



**Voices of our Sisters and the Collaborators**

**CASA GENERALIZIA**

**Suore S. Giuseppe dell'Apparizione**

**Via Paolo III 16**

**00 165 ROMA, ITALIE**

***May 2023***

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## Editorial

*Dear Sisters,*

*Here we are once again, though after a longer gap, with a lot of information about life in the Congregation around the world.*

*I thank Sr. Margaret Anne for her extraordinary work of research in the different English language Archives and presenting this article on the Biographies of St. Emilie de Vialar. Archives are truly the wealth of the Congregation and I thank the Lord immensely for the work being done today. Now it is for us to read, react, respond and thus help Sister Margaret Anne to develop her work for the benefit of us all.*

*This magazine contains many colors, videos and photos of Sisters as a result of the Canonical visits to different countries. Sisters please send in more articles that would interest all our Sisters and bring us all closer with more news and information.*

*I thank all the Sisters who have contributed articles sharing their life and mission in different countries. Some experiences are very challenging and it strengthens the missionary face of the Congregation. Thanks to all those who have collaborated with me, thus making this bulletin the fruit of our united effort.*

*As we are in the Easter Season let us continue to live and share the Easter joy of the Risen Christ wherever we are.*

*Sr. Renee Quadros. SJA*

## From the Archives Biographies of St Emilie De Vialar

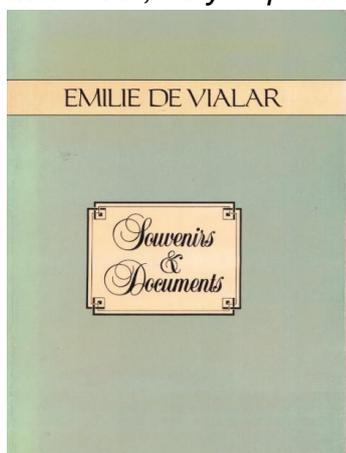
*Biographies are mostly instructive and useful as helps, guides and incentives to others. Some of the best are almost equivalent to the Gospels, teaching high living, high thinking and energetic action for their own and the world's good. (S. Smiles)*

Following the death of Mother Emilie Julien, (1878) Mother Euphrasie Maraval was elected General Superior. One of her concerns was how best to retain and develop the spirit of the Congregation. It is recorded:

*The Council of the Mother House, presided by Sister Euphrasie Maraval General Superior has met in order to deliberate about a topic of interest to all the Sisters of the Congregation, the writing of the life of our Venerated Foundress. The Councilors have approved this project with enthusiasm.*

A search for information in letters and documents was undertaken. Later, Mother Melania Souquie General Superior 1890 –1898, continued promoting the search for relevant material. The task of writing the Biography was entrusted to Fr Brunet a priest in Gaillac, who assembled documents and left significant notes and information about many people who knew the Foundress. A book was published in 1880 but according to notes in the central archives it is 'untraceable'. A letter to the Sisters of the Congregation states '*The book itself was kept in bookcases and disappeared.*' However, mention of Fr Brunets' work is found in the Preface to 'Souvenirs and Documents' by Canon Darbon published in 1901.

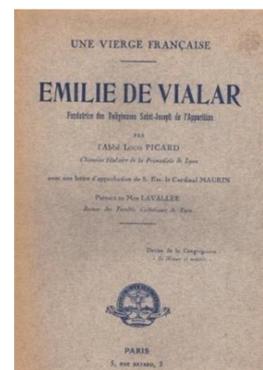
*You said: The Sisters who had the happiness of living with our Foundress are disappearing year by year, and those of the younger generation who are coming to us in large numbers and are so dedicated do not know her whom from now on they will speak of as their Mother. Moreover, as you pointed out, will not God be glorified if we publish, his graces and favors which he has pleased to pour out upon a chosen soul who founded in the Church a new family which has been in existence now for over half a century? (S and D vii-viii)*

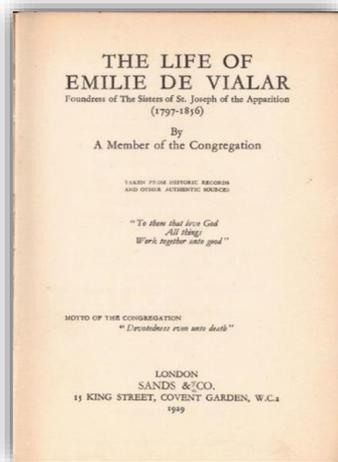


'Souvenirs and Documents' was translated into English in 1986 and printed in Liverpool, England. No mention is made of the translator.

A further biography was published in 1926 'Emilie De Vialar' and written by Father Louis Picard an author, scholar and a Canon of the Cathedral in Lyons. This biography of the Foundress quotes from her writings, letters and from those who knew her. The second section of the book is a personal reflection on her virtues and spirituality. It has not been translated into English.

A Biography not so well known is 'The Life of Emilie De Vialar' written by 'a Member of the Congregation' and published in London in 1929. This book is dedicated to Mother Celina Buffo who:





...for a period extending over nine and twenty years directed the Congregation as General Superior and who in the midst of great and varied trials reflected the spirit of the Foundress by her patience, courage, confidence in God and unwavering fidelity to duty.

This dedication at the front of this book is followed by an Approbation by F. Perroy, Bishop of Media Rangoon and written on the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul 1928.

*It afforded me great pleasure to read your manuscript copy of the Life of Mother Emilie De Vialar. Her biography has already been published in French and Italian, but although the Congregation has been in existence for well-nigh a hundred years nothing in English. We are happy to note that this new biography is both interesting and edifying. It will prove beneficial*

*to the faithful who appreciate the Christian virtues of humility charity, self-sacrifice and fortitude, virtues practiced to a heroic degree by the Servant of God Mother Emilie De Vialar.*

Following this Approbation is a letter written by The Archbishop of Perth West Australia Patrick J. Clune, C.S.S.R. He writes of the work of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Apparition in education and states:

*It is with feelings of mingled delight and gratitude that we have heard of the probability of the Saintly Foundress of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Apparition being Canonized. (p 9)*

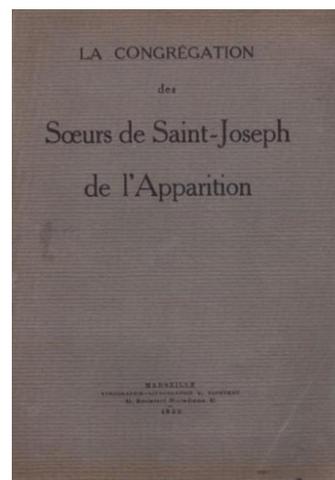
The initial chapters of this book outline the early years of Emilie and the development of the Congregation. It is evident that the writer had access to many sources and states on the initial page that the material was *'taken from historic records and other authentic sources.*

Chapter VI entitled 'The Field Afar' outlines the foundations in Burma, Australia and England. The final Chapter entitled 'Capelette' refers to the Mother House in Marseilles and a brief sketch of the life of Mother Celina Buffo. Mention is made of Sr. Teresa Magrath born in Dublin on the 17 November 1828 *'who was appreciated for her virtue and skilled in the heavenly science of music' and had recently celebrated her 100th birthday in Marseilles.*

Finally, the Appendix consists of eighteen sayings of St Emilie and the graces and favors attributed to her intercession that occurred in different parts of the Congregation. A note on the inside cover states:

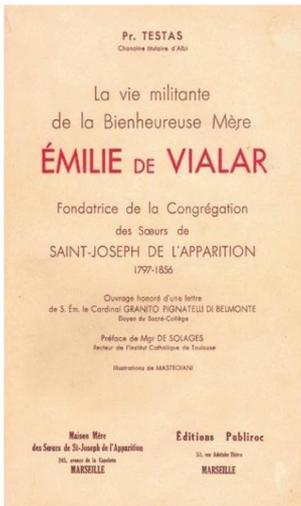
*The profits on the sale of this book are to be devoted to the cause of Beatification now under consideration in Rome.*

One can only wonder who the author of this biography is. All that is known is that it was 'A Member of the Congregation.' However, as it was published in England and probably written in Burma one can suggest that it was compiled by an English Sister who went to Burma in the early part of the 1900's.



In 1935 'The Congregation of Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Apparition' was published in Marseilles.

This book bears out the truth of the Scripture quote “Go and teach all nations” and also the dictum ‘Teach the great mystery of the Incarnation.’ The bulk of the book covers the missionary expansion with special emphasis on the first foundation in Algiers and in particular the impression made on the Arab inhabitants. From there it moves further afield to Tunisia, Rome, Malta, then the Orient and the Far East and so on, answering many of the calls that were received by St Emilie. A salient point is the fact that these Sisters went to places never before seen by religious. There is a chapter on ‘Formation and Life of the Religious’. The book concludes with an essay regarding the ‘Decree on the Heroic Virtues of the Venerable Mother Emilie De Vialar” given at Rome on 19 March 1935 by Cardinal Laurenti S.C.R. at the final decision of Pope Pius XI after which the Cause for Canonization could proceed. This volume contains a variety of interesting photos.

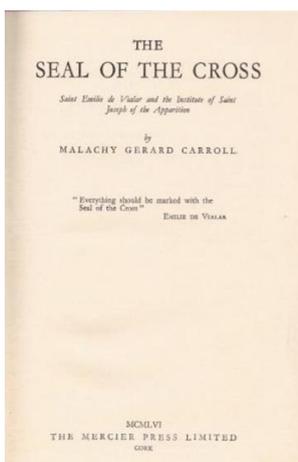


A few years later 1939 Pr. Testas who was Chancellor at Albi wrote “Emilie De Vialar” which was published in Marseilles. It contains a well recommended letter by Cardinal Granito Pignatelli di Belmonte and a Preface by Mgr. de Solages Rector of Catholic Institute of Toulouse and an informative Forward by the author.

The book is divided into three sections: the first has nine chapters under the heading ‘A Long Preparation’; the second section with ten chapters is titled ‘Put out into the Deep’ and the “Third section has fourteen chapters with the title ‘All Peoples’.

The Long preparation covers the years from Emilie’s birth in 1797 to the founding of the Congregation in 1832. This is followed by the development of the mission beginning with Algeria and expanding to other early missions. Also covered are supporting documents in her defense when various troubles accosted her. Finally, there is the greater expansion of the mission to places far and wide and reference to Emilie’s death (1856) and Beatification (1935). There are several photos and numerous illustrations.

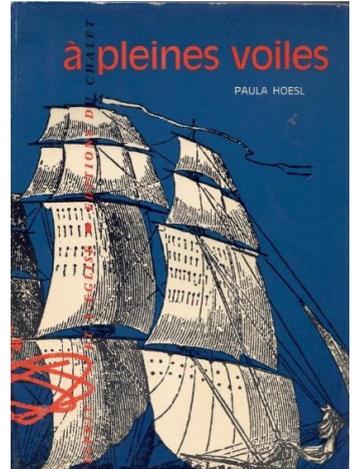
Four years after the Canonization of St Emilie De Vialar, Father Malachy Carroll wrote ‘The Seal of the Cross’ with material largely sourced from the work of Father Picard. It was later translated into Burmese. It has been extensively used in the English-speaking world. Consisting of eight Chapters, the first five deal with the life of the Foundress, Chapter 7 outlines the spiritual qualities of Mother De Vialar and Chapter 8 focuses on the Spirit of the Institute of St Joseph. Appendix A and B outline the narrative of the foundations in England and Australia. The Foreword is written by F. W Kershaw, parish priest of Mt Carmel Blackley Manchester in which he acknowledges that the book is sponsored by the ‘Mother House’ and makes use of St Emilie’s autobiography. He continues:



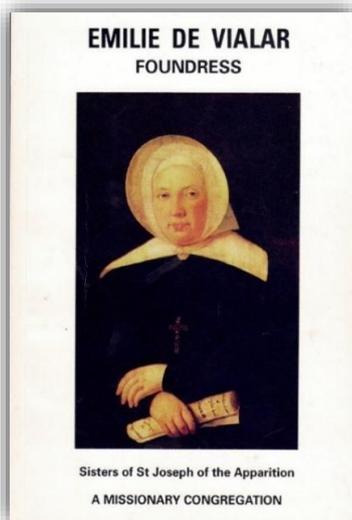
*In the few years of her active life, she organized the first women missionaries to sail the seas gallantly to reach the far-flung harvest fields of the Gospel. Outstanding is her amazing courage. She waded through seas of sorrows but was never engulfed. In fact,*

*she walked on the waters.*

A smaller volume of four short Chapters entitled 'A Plaines Voiles (With Sails Set) Sainte Emilie De Vialar Foundatrice des Soeurs de Saint-Joseph de l'Apparition' was published in Lyon, France in 1963. The author is Paula Hoesl. The first Chapter treats of Emilie's birth through to 18 years during which time she grew to be very devout, attracted to the Lord, and beneficiary of special graces. There are many quotes from her own "Account of Graces." Chapter Two has her searching for her vocation, developing a great intimacy with the Lord, and putting into practice much charitable work which would be the basis of her future mission. Chapter Three deals with the Foundation, the first missionary venture to Algeria and the great spread of the early missionary labours of the Institute.



The second part of the book gives a good exposition of the various missions and also includes the many difficulties and crosses that Emilie so admirably coped with. The remaining section of the book covers Emilie's qualities both natural and supernatural, her great love for her God and for accomplishing his will. A brief account of her Beatification and Canonization is also mentioned and the heritage she has left for her Congregation. The final Chapter refers to the missionary call of Pope Pius X11 and the foundations in Mauritania and Siam. Again, this book contains some interesting photos



In 1987 'Emilie De Vialar Foundress' written by Sister Agnes Cavasino was published and in 1996 translated into English. In the Forward Sr. Agnes states that she has drawn from original sources including previous biographies.

*All these documents have allowed me to retrace the human and spiritual journey of her whom we affectionately call our Holy Mother. But this profusion of documentation represented a volume of immense proportions which would soon tire the reader. Hence it was necessary to be selective, to sacrifice pages brimming with life. (p 9)*

She further adds:

*I did not intend to write a biography. I have, rather, tried to allow the story of her life to unfold, keeping in mind as much as possible, the chronology of events, allowing the characters to speak for themselves, especially she, who is at the heart of this story. (p 9)*

This biography by Sr. Agnes Cavasino was translated into Italian in 1990 by Citta Nuova, Roma printing house and into Spanish 1993 by Imprenta, Douladoure France.

#### Concluding Note

The research for this article is largely taken from material in the Australia Archives. I would be interested in information or comments regarding these Biographies' as well as the existence of other works. I am aware of many small booklets and pamphlets about St Emilie in a variety of languages but for the present I am focusing on the Biographies.

Please forward comments to [stjomagb@iinet.net.au](mailto:stjomagb@iinet.net.au)

Many thanks. Sr. Margaret Anne Beech

## Echoes of Visits

**Thailand – Latin America - Myanmar — Philippines – Central Novitiate, Manila – Australia - Singapore**

### ***Province of Thailand***

From October 10-17, the sisters of the Thailand Province held their annual retreat at Seven Fountains, Chiang Mai Province, on the topic of Discernment and given by Father Saichon Kalyulai, a Jesuit priest. On October 17<sup>th</sup>, we had a Mass of gratitude for the 25th anniversary of the Profession of Sr. Assumpta Yotoo and Sr. Marie Therese Wimonman Srimuang, presided by Fr. Boonlert Sangkusonnaipasutha. We were honored with the presence of Sr. Monika Duellmann and Sr. Rita at this celebration.

On October 18<sup>th</sup>, the Province of Thailand officially welcomed Sr. Monika Duellmann and Sr. Rita Aye. On the Provincial Day Sisters from each Community shared about their life and mission. Through this we were able to see our weak and strong points - individually, in community and in the Province. We also shared on the documents of the Chapter of 2019 which we had been working on in the Province. In the afternoon, we had time for recreation and a sharing of gifts in order to strengthen relationships between the Sisters in the Province.

On October 19<sup>th</sup> to November 8<sup>th</sup>, Sr. Monika and Sr. Rita visited each Community. This was followed by a meeting with the Thai Provincial and Councilors where a summary of the visit was given. In the evening the Sisters called on Zoom to listen to Sr. Monika and Sr. Rita express words of thanks and to say goodbye. This visit by the Superior General encouraged and supported us in seeking a greater unity within the Congregation around the world. It helped us see the importance of visits and to see the work that is truly rooted in the spirit of the Congregation. With give thanks and gratitude to Sr. Monika and Sr. Rita for their devotion and example of being missionaries. We felt the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit and the attention given to this by the Sisters of the Province.

**WE LOVE YOU SO MUCH THAT WE WERE DELIGHTED TO SHARE WITH YOU NOT ONLY THE GOSPEL OF GOD BUT OUR LIVES AS WELL, BECAUSE YOU HAVE BECOME SO DEAR TO US. (1 Thessalonians 2:8)**

Sent by Sr. Martina Ngamwong

Please see the YouTube link for photos: <https://youtu.be/lqhdD67nD48>



**Gathering of the Sisters in Thailand**



## Province of Latin America



In fidelity to the Constitutions, our Superior General Sister Monika Duellmann and her Council scheduled a visit to the Province of Latin America in January 2020, however due to the covid19 pandemic it was not possible. In November 2022 the Provincial, Sister Delia, communicated the news that visitation to Guatemala and the countries that make up the Province would occur in November/December 2022. Sr. Monika would be accompanied by Sister Milagros, General Councilor. Having received the program of the visit the Communities prepared to receive them with joy and responsibility.



The Sisters arrived in Guatemala on 25 November and a reception was held in the Provincial House of Lavarreda in the capital, zone 18 on the 26<sup>th</sup>. The Sisters from the nearby Communities were invited to a welcome lunch, and to greet Sisters Monika and Milagros the Postulants with their music teacher presented a dance and some songs.

### The Novitiate,

In our meeting at the Novitiate Sr. Monika told us: *"It is noticeable that you are united and trust and collaborate with each other."*

## Chicaman Community

The Sisters visited a mission where there are the Poconchi indigenous women, small communities and young people. These groups welcomed them and the Sisters discovered how the presence of the Sisters, in the apostolate with them is a great help. Sisters Monika and Milagros expressed their feelings to us *“we feel that you live an incarnated mission, that you lead the life and reality of people along with your community prayer”*.



## Community of El Teja





On the Feast of the Immaculate Conception together with Sr. Monika and Milagros we participated in the Eucharist in a local town and were then invited to a family house, for a welcome dinner. It was a moment of fraternal encounter. Visiting children's groups proved to be moment of joy. The Lourdes community in the village of San Miguel Morazán enabled a meeting with Ingrid's grandmother and sister. Sr. Monika told her *"I'm happy to be with you, I'll tell to*

*Ingrid that you are well"*. Later Sr. Monika said *"I have discovered how close you are to the people and how close they are to you. We have felt very good in the community"* We thank the Sisters, who pray with sincerity."

### Community of San Jeronimo



In San Jeronimo there is a nutritional project for the children and cooking class for the women. Here there were children from the 'Spark Program' and young scholarship holders and friends whom came to greet the visitors. On Sunday the visiting Sisters participated in the celebration of the Word and came to know the different apostolates of the Sisters of Saint Joseph in San Jerónimo. Sr. Monika said *"I see that the people appreciate you a lot"* *"I am*

*happy that there is a familiarity between the people and the Sisters"* At Pacajay there was a community meeting with the ladies and children who participate in a maternal child project



**Community of San Juan Sacatepequez**



**Community of Naranjo Frontier**



The Sisters were received in Naranjo Frontier with great joy and we thanked God for the cooler weather. Having toured the village, we arrived at the formation center where Sister Carmelina coordinates the education of adults as the children do not have the opportunity to continue their studies. At the dispensary we met the patients and the health promoters. The service provided here is admired due to the small surgeries that are carried out such as extracting remains of bullets or delicate sutures that sometimes other centers do not attend to or there is no doctor. In the afternoon we animated a holy hour in the Parish and participated in the Eucharist which was followed by a sharing with the parish community.

Belén house was visited where migrants from Venezuela, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala are welcomed. It is located on the Ceibo border to Mexico where we met with the managers of the house who shared their experience of caring for the migrants. This included the richness that comes from encounters with different communities and especially our Sisters in Haiti who have suffered from violence and the dispossession of their goods.



## Community of Panamá



The visit to the Communities has been a great feast; The community of Panamá was dressed in joy to welcome Sisters Monika and Milagros. Some people from the Parish were available to make typical presentations - dances and songs, introducing them to the Panamanian culture. A Mass



was celebrated for the mission that the Congregation carries

out in accompanying the people of this area. We had the opportunity through some friends to take the Sisters to a visit to the Panama Canal, to the Cocoki Locks. The Sisters were happy for this opportunity to visit the Canal, as they learned about the entire process of lockage. It gave them the opportunity to learn about the offices and how the passage of ships is handled.



Reguliches - friends of Jesus, is a group founded by Sister Delia. They invited the Sisters so they could express their thanks for the presence of the Sisters in Panamá during which they spoke about the mission and shared aspects of Panamanian culture. This was done by a typical dinner with songs and dances presented by children, teenagers, youth and adults. It was very nice and enriching time.

## Community of Lima - Zapallal

As we integrate the Community in two different houses in Lima and Zapallal Sisters Monika and Milagros shared a few days in each house. Having learnt a little about the context of our life and mission the Sisters shared some phrases that strengthened us.

*“We have touched on life and mission, in your community. We have verified this by sharing with the people with whom you work”.*





*“We have experienced strong moments of prayer, your prayer is incarnated, you bring to prayer the reality of your peoples”.*

*“We have felt strongly that what you share is lived. We have felt the affection that people have for you; you know the people and their situation and try to listen to them”.*

On December 28<sup>th</sup>, Sisters Monika and Milagros said good bye to the Latin American

Province from Peru through the effective means of Zoom and thus able to include all the Sisters. Gratefulness and joy were expressed for having met and shared the life and mission. The Sisters expressed a ‘Thank you’ for this family visit during which the lights and shadows of our life were touched upon. There were providential moments and moments of encouragement. This enables us to move forward keeping in mind St Emilie and St Joseph as we continue to trust in God who has called and accompanies us in following his Son Jesus.



By Sr. Carmen Morales Luna



## Province of Myanmar -2023

### Gathering in Mandalay, a support visit

#### by Sister Mary Seng Pan

At the convent in Mandalay, our Sisters were excited and waited to see our new General Superior Sr. Monika and Councilor Sr. Renee. Once we heard that they had landed at the airport, we, fifty-three Sisters from different Communities, prepared ourselves to welcome them. On their arrival our Diamond Jubilarians, Sr. Christopher and Sr. Geraldine presented them with a bouquet of flowers and they greeted each Sister.

We proceeded to the Chapel to give thanks to our Heavenly Father for allowing us to have Sr. Monika and Sr. Renee with us. We sang the "Laudate Omnes Gentes, Laudate Dominum". We felt that our mother St. Emilie was watching from above. In the hall, the Sisters and boarding girls sang a song of welcome and performed the traditional welcoming dance "Maung Shwe Yo".

The Provincial Sr. Therese Phelinyah spoke a few words: *"A warm and pleasant good afternoon to all. We are delighted to take this opportunity to welcome our distinguished guests, Sr. Monika Duellmann and Sr. Renee who have come to meet us in this land of ours. A land of chaos, ruins, sorrow, danger and insecurity. It gives us great happiness to see and feel your presence in our midst."*

Sr. Monika, who had desired to come to Myanmar for a long time, encouraged us and expressed *'I am at home. We are one family here together; we are one family all over the world.'* She said; *'wherever she went, she was asked 'How are the sisters in Myanmar?'. Today I am here'*. She thanked all the Sisters and girls for their welcome and added *'I may not remember all your names but be patient with me.'*

Sr. Renee said; *'We are finally here with you and it is our greatest joy. Even though you face many problems all around you I appreciate the atmosphere you have created here, full of joy, dance, colors and happiness. Thank you, Sisters for the Life you generate for yourselves, and others. To all of you thank you very much.'* The evening concluded with the singing of the Magnificat.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of February six sisters celebrated their Diamond Jubilee and three sisters their Silver Jubilees. It was a day full of life and celebration with Sisters, friends and families. The Sisters were jubilant. During their time with us Sr. Monika and Renee were able to visit four other communities. Thank You.







## Philippines

Srs. Monika and Renee visited the Delegation after the Council of the Congregation. They expressed their joy at being able to visit the Communities and see the Sisters in their respective mission. A pleasant evening meal was held at St Emile's Learning Centre attended by the student Sisters, Novitiate Community, the Provincial of Myanmar and some members of the General Government.



10 Postulants at Las Pinas with the Sisters of the Community





**A pleasant evening dinner with St Emilie Learning Centre Community, all the student Sisters, novitiate community Sisters, Provincial of Myanmar and some members of the General Government.**



**There are 9 Sisters from Myanmar studying in the Philippines. Some are in the hostels and others in the communities.**

**St. Emilie learning Centre is a Primary School owned by the delegation and is managed by the Sisters.**



In Bani Sisters do pastoral ministry in collaboration with the Church and also teach religion in the state owned schools.



In Bohol we have a community of Sisters running a primary school owned by the delegation and managed by the Sisters and they are involved in the pastoral ministry.

By Sr. Renee



## Central Novitiate, Manila

On the 19<sup>th</sup> February 2023, we had the joy of inaugurating and blessing the new building in the **Central Novitiate** compound. All the participants from the Council of the Congregation along with Fr. Yago, the facilitator, were present for the occasion. The building was blessed by the Parish Priest of Novaliches. The Eucharist was celebrated during which the Novices sang very melodiously. After the Mass the Novices displayed an informative and cultural programme in which they told us about the classes they follow and their apostolic experiences. This was accompanied by cultural dance. The Sisters said: *It was a very enriching experience for us all to see life in the Central Novitiate. Thanks to the two Formators Sr. May Rose and Bernadette Ratreer who carry on the responsibility in a collaborative manner. At the end of the celebration all were served with a very delicious meal.*









By Sr. Renee Quadros



## Visitation Australia Delegation March 14<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> March 2023

The ten days of visitation by Sr. Monika, Sr. Anita and Sr. Marilena was a time of grace and blessing for the whole Australian delegation: Sisters, Associates and Staff. Through Delegation and Community meetings, personal dialogues, assemblies, celebrations, it was truly a time of encounter and true dialogue. Reflecting on the Gospel passages and some of the Intentions and Orientations of the General Chapter 2019 provided the opportunity for deep personal and community sharing. The joy, struggle and reality of being an SJA missionary disciple today for both young and senior sisters from different countries in WA church and society was shared in open personal and community conversations. It was truly a time of grace and blessing for all. Ministries continuing or emerging in Schools, Parish, University, Women’s Prison, against human trafficking and Personal Advocacy, and supporting ethnic groups were shared. The Delegation was affirmed, encouraged and challenged in its mission and the future is assured. Australia is still a place of mission and our SJA presence will continue in a new and vibrant way in collaboration with our Associates and Staff. Some moments shared to capture “the spirit “of communion, reflection, conversation and cultural celebration.

Sr. Anita Callaghan





## Singapore

Sisters Monika, Anita and Marilena visited Singapore from the 25<sup>th</sup> to the 30<sup>th</sup> March 2023. During their visit they met a number of people including a lot of migrants and illegal workers working and living in Singapore and Malaysia.

Sr. Maria Goretti writes from Singapore:

In Singapore on the 26<sup>th</sup> March the Sisters visited the Malaysia Migrant mission and the Myanmar Catholic Community in Singapore (MCCS). It gave them the opportunity to see 60 percent of what a Migrant mission looks like in Singapore. In Malaysia they visited Bishop Bernard Paul and two factories where Myanmar Migrants work. They met up with Bro Dominic, Garielite, Bro Paul Ho and Bro Nicholas, De La Salle Brothers together with the head of St. Theresa's Nursing Home, Victor Seng. They also visited to Fr. Peter Zhang, Vicar General of Singapore.

By Sr. Maria Goretti Dau Nyoi



## Echoes from the Sisters in Haiti



**Sr. Margaret Michael** writes; 'When God has done so much for me, what not I ought to do for Him!' With these words of St. Emilie, I enthusiastically carried out my mission by serving the poorest people on the planet in Haiti

The Community was peaceful and we were happy to be together. Our union with God helped us to be united and cooperate in these missionary activities.

In the month of September, the situation in the country became serious and the schools were not reopened. The Mafia took over the country causing havoc, resulting in deaths, kidnappings and stealing. They blocked the Customs preventing goods coming in from other countries. The markets were empty and there was no diesel, petrol or cooking gas. Life became difficult but we were able to live relying on the support of the Lord.

A great shock occurred in Haiti on the 16 of September. Many Catholic institutions were attacked and we were one of the victims of the vandalism. On this day bandits, with the people of the area, entered our campus and dismantled everything. They destroyed or took everything possible. They took all the materials from the handicap Centre - the walkers, chairs, massage beds and materials. They took all the food from the nutritional center, the benches, all the photos which were hanging on the wall and the televisions used for the mother's lessons.

Everything was taken from the sisters' house, the food from the fridge, tables, the Tabernacle and chapel furniture. Our guard who looked after the campus, realizing the danger pushed us into a room and locked the door. He called the police who took us to the police station where we remained for the day on the 16<sup>th</sup>. The police realizing the danger we were in, from the Mafia who wanted to attack the police station too, moved us to one of the policeman's home.

The next day we went to see our place. We were shocked to see that not even a nail was left in the School Centre, the sisters' house or the T-Shirt Factory. At this factory they removed all the solar panels, 10,000 rolls of cloth and all the packing materials. They took away the windows, doors and even the toilets and the rest they broke or burnt. We thought the crowd had come for food but they came with the intention of destroying our mission activities.

We had seen the building going up 'brick by brick' and now it was completely destroyed within an hour. We were so sad to see all the documents of the school destroyed. They did not realize that all we had was for them. They ransacked, broke and destroyed and carried away all they could. It was a great shock for us for we never thought that the people whom we were serving would betray us by such actions. We are not able to understand - why did they come to us to destroy everything when we were serving the very vulnerable.

The Lord left us with the 'gift of life' and we appreciated the prayers of many people. After this incident we lived in a house where we had the Sewing School. During this time the city had lots of manifestations and burning of tyres. We were not able to go out to buy anything. They began to go house to house and knock and steal. So, the Province decided to call us back from Haiti. We returned to India on the 22 October and are waiting for the situation to improve. It is still tense with a number of gangs controlling different parts of the country.

We thank the Lord for all his providence in protecting us and for all your support for this mission. I'm sure God will have a new plan for us and this mission. Thank you so much and

God bless. We thank our Congregation and the Province for being so concerned about our safety.



### My Experience in Haiti by Sr. Rita Mary

‘Go with what you have and will receive, do all the good you can’

In 2008, I received an obedience to be a missionary in Haiti. I felt it hard to say ‘yes’ but it was an obedience so I had to. When I reached the country, I experienced everything as new, the atmosphere, people, and language. In the community we spoke English so I did not have much difficulty in adjusting to my new situation. With the cyclones in the past, we lost everything and had to take shelter in another religious house. (Cluny Sisters). Then the Council asked me, ‘do you wish to go back?’ and I responded, ‘if it is a need I’ll stay.’ And thereafter I plunged into this challenging mission, a mission which fulfilled my inner thirst of serving God through vulnerable people.

In the year 2012, I was given an opportunity to continue further studies in India. In the year 2022 I was delighted to receive an obedience to go back to Haiti and take care of the school canteen. In the initial stage everything went smoothly. But suddenly on 16<sup>th</sup> September, 2022 we heard that the Salesian Sisters were looted by the protestors. We were warned of the same threat. That night we were all disturbed thinking of what may happen the following day. Despite our fears we held on to God through adoration and encouraged each other of the possibility of the forthcoming challenges. The superior reminded us to keep our passports and important documents safely with us.

Following the devastating events on the day and our rescue by the police words from the Bible echoed within me, ‘the son of man has no place to lie down.’ In the midst of this trauma, I was moved to tears and could see a ray of hope as we still had life. I now understood the deeper meaning of the vow of poverty. We were without a place to go. But when God chooses his loved ones, he never leaves them, and therefore like St. Joseph, one of the policemen willingly took us to his house. Mother Teresa Sisters, one of our sister’s brother Fr. Theona and our school teaching and non-teaching staff helped us with basic needs. We didn’t have a visa to return to India but experienced God’s assistance through various people as they tried to help us in every possible way. Eventually we arrived safely in India.

I thank the Almighty for the gift of Life and such a challenging experience which made me strong in faith to witness Christ in all circumstances. Today, along with St. Emilie I can proudly say, ‘*Let us have no other wish than to work for God’s Glory alone.*’

## *An Experience of Faith by Sr. Paulina*



I thank the Lord for saving our lives from the tragedy that took place on 16/09/2022. During this time, I strongly felt the protection of St Joseph. Personally, it was a painful and sad experience to see the people dismantling everything. But God was revealing himself to me through the readings of the Book of Job. "Naked I came from my mother's womb, naked I shall return. The Lord gave, the Lord has taken back. If we take happiness from God's hand, must we not take sorrow too?"

As I began to reflect upon the richness of the mission in Haiti. I am reminded of Pope Francis insisting on being prepared to go out of our comfort zone and reach out in love to the needy and destitute. Personally, I was very happy to go to Haiti and to serve people. Before this incident I had opportunities to learn about the works of the school from Sr. Rosa. Yes, our works of charity have been appreciated by the people, so I couldn't understand when the Mafia joined by the people around entered our campus and destroyed everything.

Then I realized it would have been out of poverty that these people came to destroy these things. Incidents pass, but memories remain. It was hard to have nothing. I strongly felt God's presence and His comforting hand through the many good people who provided us with shelter, food, clothing and prayer. Today I am alive just because of the assurance of God and I, personally feel happy to go back and serve the people once the situation improves.

## *God, Beyond our Understanding by Sr. Rosa Tigga*



I was sent on mission to Haiti in October 2010, the year the city of Gonaives was recovering from major flooding. At this time our mission had lost everything. Placing myself in the hands of the Lord I worked hard to improve the mission and to be of service to the poor. After the long summer holiday our mission was to begin on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2022. Due to some reason the date for the school to reopen was postponed. Our house was filled with provisions for our mission.

On 15<sup>th</sup> September Sr. Paulina and I were in the school office preparing the school documents. Around 11 a.m. a teacher rang to say that city gangs had ransacked the Seminary, Caritas, and St Johns School. This message caused us to panic, and we ran to the house where Sr. Margaret had received a similar message. We were fearful of what might happen to us the next day. We discussed and planned what we might do regarding food and money.

In the evening one of the Oblate Fathers along with our Parish Priest visited us. We had supper together laughed, joked and enjoyed being together like a last supper. After they left we had a call from our former driver that gangs wanted to take our vehicles. Therefore, the next day at 4 a.m. we removed the vehicles and put them where nobody knew along with some newly purchased dining room tables. Next morning, 16<sup>th</sup> September, we dug a hole and buried some of our money. We prayed together putting our confidence in the Lord that

we would be safe. At 6.30 a.m. we heard that the Presbytery of the Cathedral Parish had been attacked.

Around 8 a.m. as the gangs were approaching, we could hear the noise all over our zone. As they reached our place the guardians tried to stop them but the crowd was too large to control. They began by banging and breaking the doors and then proceeded to take our things. Having locked ourselves upstairs we could see what was happening. Shocked we didn't know what to do. We sat together on the steps asking St Joseph to protect us. One of the men who were trying to stop them from taking the big cylinders was stabbed with a long knife but was able to run to safety.

At this time, we heard gun shots towards the T- shirt factory and saw smoke rising in the distance. It was at this point we were evacuated by the police. Later that evening I went with two men to fetch the money which we had buried. I saw all the buildings completely empty.

I had never imagined that this type of thing could happen for I thought we were well protected by our neighbors. I now know I was wrong. Schemes had been plotted to destroy our mission. During the 12 years in this mission, I had done my best to improve the school and to see it all smashed within two hours was unbelievable.

It made me question as to whether I had failed to do the will of God? One of our teachers told me 'Sister, these many years we taught children of good parents but today we have to work for the children of such people.' I really don't know where to begin because moral life has no place. I feel sorry for those who are really poor. I loved the mission but now I don't know. I also feel sorry for all our benefactors who have been disappointed. May be God wants us to go through a wine press to become missionaries for his kingdom? As our mother Saint Emilie De Vialar says "Our life must be marked with seal of the cross." After all this one of our guardians stated that 'there was a very strong divine power that was protecting you.' On our missionary journey we really don't understand HIM because HE is beyond our understanding.





## **My Life and Work at the Don Bosco Migrant Centre by Sr. Jain Madhura Kispotta**

The Don Bosco Migrant Service is a migrant rights-based organization initiated by the Salesians of Don Bosco in Chennai. It accompanies and advocates for safe migration for the inter and intra state young migrants who work on construction sites. It promotes safe working conditions and social security benefits along with labour rights, skills development, education and health care for the labourers and their families.

As citizens of India, our Constitution gives us the freedom to live and work anywhere in the country. Migrants need to search for their work and livelihood anywhere in the country. People from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Bengal come to Southern India especially for contract work. Eighty percent of these people work on transportation of goods, construction work, brick kilns, hotels and production centres.

Manali is an industrial township, where iron, steel, chemical industries have been set up. Men and women are engaged in employment 12 hours a day and 7 days a week. They live in a rented house made of tin sheets. Despite the implementation of one country one ration policy, the migrants do not get government rations of food grains. It becomes difficult to live and settle among Tamil speaking people. In schools the children do not get the opportunity to study.

As for me, it is an opportunity to experience the realities of a migrant mission in collaboration with the Society of St John Don Bosco - Salesians. Being new I did not know about these people and their living conditions. God has done so much for me by bringing me to this mission and it has been a blessing. I have many challenges such as language, fear of vehicles driving on the highway, fear of unknown people, of accusations, of conversion and non-cooperation from the migrant families.

In spite of these problems there have been strong moments and blessings. I was able to organize and coordinate a number of activities for the people such as:

- Taking care of the tuition centre for migrant children and organizing a drawing competition on Independence Day.
- Celebrating Christian and Hindu festivals and feasts
- Attending camps for the underprivileged people, medical camps for the Irullars community, blood group camp for the students at government schools and E-sharam card camp for migrants.
- One day outings for the children at the study centre.

So, these are some actives I have undertaken to help the children, women and migrant people improve their way of life.



## Don Bosco Social Work Centre for Irular Community by Sr. Malliga

***What shall I return to the Lord for all his goodness to me. Ps 116:12***

As the Word of God touched me, I Sr. Malliga Balthasar SJA joined the Don Bosco Social Centre on the 8<sup>th</sup> June 2022. Professionally I was trained as a teacher however a need led me to social work ministry for the Irular Community.

The Irular people are the most downtrodden people in the society and move from place to place for their livelihood. Some are living as slaves or bonded laborers to landlords. They do not have land but live in the river areas, putting up small huts in which to live. They do not educate their children as they move so often. Even the society does not accept their children in the schools and they do not keep themselves clean. Their main occupation of the Irular people is fishing and cattle farming.

These people live in a small village called Sadayankuppam north of Chennai. The village consists of forty houses and forty-four families living in small huts. People go to work in the early morning and return in the evening. The men go for work and the women do household duties and take care of the children. These people are not educated and their children do not go to school despite a government school nearby. They do not have the habit of saving for the future, in a sense what they earn in a day, they spend on that particular day. In this community I have been asked to focus on the children, especially in regards to their education.

When I commence working here, I found it difficult for so much was new to me. As the days passed and with the help of Fr Bosco SDB, the Director and our Sisters I quickly learnt and gained confidence. As I began to mix with the people, I found they did not freely talk with me. As days passed children were happy and things began to change. With a focus on the school children, I try to encourage and explain the importance of education and conduct evening tuition classes. Slowly some of them come and talk...but not all. I have arranged some celebrations with the children, like Christmas and Pongal (Tamil New Year festival). Gradually they seem happier and more accepting of me and have slowly started to share their joys and suffering with me.

I am very happy to work for them and help educate the children of the village. Gradually people are becoming freer to approach me and to ask for what they may need. I would like to end with St Emile's words



**Never lose sight of the aim for which we are united: God and his greater glory, the service of the neighbor and the ardent desire to be of use to him.**

I am trying to make the children feel that the world is theirs.



## Missionary Work in Australia

by Sr. Elizabeth Rose



Records show that there was a sudden increase in the numbers of Congolese-born Australians between 2006 and 2016. This was the result of a conflict between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda, ongoing from 2004. The majority of Congolese Australians settled in Queensland, Western Australia and Victoria.

After 9 years in the Refugee Camp, on March 9<sup>th</sup> 2005, the Lulinda family arrived in Perth, Western Australia. Gerard, the father, having been a teacher in his home country, had kept busy in the camp working with the Red Cross, helping others wherever he could in the dreadful conditions, not least being the shortage of water. With them were their (then) 6 children. Having lost one baby prior to leaving home, Gerard's wife, Esperance, later miscarried again in the camp due to lack of water and poor health conditions.

The Lulinda's first SJA contact came when one Sunday, having attended Mass in Christ the King Church, Beaconsfield, they came to our convent, which was then opposite the church. Barely able to speak English, they were looking for a French speaking priest. Fortunately, one of the local priests had spent many years in the Congo and spoke the language fluently, thus able to help the family in many ways. From then on, the Sisters of the Beaconsfield community all helped the Lulindas through their 'settling in', especially with small jobs to help them earn money, and by collecting clothing and other goods for them. One Sister coached them in English.



We soon learned that this family was not going to sit back and wait for help. They were very motivated, trying to be self-supporting by earning money in any work they could find, no matter how menial. Their eldest son, Amani, worked his way through a government high school, then University, by also taking on casual work, and finally achieved a University degree in *Science and the Environment*, which assured him of a good job. The younger Lulinda children were able to attend Seton Catholic College. The eldest daughter, Suzanna, kept contact with a young man she had met in the Refugee Camp. He had settled in America, and Suzanna eventually married him there. In the intervening years, the Gerard and Esperance were blessed with the arrival of their own little 'Aussie'- Veronica, ('Vero') who has now joined two of her sisters at Seton Catholic College.

Over the intervening years, the Lulindas have continued to work hard to be independent in supporting and educating themselves, and at the same time helping their people here and back home in the Congo. They are now part of a group, with others, which they have named **Volunteers for Humanity**. Amani is also involved in this long-term family project inspired by Esperance and Gerard, to help their fellow Congolese living in the extreme poverty of their home surroundings.

After struggling to get wheelchairs, clothing and other things to the Congo in any way they could over past years, last year they finally managed to share a shipping container with another group to ensure the safer passage of what they collect. Our SJA communities

donated towards this to help them raise their contribution. The cost of a container is now \$A11,000 and likely to increase. Amani says that a container is likely to be less challenged at the borders than anything smaller, and in the long term, they can pay less overall in tariffs, bribes etc. So far, they have raised \$5,000 towards having their own container in 2023. Their goal now is to build a little hospital near Burundi, which is badly needed.

The Lulinda family are still friends of the Sisters since they first came to our convent in Beaconsfield 17 years ago. We are proud to assist this wonderful family in their initiatives. They have worked extremely hard to establish themselves independently, educate their children and help others, and are citizens of whom we can all be proud.



This is just one of many more stories that could be told by our Sisters here in Australia. We can all remember the energy of our 'older Sisters' in the past, engaged in similar ways, right to the end; and today others are still 'carrying the torch', keeping the missionary spirit of St Emilie alive.

With the diverse nationalities that have come to settle in Australia over more recent years, there is an even greater necessity for the support and care of many, especially those who have been dispossessed of their own country, and struggle on bravely. Our Sisters here have always continued the work of those before us. The increased diversity of nationality and experience in our SJA Sisters who have recently joined us from other countries, is an inspiration for all to see this work continuing and expanding.



## *Sr. Andre Magri*

### *Homily by Fr Marc Andre*



#### **“Come follow me.”**

Every call sounds beautiful when it is spoken by the Lord, and if we had to live in a world of dreams or fairy tales it would be a perfect introduction after which one would expect a beautiful romantic story without any shadow or sadness.

But those who give heed to this call... those who are trying to live this call know that in real life it is more brutal than this. The beautiful voice and the

calling that touches the heart, the mind, the soul and the flesh carries with it a very high price of tears and bleeding.

A call that is welcomed in youth in all happiness and with all the potential, when everyone is congratulating and cheering you, when you feel welcomed and accompanied when you have to live this life during all its seasons... from the eagerness of Spring and the Summer fatigue, in the Autumn lull and the Winter cold, when life is heading towards the tomb.

Sr. Andre like the many priests and religious knew what this calling meant... The Lord asks/demands of us that we offer our lives in sacrifice as a holocaust as He did.

#### **The greatest trial**

Throughout her 70 years of religious life she had many trials but the greatest one which we lived with her and witnessed to was that after decades where she lived and spent herself in the Paola convent she had to leave this place. We are all aware of the fact that for persons of a certain age like her a radical change brings a lot of hardship... she also had seen the closure of this convent. It is the place where she laid her head to rest for so many years... it was her cave, her nest.

The tears that flowed from her eyes on that day were tears of a broken heart it is similar to the tears we are shedding today. They are the tears of all those who welcomed the Call, of all those who are trying to follow the Lord – When they look around them it as if they cannot recognize this world that they were born into and brought up in and at times neither the Church that they loved with all their hearts. That which gave us peace of mind, that which gave us the bold courage the which protected them from the attacks of the enemy which withheld thanks to the strong foundation that used to keep us safe, now seems like ashes in front of our eyes ... it is from those very ashes the Lord will call us again **“Come follow me.”**

Leave the dead to bury their dead ... it is useless crying and sobbing the beautiful structures that were alive by the presence of so many religious, it is useless sobbing the forms and ways that have passed and ended... it is useless for us to hope that we shall find rivers of life giving water in a world which has become a desert... but instead ... as we are made smaller, bent but never crushed we need to continue giving a greater and more authentic witness ... and in the dryness that has overcome us we need to search for new ways and means of how we can pass on the source of hope, love and mercy. We need not have any doctorate or be professors... no outer signs of extravagant liturgical wear because of these

we seem to have more than enough... but we need small ordinary acts made with great love.

### **St Joseph's kitchen**

In St Joseph convent kitchen, we never went in expecting to listen to Karl Rahner or to discuss the Synod. When we went in we were welcomed and embraced and were given drinks and food. **"Come follow me..."** but where are you taking us Lord ... it seems that we arrived at a precipice ...seems that the path trodden is coming to an end. will it lead us to an abyss...why are you hurrying ahead of us... let us turn back... maybe we should have taken another path... less rugged and harsh. **"He who puts his hand on the plough and looks back is not fit for the Kingdom of God"**

So, there is only one thing that we can do, let us abandon ourselves in His embrace... let us bind ourselves to Him...with prayer... before sunrise...till after sunset... into the darkness of the deep night

### **Her prayer life**

Sr Andre's day used to evolve around her prayer life - with the community, Radio Maria, - alone in the chapel with a helping hand from St Joseph who used to wake her up in the midst of the night...through the good and the ugly, in happiness and in tears, in her fears and her hopes all used to find their rest in the Lord's embrace.

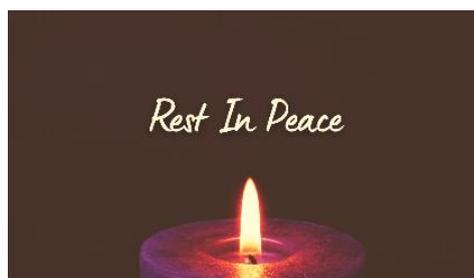
### **Her surrender**

She surrendered the tables with fine food to the chefs/cooks that replaced her... the fine wines I wonder whether she ever bothered with them. But now that she reached this stage she was adamant not to look back.... She made sure that the plough reached its destination to the end of the field... now we hope that this will be sufficient for the Lord for Him to offer her His heavenly dwellings... a dwelling that she will never have to leave behind.... let us hope that the death that she experienced in her life when she buried herself with Christ through her Baptism and later on through her religious profession will now be changed into the resurrection for Eternal Life.

### **Closing prayer**

Receive O Lord this virgin bride and this pure soul who gave her life to you till the very last breath. To us who are still here. in your mercy say to us again "Come follow me" so that we too will reach our final destination next to Sr. Andre.

Sent by Sr. Dorothy Vella Zarb



## *Sister Theresa Yin Nyak*

Sister Theresa Yin Nyak arrived in France, from Myanmar in August 2015. After studying French for two years and being involved in Caritas and EHPAD (house for aged people) she went to the periphery of Paris, to the community of Saint Maur and in 2020 to Champigny sur Marne. In September 2022 she answered the call of the Provincial Superior, Sister Agnes, to go to Nicosia, Cyprus.



**Sr Theresa**

During her two years in Champigny Theresa volunteered to accompany a disabled girl in a Catholic school, helping her in the daily needs and school activities. This girl was in a wheelchair and her health progressively worsened. At the same time, Theresa had catechetical and pastoral work responsibilities in the Parish and just before leaving was appointed to the pastoral animation team. Before her departure they visited the Church, where in 2020 she and Sr. Rose Mary had made their final vows. The parish priest and the people who were present, thanked her and spoke the following:

### **Dearest Sister Theresa,**

It was with great emotion that on the 4<sup>th</sup> October 2020 I saw you pronounce your final vows just six months before I was baptized. I am sure others remember it to. Afterwards you accompanied us by teaching catechism and recently at the parish animation team. Today the Lord is calling you to a new mission, in Cyprus. What a grace, what a joy! We are going to miss you a lot, but we rejoice with and for you. Our prayers will be with you in this new mission.

As Saint Emilie de Vialar would say: "**Go and with what you have and will receive do all the good you can!**" May the Holy Spirit guide you day by day. In the name of Father Evariste and Father Bruno, the members of the EAP, CEP, the catechists, the liturgical teams and all the parishioners of the community of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Coeuilly, we say a big: Thank you! Thank you for the love you transmitted in these two years, for your availability towards the children, the liturgical team and in general in the Parish.

**Glory be to God for all He has done!**

Sent by Sr. Therese Armouet



## *Junior Sisters in Plouguenast*

On the 31st of August seventeen Sisters accompanied by Sister Gracy arrived from Gaillac. It was the Congregation in all its diversity – coming from Iraq, India, Thailand, Myanmar, Ghana, and Guatemala. We warmly and joyfully welcomed them. After they had found their rooms, we all met in the refectory. What a difference! Usually, five now twenty-three. We sang together:

**It's you, Oh, Lord our Joy,  
It's you who is gathering us,  
It's you who brings us Together united in Love!**

These Junior Sisters had arrived in Plouguenast France for retreat and some holidays. The Superior of the Community said: *We shared meals in an atmosphere of joy despite language difficulties. We managed to make ourselves understood by smiles and gestures as we found ourselves in a unique SJA family.*



The first few days were given to discovering the house, garden and the village. Sightseeing in Plouguenast seemed to pass quickly. A day was spent at the seaside, and the Sisters from Saint Briec came to join us for a day where many photos were taken. We visited HPAD (house for old people) where the Sisters performed traditional dances from their respective countries. They met the children in the primary school and the college where they were happy to meet a teacher who could translate into English for them. Some of them asked why they chose to become Sisters?

### First group 14<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> september

1. Sr. Punita Tirkey - India
2. Sr. Miss Sineenart Tunu - Thai *Java*
3. Sr. Miss Pattarvadee Soypradis (Bee) - Thai
4. Sr. Chrestina Saeed Butrus \_ Lebanon (Iraqi)
5. Sr. Gratia Myat Su Khine - Philippines (Myanmar)
6. Sr. Matalina - Myanmar
7. Sr. Elisebath 1 - Myanmar
8. Sr. Anwar Naim Nehme - Nazareth (Iraqi)
9. Sr. Deborah - Malta (Ghana)

### Second group 24<sup>th</sup> September to 2<sup>nd</sup> October

1. Sr. Theresa - Myanmar
2. Sr. Rosa - Myanmar
3. Sr. Ruvy - Guatemala
4. Sr. Fidelina - Guatemala
5. Sr. Eisebath 2 - Myanmar
6. Sr. Miss. Sutthida Khamchalee (Candle) - Thai
7. Sr. Rebacca - ~~Thai~~ Myanmar
8. Sr. Emilia - India

In the second week we welcomed Father Godwin, a Maltese Jesuit priest who gave the annual retreat. Since the group was large, they were divided into two groups. For two weeks the house was in perfect silence

It was an unforgettable September. Sr. Gracy who is responsible for the Juniors was with us and encouraged each to be responsible in living the daily, encounters and activities. We trusted the Sisters to organize the days for us and we managed to live the life of a big family. What a happiness to enjoy their joy, their enthusiasm and their young age! The only regret was the language. How could we share more deeply? Share what makes us live... by times of common prayer, the quality of the presence, the behavior etc. All made us feel we belong to the same SJA family.

**Thank you, Lord, for the time we had with the community of Plouguenast.**

Article sent by Sr. Therese Armouet



# *Biblical and Ecclesiological Perspectives of the Mission of Education – Challenges and Vision for the Future.*

*by Sr. Alberta Stefanou*

This day is inserted in a synodal journey proposed by the Union of Religious of the Holy Land and touches the different realities of service: social, pastoral, health and education.

This was the topic for the meeting on 15 January for the teaching sisters of the Jerusalem area. Some Sisters from Ramallah and two of us from Kyriat, Sister Claudette and myself, with some Sisters from Jerusalem took part. It was a very rich day.

Father Miguael Garcia, SJ developed the theme: ***Jesus as Master: the ethics of Jesus!***

He began with the importance Jesus gave to ethics of the Torah. Jesus followed, like all Jewish children, the Torah. The first problem in interpreting the ethics of Jesus is how to indicate the tension between the radicalization of the Torah and the relaxation of the Torah...Jesus combines motives of wisdom and eschatology in his ethics. The Evangelists call him Rabbi cf. Mk 9:5; Lk 4:14. His followers were his disciples... Fr Miguael tried to draw the general framework in which Jesus grew up and acquired his knowledge. Maybe Jesus experienced the form and content of Jewish and Greek education as an itinerant craftsman in the synagogues and the great squares of the cities. The basis of his teaching was the use of Scripture. He used the Scriptures as a means to different ends. He intensifies certain norms; he relaxes certain points of the Torah. The commandment of love is central to his teaching.

After Fr. Miguael, Sister Frida Nasser, whom we know, currently Superior and Director at our School in Jerusalem, tried to emphasize a number of important dimensions related to the 'Global Educational Pact' with which Pope Francis has engaged in a dialogue on Education:

- 1 Putting the person at the heart of every educational process
- 2 Investing all one's energy in the service for quality education for all
- 3 Encouraging people to be at the serve of the community.
- 4 Giving attention to children and the elderly
- 5 Being aware that Ecology is the science that studies the interactions of living things with each other and with their environment.

Dr. Charlie Haddad outlined the system and philosophy of the Lutheran School, exposing the challenges of the system in Palestine. This to include Christian and Islamic values – and the role of the clergy and school administrators as current challenges are acknowledged and worked with.

We were given three questions for reflection in different language groups.

- 1 For the Educator 'What face of God' do we express as an educational institution in the Holy Land?
- 2 In light of the document: 'Global Compact for Education', what are the challenges our educational institutions and the Christian education system have to face?

3 What proposals would you make to Christian/Catholic schools to have more influence on the social system and the life of the Church?

**Challenges that emerged were:**

- The importance of the formation of managers and teachers in order to make possible the requirements of education in villages and families.
- Collaboration was seen as indispensable so as to be open to the universality and with special attention to be given to the "little ones."
- Daring projects should be developed...
- Innovative steps require courage, audacity, and a lot of love!

**As an eagle stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, He spread His wings to catch them and carried them on His pinions. Deut.32,11.**



## **Celebration of 150 Years Presence in Ramallah, Holy Land by Shireen Mogannam SJS Director / Ramallah**

On the evening of Saturday, 18 March 2023, the eve of St. Joseph's feast, the Sisters of Saint Joseph the Apparition in Ramallah celebrated 150 years of serving humanity, with their presence since 1873.

The festive Mass was presided over by His Excellency Bishop William Shomali, the Patriarchal Vicar in Jerusalem, in the presence of the parish priest, Father Yacoub Al-Rafaidi and a group of other priests, Others present were: Mr. Issa Qasees Mayor of Ramallah , Mr. Joseph Hazboun Director of Pontifical Mission , Sister Valantina Sala the Provincial , and Sister Mary Yusef the Superior. There were the Sisters from Ramallah and others from different regions along with those from other monastic Orders. There were representatives from the Holy Family Parish and a large gathering of friends of St Emilie De Vialar. Ms. Shireen Mogannam, school principal and members of the administrative and teaching staff, students graduates and their families were also present.

At the beginning of the Mass, Father Yacoub noted that the great participation in this joyful celebration was a sincere expression of everyone's gratitude and appreciation for the distinguished role of the nuns for one hundred and fifty years. He noted that this work had been carried out serenely and with unlimited giving and service.

Bishop William Shomali, praised the mission of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Ramallah, and indeed in the Holy Land, indicating that their efforts are appreciated and blessed. Their presence in the school and parish has been distinguished by knowledge, virtue and a high standard of education. In her speech, Sister Valentina, praised the work of the Sisters over the long years. She also touched on the recommendations of Saint Emilie de Vialar to her Sisters regarding the education of girls.

Ms. Shireen Mogannam, the school principal, spoke about the school's development and achievements. There is a clear vision springing from evangelical values which guided them in preparing students to live in society as good citizens, shaping their personalities through activities that support the school's vision and mission.

The celebration ended with a reception in the school hall, in which everyone exchanged congratulations and prayers and a wish to grant the nuns health and wellness through the intercession of Saint Joseph, the Patron Saint of the Order, and Saint Emily De Vialar, the founding Mother.

### **Words of Former Assistant Bishop of the Latin Patriarchate – Jerusalem**

“Honorable Sister Mary Yusef and Sisters of St. Joseph and the administrative and teaching staff at SJS /Ramallah

I heard with great pleasure that you were to celebrate today the 150th anniversary of the Founding of the Congregation of St. Joseph in Ramallah, and at the school. May God bless you so that you, in turn, will be a blessing for the Palestinian Community, for the holy Church of the beloved city of Ramallah, for the youth and for knowledge and for virtue.

This occasion is dear to you and to all of us. Personally, I would have liked to attend this occasion and thank the Lord with the believers and rejoice with them and congratulate you for this long period of joyful fidelity, generous giving, happy service, and human and faith education for many generations. When I was an assistant priest for the parish of the Holy Family forty years ago, I was a direct witness to this great service of yours, and I was very pleased and impressed with your participation in this long, beautiful and encouraging pastoral and educational procession

. With great regret, your happy jubilee coincided with the feast of St. Joseph and the celebration of the ninetieth birthday of His Beatitude Former Patriarch Michel Sabah in Nazareth. I am not allowed to attend today in person in Ramallah. Today we pray for you and for the honorable Patriarch Michel, and on a suitable second day, God willing, we will visit you and congratulate you with pleasure.

With blessings and prayers, congratulations on the 150th anniversary. May God strengthen you with this noble pastoral and educational message. And look forward, my beloved brothers and sisters, for a successful and fruitful future, with all determination, confidence and hope.

Bishop Paul Marcuzzo

For more photos please see the YouTube link: <https://youtu.be/1Zx3W46Sy3>



## EARTHQUAKE - (ALEPPO - SYRIA)

The earthquake took place on 6 February 2023. The epic center was Turkey and Northern Syria, especially the city of Aleppo. The great tremor was of magnitude 7.8 and the aftershocks that followed killed at least 6000 people throughout Syria. This earthquake was devastating for the countries. The city of Aleppo was already devastated by the war and the bombs, which lasted for several years --- and now by the earthquake that ravaged several buildings that were destroyed by the war and now others by the earthquake.

In Aleppo we have the Hospital and the Home for University Girls. That night of 6 February Sister Alphonsa, Sister Josephine and 25 girls, were in the Home and around 4: 17 am the house began to shake strongly. We left our rooms and went to the courtyard where it was raining and very cold. Everyone was fearful, the girls were screaming and crying. The neighbors came out of their houses on to the streets. Some buildings not far from us were starting to collapse.

We spent the rest of the night in fear that it would happen again. We stayed with the girls until the morning. The next day many of them went home to their families. Thank God none of us were injured. We felt the protection of St. Joseph over us and our house. The words of the psalm came to our mind in this difficult moment

**"In my anguish I called upon Yahweh when the earth shakes and trembles and the foundations of the mountains shudder.....O God comes quickly to our rescue" Ps 17**

After the departure of the girls, we slept for a few nights in the hospital with our Sisters, so as not to remain alone in the Home. The house had been damaged, as well as the hospital.



We still have to plan the repairs. We thank the Lord for having kept us safe from this great catastrophe of the earthquake, and we pray for the families and their loved ones who have lost everything.

*Written by Sr. Josephine Haddad*

*Rome Welcomes our Students from our school in Greece*





It was a great joy for us to meet our students from Greece on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2023 with their school director and some staff, who were very much interested to meet the Sisters and to know more about St. Emilie de Vialar. They spoke to us about their tour with a school project on climate change and their experience of working together with other children.

They asked us about our life and what inspires us in the life of St. Emilie and wanted to visit the community chapel where the heart of St. Emilie is placed. It was a moment of deep sharing and listening. After which we had a refreshment together.

Sr. Renee

## *Rome Welcomes our Students from our school in Gaillac*

*It was indeed a joy for us to receive 12 students on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2023, with two of their school teachers and Abbé Pierre-André VIGOUROUX, the Parish Priest from Gaillac. This group is called the **friends of St. Emilie** and is very enthusiastic to make St. Emilie live today and our charism continues to with new life through them. They are involved in helping the missions in the congregation and also to pass on to the younger students this same spirit and make this group continue to live and expand far beyond Gaillac. It was a great joy for us to listen to them, to see their zeal and enthusiasm.*

### *Long Live St. Emilie*





They visited the Chapel and prayed with us, sang hymns to St. Joseph and St. Emilie. It was a joy to see young people in Gaillac wanting to share our charism and they spoke about the contact they have with the Sisters of the Community and our Junior sisters in Gaillac. The Parish Priest who is a great admirer of St. Emilie is a real support and keeps motivating the Pupils and also our junior Sisters.

Sr. Renee Quadros



## Pastoral of Vocations

Kiryat Yearim, 10-11 April 2023

For two days, on the 10-11 April, in the monastery of the Virgin Mary Our Lady of the Ark of the Covenant, in Kiryat Yearim, we had a spiritual meeting with 20 girls between the ages of 16 and 17 years.

The subject was the role of the Virgin Mary in the history of salvation.

Sister Athar, Sister Inaam, and Sister Muna prepared and led the meeting, with the participation and support of Sister Matilda, Sister Rosa, and Sister Veronica.

On Monday morning, we visited the Old City of Jerusalem: The Church of the Holy Sepulcher and the Last Supper room, as well as the Church of the Imprisonment of Christ (Saint Peter in Gallicantu).

Due to the political situation, it was the first time for many of them to visit Jerusalem, since most of the participants are from Palestine.

After that, we set off to Kyriat Yearim where everything was arranged and prepared with love and joy by the community and the Filipino girls.

We started our first meeting by talking about our presence and mission in Kiryat Yearim and the importance of the mountain in the Old Testament, about Sister Josephine who bought the mountain in a miraculous way, and about the name of the monastery (the Virgin Mary Our Lady of the Ark of the Covenant).

Then we went to the church of Emmaus Nicopolus and celebrated the Holy Mass with the Patriarch of Jerusalem.

In the evening we started the second meeting about “our own call”: where God is calling us today, and how to hear God's voice in our daily life.

We then did an activity “treasure hunt” using the bible to find clues and then the secret word.

The girls were very active and happy and excited.

The end of our first day was crowned with a moment in front of the Blessed Sacrament, where we mediated in silence and prayer.

As the sun rose in the morning, we blessed and praise the name of the Lord with the morning prayer.

The third meeting was about the Virgin Mary and her role in the history of salvation followed by questions: what do we learn from Mary in our lives? How I am helped by Mary in my life?



We celebrated the Divine Liturgy with the Benedictine monks of Abu Gosh, then we split into groups to share the answers to the previous questions and personal experiences. After lunch, it was time for an art activity where they learned how to make bracelets and rosaries from string and beads.

And we concluded our experience coming down from the mountain, fulfilled by the beautiful scenery, the sounds of birds, and joy and happiness, ready to transfer this experience and happiness to family and friends.

**I'm going to convey to you some of the girls' comments to the sisters:**

- ✓ It was a very wonderful experience that made me love the Lord more and get closer to him.
- ✓ I loved the place and the prayer and the meditation and how wonderful it is for a person to sit with himself.
- ✓ I loved the positive energy in the place and in every one of us, especially the sisters.
- ✓ I loved prayers and Masses in different languages so I felt that I am in the sky despite my lack of understanding of the words so my presence there filled me with happiness and joy.
- ✓ I loved visiting churches, it was a great blessing for me, and it increased my faith and adherence to my town.
- ✓ I felt a strange and beautiful change and joy as I benefited from the information and my mind opened up to things I did not realize or think about.



Sent by Sr. Valentina Sala