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>>> NEWSLETTER <<<
SOCIETY OF THE SACRED
HEART
PROVINCE OF INDIA



NEWS FROM THE COLLEGE
COMMUNITY

**FAMILY FOUNDATIONS UNSHAKEN IN SPITE OF DIVERSE RELIGIONS/
CULTURES**

I was born to parents who were fervent Catholics, with tremendous reverence for the Church's teachings; they encouraged their children to be faithful to Mass on Sundays and Feast days, recite the Rosary daily, and participate in common devotions. As family what gave us the resilience and inner strength to face the challenges we would experience in the future as different members of the family chose diverse religious beliefs but maintained strong family bonds, was the family

Spirituality which was strong and focused more on being good human beings than following rules. Both parents taught us to respect our helpers, reach out to the less fortunate and respect each other no matter what paths we chose to follow.

As children we shared our dreams at meals, and often discussed the priest's sermons. My brother Gerry, who later embraced Islam, was the most vocal of all and a great admirer of the Jesuits Fathers. Later I discovered that he was part of the Interfaith Dialogue in Ashirvad in Bangalore and a close friend of the then Provincial of the Holy Cross Fathers. He took me to meet the Imam who wanted to assure me that there was nothing to fear as we (Christians) were the New Testament and they (Muslims) the Old Testament! My father expired at an early age of 48 years leaving my mother to provide for 7 children.

In 1970 when I decided to join Religious life (at that time my brother Carlton and I were the only earning members in the family), my mother took up a job as the Receptionist in Sophia High School. Having the Sisters, especially Sr. Bertha Wilcox, as a support system helped her face the future challenges.

After my brother Gerry became a Muslim, my brother Allen chose to be a 'Born Again' Christian. Rebecca, my sister, is a diehard Catholic Charismatic wedded to the Pota Church, and I as a young nun was introduced to Hinduism by Vandana Mataji. However, my family was not amused when I started putting 'Om' on every letter!

What added colour to the 'Family Collage' was that my father's mother was British, and his father was from Mangalore, my mother's father was a Goan and her mother was French. My father's elder sister married a British Soldier; another sister married a Hindu Marwadi; his youngest brother's daughter married a Sikh; and his older brother married a Chinese! With such a mixture in the family there is no room for prejudice or biases, but only for love.

With this spirit of openness I as an RSCJ could take to my Ministry in the Sophia Nursery School this same positive attitude to safeguard the dignity of everyone regardless of Religion or Culture.

Charlotte Bastion rscj

LIFE GIVING MOMENTS WITH EX -STUDENTS

Although I retired from Sophia Junior College around 25 years ago, many of my former students still keep in touch with me.

It is a great joy for me to share my experiences with our ex-students. A number of them come personally to visit me, contact me by phone or WhatsApp and share their valuable and interesting experiences. Distance is not a barrier, and their sharing goes beyond themselves, at times even to their grand children. As a result of these interactions my horizons widen to the whole world. A number of the ex-students have formed groups and they share their lives among themselves and communicate their sharings with me. These are so enriching because they make one beyond oneself by getting to know about a variety of interesting things. Lately, an ex-student shared her joy of God's gift of a grandchild. She was so eager to share her joy that she did so and sent me the grand child's



photograph even before the child was named. These sharings give me much joy and they lift my spirits.

Teresa Pereira rscj

A RICH NEW EXPERIENCE

Pilgrims and Prophets of Paschal Hope was the theme of the Provincial Chapter (PC) of the Sisters of the Cross of Chavanod (SCC). I was invited to be the Observer at the PC. 36 delegates of the SCC Pune Province, with 4 Ex-officio members, the Facilitator and I, together with 2 secretaries, assembled at Ishvani Kendra in Pune from 28th April to 6th May 2024. The PC was pre-poned because of elections in Goa on 7th May. Despite my refusal, the Superior of the SCC, Marine Lines community, picked me up in a cab and put me in the *Vande Bharat* train at CSMT, Mumbai, and then again at Pune. I felt embarrassed, as this chauffeuring and travel by *Vande Bharat* was a new experience for me – it was like a plane flight with bottled water, newspapers, food et al! I usually travel like the poor of Yahweh, but I enjoyed the comfort and luxury provided with much love.



Bishop John Rodrigues of Pune, blessed the delegates, and an exquisite newly carved wooden SCC Cross, amidst a very inspiring liturgy, and an aptly decorated altar with an oil jar, flour, water pot, grapes and models of a heart, brain and ears. Bishop John delivered an appropriate, well-prepared homily on the



theme of the PC and the Chapter Emblem, the art work of a combination of many sisters.

Pilgrims in groups, each carrying a hand-crafted and emblemed *Zholi* bag, containing a signature cap, food and drink for the journey, entered the AC Hall, artistically and functionally set up with an array of gifts for each delegate, and sat around round tables with placards with the name of the group, and live potted plants to welcome them. The Facilitator, Bro. Philip Pinto CFC, of the Oceania Province, and Mudita RSCJ, the Observer, were each welcomed with a shawl and potted plants after which the Provincial, Sr Bromadine Palokaran, opened the 6th PC.

Very democratically and objectively, the oldest and youngest delegates conducted the elections for the two scrutators (a new word for me). The elected scrutators then conducted the elections for the Secretary and the Assistant Secretary. Logistics over, the PC began with a moderator for each of the 7 days.

Highlighting the purpose of a Chapter as a time of evaluation, discernment, setting directions for the future, listening to the wisdom of all, caring for each delegate, the mission, the resources and the Earth, Bro. Philip reiterated the four attitudes for a Chapter namely, being present, participating, telling the truth and letting go. Trusting the wisdom of the Chapter was vital. *Repent and believe* called all to let go of their current image of God. God has evolved because humanity has evolved. The very honest and clear six-year Provincial Report, then

unravelling the tapestry of the Province with its ups and downs.



Day 2 began at 8.45 a.m. with the reading of the minutes of the previous day, rectifying, resolving, proposing and passing of the minutes and clarifying the role of the Steering Committee. Each morning the Observer spoke for five minutes. The Provincial Treasurer then read out the Financial Report – giving the flow of the financial currents with transparency and accountability. Not lavish, but adequate, was the gist of the day; our attitude to money and possessions determines who we are as persons. No good comes out of comforts. Good comes out of chaos or crisis. The Orientations of Chapter 2019 were looked at and followed by an activity, in which the delegates chose to be in one of the three groups, i.e. Church, Indian Situation and Religious Life. They then had to list the major issues and problems of the same, depicting it in an image. Each day ended with time for integration and sharing in each group.

Day 3 saw the three groups sharing with all in the PC their image together with their insights and reflections. Having sensed the major issues in the Church, the Indian situation and Religious Life, the delegates were asked to come up with five major issues of the Province and in the Congregation (all reports were given to the delegates in advance), and then to put up six issues on a chart. These were collated and put under five headings, i.e., Spirituality, Leadership, Community, Mission and Ministry, Formation and Vocation Promotion. The delegates then had to choose one or more key questions for each of the five big issues and write one question on each page. Delegates then chose one of the five areas, where they experienced their energy leading them to, and where they had something to offer.

Day 4 – Delegates deliberated on the 5 major issues of the Province. Six Lay Associates (LA) joined the PC in the afternoon. They were welcomed with shawls and potted plants. They then shared their experiences. I was delighted to learn that Mrs. Lata Amolik studied in our school at Haregaon under Sr. Gertie Alphonso. They then joined the table of their choice. The SCC began this LA 23 years ago, and now have 7 units. The day ended with the delegates being asked to put their findings under a definite Format, i.e., 1. Context (Biblical); 2. Current Reality; 3. What is Missing?; 4. What needs to be Changed?; 5. Recommendations.

Day 5 – The whole day was spent looking at the 5 major issues of the Province in the given format. Bro. Philip made a few interventions at the group tables. He focused on the fact that formation is about becoming WHOLE and not HOLY. In the evening, *Postulates* i.e. recommendations for the General Chapter, were read out by the Provincial, discussed and voted for or against. This was new for me. The day ended with, “*Name something new that is struggling to be born in you, if you but, let it and Dare to be human creaturës*”



Day 6 began with a *Ritual of Reconciliation* using three stories from scripture: 1. The Gerasene Demoniac; 2. The Woman with the issue of Blood; 3. The woman who was a victim of men – exploited and condemned by them. Delegates were asked to identify with a story of their choice. After prayer and reflection, delegates were

asked to choose a partner and share their pain, ask for forgiveness, and wash one another's hands, and wipe them with a towel, as an expression of their regret and sorrow, for any actions that might have caused pain to another. This was a very meaningful exercise. The group sharing on the five major issues of the Province then continued.

Day 7 – Focusing on “*Life is a balance of holding on, and letting go*” the day was spent on voting for the delegates to the General Chapter. The final document was voted and unanimously accepted, and the PC ended with the secretary reading the minutes of the day, followed by several votes of thanks.

I am very grateful to God for this new, good and very rich experience. I learned much in the process – human beings are the same everywhere: generous, hospitable and much more!

Mudita Sodder rscj

SHANTI AUR AMAN KE LIYE BADTE KADAM



Small steps for peace... Many of us were very disturbed about the violence that was happening in Manipur; there were protest and meetings happening at various levels. We at Sophia took the initiative to bring together the youth in our city to become aware of some of the dynamics behind what was happening.

We collaborated with the Nirmala Niketan Colleges (Social work & Home Science), Samanvaya and a few others and organised an intercollegiate panel discussion on “Ethnic and Communal conflicts in India & Peace Initiatives”, inviting the youth to attend and reflect on the question: “Where have we reached in the creative growth and development for the common good of our nation? How can we be agents of peace?”

The event was called ‘Shanti Aur Aman Ke Liye Badte Kadam’ and held at Sophia Bhabha Hall on 29th August 2023. The first panel, moderated by Mr. Cletus Zuzarte (Nirmala Niketan), addressed Ethnic and Communal conflicts in India. The Panellists included Advocate Irfan Engineer, Father Frazer Mascarenhas and Advocate Audrey D'Mello. The second panel addressed Peace Initiatives and was moderated by Dr Astrid Lobo Gajiwala. The Panellists included Dr. Rama Shyam, Ms Brinelle D'Souza and Ms Hau-Tungnung (a woman from Manipur).



The event had approximately 550 attendees that spanned across students/staff from Sophia College, Nirmala Niketan College of Home Science, Nirmala Niketan College of Social Work and St Pauls Institute of Communication. The event produced very fruitful discussions and provided great insights for all the attendees and participants on how we can build and strengthen our collective social responsibility, what role the youth can play in promoting the values enshrined in the Constitution of India to preserve the unity and diversity of our beloved country, and how we as individuals can be agents of peace.

Patricia D'Souza rscj