. At that moment as life passed between us, religious and lay person, and I experienced this as a ministry, where we religious and lay, relate to and complement each other. And this is how it will continue to be for me. In this great drama of a new vision of Church, we religious will be “**bearers** of life and

dynamism and **recipients** of influences which are necessary and contribute to the growth and survival our religious life”.

To conclude I give a last extract which like those above are from “Religious and Laity,” an article in *Review for Religious* by Jose Cristo Paredes, which has been inspiring and challenging me in my search in this ministry:

“Religious should ensure that in their relations with lay people they are neither demanding nor defensive. We should remember that religious life does not exist for itself, for its glorification or to leave its imprint in permanent institutions. Religious life can be defined as the charismatic art of dying, of dying for others in order to give life. Orders and congregations are not founded to exalt the names of their founders or to perpetuate their historical identity.

To abide by these criteria would have important practical consequences indicated in the following questions.

Will we be able to change the way we work, to make it more ecclesial, by opening our doors to laity and allowing them to become authentic partners with us in mission?

Will we have the courage to free the charisms of lay people and to offer them alternate fields of action?

Are we prepared to sacrifice greater efficiency for more witness?

Are we prepared to pull down the barriers which still stand between us and the lay people, in order to share with them the same ecclesial life, the same Christian discipleship?

Are we religious ready to share in the charismatic ideals and initiatives emanating from lay people?”

*Marie Noronha rscj*

### **Being a Teacher and a Learner**

These last six months in Sophie Nursery have been a time of much learning. I’ve learnt to be gentle and kind with the children, to love and respect every child irrespective of religion or class, to teach them values as we pray together before snack time and even learn to share with each other, to speak politely with parents and patiently answer their question. I take time to help children with difficulties in their learning, like helping a boy who was silent and would not speak up and speak correctly. With the various activities available in the school, I have learnt to change the class activity from time to time as the children’s attention span is very short.

Sr. Charlotte, the principal of the school, guides, helps and supports me, and the Staff, especially Megha and Bharti in whose class I help, have always encouraged me and given time for suggestions in planning my lessons. All the teachers on the Staff are friendly and I experience them as one big family, “almost one body.” Celebrations we have had have also brought us closer, as while waiting we have time to share with each other. We celebrated Teachers’ Day with a party and we have just had our Christmas Party. On a field trip we had I was happy to see many things. Teaching in Sophia Nursery has been an enriching experience for me.

Besides teaching in Sophia Nursery School, I am also attending a part-time course in Early Childhood Education at the Dadar centre of the National Academy. I attend the afternoon classes there, three times a week. I did my internship at Sophia Nursery itself and will have to make the final submission of my Lesson Plans and a vast assortment of teaching aids in January. The examinations will be in March.

*Shalini Sajan rscj*