



# SSpS MISSION

Called by the Spirit • Embracing the World

Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters | USA & Caribbean | AUGUST 2020



*COVID-19 Our New Mission Field*

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“We fly to your protection, O Holy Mother of God”.

In the present tragic situation, when the whole world is prey to suffering and anxiety, we fly to you, Mother of God and our Mother, and seek refuge under your protection.

Virgin Mary, turn your merciful eyes towards us amid this coronavirus pandemic. Comfort those who are distraught and mourn their loved ones who have died, and at times are buried in a way that grieves them deeply. Be close to those who are concerned for their loved ones who are sick and who, in order to prevent the spread of the disease, cannot be close to them. Fill with hope those who are troubled by the uncertainty of the future and the consequences for the economy and employment.

Mother of God and our Mother, pray for us to God, the Father of mercies, that this great suffering may end and that hope and peace may dawn anew. Plead with your divine Son, as you did at Cana, so that the families of the sick and the victims be comforted, and their hearts be opened to confidence and trust.

Protect those doctors, nurses, health workers and volunteers who are on the frontline of this emergency, and are risking their lives to save others. Support their heroic effort and grant them strength, generosity and continued health.

Be close to those who assist the sick night and day, and to priests who, in their pastoral concern and fidelity to the Gospel, are trying to help and support everyone.

Blessed Virgin, illumine the minds of men and women engaged in scientific research, that they may find effective solutions to overcome this virus.

During the past several months our lives, our world, have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In this issue of the SSpS MISSION, I wish to share some thoughts from Sr. Ana Elidia Caffer Neves, SSpS, a member of our Congregational Communication Team in Rome as well as a sampling of stories sharing our SSpS outreach throughout the world.

Sr. Ana Elidia writes: “For us SSpS, along with all of humanity, the COVID-19 pandemic is deconstructing everything that we had organized and made us mobilize to find other ways of living the mission, community life, spirituality, and our other relationships. We are called to be creative and challenged to find new paths of solidarity and to transform ourselves internally, responding to the call “what contribution does the Spirit want from us today in this context of global crisis?”

Within our possibilities, we take on, with a missionary spirit, the small and large actions that we can do, which for some is to pray for the sick and health professionals. In pastoral areas, different apostolates and social works where we are unable to bring people together and open doors, the Sisters continue their mission using communication technology to listen, to encourage, and to provide concrete help when necessary and possible.

In all countries where we serve, our greatest concern is with the poorest, the homeless, the unemployed, women in vulnerable situations, the elderly and the sick... We have reports on the work of distributing food and sanitizing kits. In many places, hunger is the daily reality of daily-wage laborers who suddenly lost their jobs. Thousands of families survive, thanks to the solidarity of so many others who share what they have.

Sisters in health ministry are the most exposed to contagion. On the front lines, they share with other professionals in clinics and hospitals the puzzlement at the impossibility of offering the necessary treatment. The number of Sisters involved in making masks to protect people is significant.

Schools suddenly had to adapt to the demands of social distancing and on-line instruction. Even the most technologically prepared are facing great challenges as the dynamics completely change. Families are suffering anguish, insecurity, and fear. The Sisters with teams of educators realize that in addition to creating new learning processes and managing the financial crisis, they also need to emotionally support professionals, families, and students through on-line meetings.

We testify that the greater the suffering, the greater the solidarity! We have the hope of overcoming this pandemic and that we will come out stronger and more aware, because everything is interconnected. We are one family and we need each other!”

This pandemic and our world condition calls us to prayer that God’s compassionate, healing touch will rest on the lives of all who are suffering with COVID-19; and may the Holy Spirit guide and inspire medical scientists to develop an effective vaccine.

Sr. Mary Miller, SSpS



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We testify that the greater the suffering, the greater the solidarity!



# Another Look at THE NEW NORMAL

By:  
**Sr. Rosalia Galmin, SSps**



During these last few weeks and months, we are facing another unusual and new time in our lives. I said it is a “new time”, because it causes a big change in our daily routines, work schedules, tasks, activities, and even our mission priorities. For our Congregation, the 15th General Chapter is one of the most awaited moments by members of the Congregation worldwide. I believe that we certainly never thought there would be a story in the history of our Congregation, that the “15th General Chapter” was postponed and possibly even beyond 2020.

I remember in the early months of hearing the news about the virus that attacked the people in China, I thought that this was just another virus that would be gone in a short time. I was concerned, but not really worried about what it could cause to bring about. But when the news of so many deaths reported here and in other countries became a daily topic of conversations, I came to understand that this was no longer an ordinary seasonal sickness. It became frighteningly clear that we were heading for a real catastrophe. Unpredictably and stealthily it brought sickness and death to country after country.

When we were asked to stay at home and work from home, we were also sharing more of our time with each other in the community. I slowly accepted this new reality that still is full of surprises and often causes a sense of uneasiness. We accept this as a challenge and try to find grace in this situation as it

gives us more opportunity to live closer with others who might feel the same and can give support.

This unusual situation invites us also to pay more attention to ourselves, and how we navigate the changes from the way of seeing the “unusual”, to speak of and accept “a new normal”. We can take it as a meeting place between peace, closeness and freedom. I begin to realize, that we actually all have different ways of responding to this reality. It teaches me to see and learn to understand things from different angles or points of view and find creative ways to bring up more interesting topics to share. We invest energy to conquer fear and foster positive changes in attitude which is beneficial to all of us. The desire to find simple ways to cheer each other and even the desire to open the garage door and greet the next door neighbors becomes the most beautiful moment every day. I come to understand that “time is expensive” and I can never know when it will be taken from me.

Building a critical attitude in receiving and delivering messages and information about pandemics, quarantine, and other situations related to COVID-19 carefully and constructively becomes a community commitment in order to avoid some gossip, rumors, and cheap commentary. This gives us a chance to keep the harmony in community life and to be a sign of hope for others during this period when the dangerous virus COVID-19 tries to hold us captive.

# COVID-19

## Our New Mission Field

Our Response to the Global Pandemic



By: *The Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters*

*During these times of global disaster & unrest we may be tempted to ask "Where is God?" We Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters want to offer you an answer to this question. Within this article are a few stories from Sisters around the world and what we are doing to be the hands and feet of God.*

### SSpS Russia



By: *SSpS Sisters*  
*Tressa Sebastian Nayathu & Jose Augustina, SSpS*

The Russian Government announced lockdown due to COVID-19 in the second half of March 2020. Since then the Governors announced particular lockdown for their regions. The Churches were first recommended to have limited number of parishioners

and then separate instructions were given to Religious organizations. But since people were encouraged to remain home in self-isolation, the Churches remained empty. Hence one of the first things was to make available to the people the live streaming of the Holy Mass. Hence in all of the parishes where our sisters are serving, with the help of the priests, we had the live streaming of the Holy Mass, Adoration, Rosary and other spiritual conferences through videos.

The other work of mercy was material, i.e., providing groceries and necessary food products to the needy. The Sisters in Tambov help a private foundation in their work of providing honey and other food products to several families. The community in Irkutsk

helped the needy with groceries and especially some muslim students during the Ramadan fasting month by providing food for them to complete their daily fasting in the evenings. Such actions were in general. The more regular and specialised voluntary work is carried out by Sr. Tressa, who is a volunteer in the program of providing daily lunch for the Elderly. This project is carried by "Kristal", a Charitable Foundation established in 2014 for Social Support of the Population in the city of Abakan, which provides free meals for the elderly people and people in difficult situations. Since 1st of April, 2020, an all-Russian project called "#We Are Together" began in the city, which involves daily home delivery of free meals to the elderly. "Kristal" requested the volunteers and also boxes providing meals. The Catholic Church in Abakan immediately responded to this call. Sr. Tressa Sebastian is one of the volunteers who is committed to this cause. She goes daily with lunch to 10 elderly people.



Volunteers in all the respective groups are instructed to follow the precautionary measures strictly in order to avoid any chances of being infected. It is really a privilege to be part of this program in several parts of Russia and offer help to the needy and the most vulnerable. The people with whom we work and whom we serve are very grateful and appreciative of the presence of the Catholic nuns.



### SSpS Rome



By: *Sr. Scholastica SSpS*

Unexpectedly, my cousin Martha contacted me, asking if she could send masks to people in Rome. I was inspired to ask my friends to promote small donations from our classmates. I contacted my friend Juan and she willingly accepted. Then, Sr. Eleonora phoned Mr. Marco Franciono, in-charge of COVID 19 Emergency in Sant' Egidio Community in Rome. It was good news for him, as they are distributing food to the poor and homeless daily.

Juan invited others to join and together we created a donation group via WeChat. One made promotion leaflets and another became our treasurer. I shared about this with my Provincial, Sr. Theresa and she promoted the movement to an even wider circle.

We were able to raise a total of \$54,716. We have sent medical supplies (575 ICU protective gowns, 1000 isolation gowns, and 56,400 masks) to Sant' Egidio communities in Rome, Mozambique and Malawi, Gemelli Hospital in Rome, SSpS Hospital in Flores Indonesia, and our SSpS clinics in Africa.

We are deeply grateful for people's trust and generosity!

# SSpS Papua New Guinea



By: Sr. Monika Steinberger, SSpS

Although we have only eight confirmed cases, the State of Emergency implemented strict measures to control the spreading of the virus. However, 1,600 boarding students at Divine Word University remained on campus. The dormitories are crowded, students share facilities, and all students collect their meals in the university hall. Although we try our best to encourage students to practice social distancing it is an enormous challenge with such a crowd. The university set up quarantine facilities & employed additional nurses on campus.

We were permitted to have online and face to face

teaching of small groups. Therefore, in cooperation with Bread for the World, we initiated a face mask sewing project to provide each student and staff of the university with two fabric face masks, which is a total of 4,500 masks. Even though it is tiring to coordinate this project, in addition to our normal workload plus setbacks such as breaking down of sewing machines, we can see the guidance of God in it.



# SSpS Argentina South



By:  
Sr. Mariana Belén Villalón, SSpS

On March 24, we inaugurated an inserted community in the western zone of Neuquén, Patagonia, Argentina, a populous settlement of those with very limited resources.

Because of COVID-19, the schools closed and

began to prepare online platforms from which those who do not have access to the Internet are excluded, added to the difficulty of unschooled parents who cannot help their children with their homework. Faced with this reality and seeing that our neighbors were in this situation, we began to give support classes guaranteeing access to education.

Likewise, we collaborated with the food assistance of the most vulnerable families in collaboration with the parish Caritas. We also assisted them regarding online procedures, registration, and resource management to access the social services offered by the government. We seek to be a compassionate and prophetic presence that walks alongside the people.



# SSpS Portugal



By: Sr. María Mendes, SSpS

As a social worker, I have served in the Social Center of the Parish Church of St. Nicolas for 4 years. My mission is to support the needy around Lisbon, which includes homeless and vulnerable people. We contact them daily by phone, to monitor their health situation and the care they are receiving.

We provide lunch and supper for around 150 people in different places; basic non-perishable food for around 90 families and weekly 60 families receive other kinds of nutritional goods. Along with these services we offer the possibility to receive emergency health care and spiritual help.

The center is managed by Fr. Mario Rui Leal Pedras - President of the Center - and we count on the help of young students living at the residence of the Parish.

As SSpS, we take this mission as a new way of being with the neediest people.



# SSpS India South



By: Ms. Girija J. Xalxo,  
HSMA

Holy Spirit Missionary Association and Holy Spirit Community Health Center in Mumbai responded to the extraordinary needs that this crisis is generating. Since we are in quarantine, we need our network and contacts to locate the area where there are people who need help. We aimed to help the neighborhood migrant workers, who live in poverty and unhygienic conditions.

Due to the absence of early and effective preparation, people started experiencing social and economic disruptions and shortages of essential services and commodities. Sr. Elsy quickly purchased rice, wheat flour, oil, and sugar and made individual packets. Since the frontline workers and medical staff are allowed to travel, the Sisters went to the assigned areas and distributed the packets.

We experienced love, respect, and recognition during this mission. We are thankful to all the volunteers, health workers, scientists, and frontliners. During the pandemic, we realized that we became closer to one another and our faith has been deepened.





By: SSpS Sisters

Paula Jagoda & Maria Marta Przywara

The pandemic has worsened the situation in Ukraine, a country that has been suffering the aftermath of the 5-year long war. We help the people, who are in need by sharing the food we receive from others.

Our ministry is mainly with children and in parishes. So now we make use of the internet and phone to carry out most of these ministries. Most of the churches in Ukraine are open but only 10 people can be inside at a time. In the eastern part, the situation is different. Sr. Maria Sleziak, who lives there, shares: "Here, all the church services are cancelled.

We connect with the parishioners on the phone and help the homeless with masks and food. Sr Nataliya who works as a midwife in the hospital helps mothers who are in difficult situations. We also help neighbors who are alone and single mothers with children. We continue to support some patients in the tuberculosis hospital. In general, we continue our ministry as before, only in a different way".



We stay in the quiet, gathered together as one community. Like the women who followed Jesus during his life and onto his death and burial, we are puzzled and don't understand. Life as we know/knew it is buried by this pandemic. We ponder the WHY: Why is this happening? Why can't we do something? Why didn't someone/anyone see this coming? Why couldn't this have been avoided? We hear the blaming and see the finger-pointing. Sometimes we join the ranks of blaming. We see how one action (or non-action) affects many, rippling out into the neighborhood, the nation, the world. It's a lesson still being learned and yet to be lived.

Why can't we missionaries go out? Like the disciples we sit in the upper room of our hearts fearful and wondering where is that Spirit that was promised? When is that Spirit that was promised going to come? God love the world so much... What really is the message of Easter, of Jesus' giving all for love of all? What new life will be present if each act of love we see and hear about reverberates and spreads like the virus? Yes, we see signs everywhere the reaching out in so many ways: neighbor helping neighbor; medics risking lives to help others; friends using technology to stay in touch; family doing face time together on their iPhone and/or iPad. We see it in our own communities as we live more closely together, as we grow in consideration for the well-being of others by "distancing" and wearing masks. We learn new ways of being together and grow more deeply in our understanding of one another and of being a missionary presence.

The experience of this Pandemic gives greater insight into Jesus' command: "Go out into the whole world." The love and care we show each other during these "shut-in" days spreads into the whole world. Moving with hope toward the reopening of our countries and economies, we know a new world is dawning. Life will not be the same. We KNOW because we believe Jesus lives and goes before us. Immersed in the life of the Trinity transforming the world with compassion, we go from "pandemic" to NEW LIFE.

God is LOVE, Alleluia!

By: Sr. Judith Vallimont, SSpS



**I**n Lent the COVID-19 pandemic broke out in full force. Although Easter has gone, the pandemic is still raging in our world. Somehow Lent still feels near. Lent and Easter are all around us in a mysterious mix of blame, selfishness, and wants with goodness, generosity, and compassion. These days of shut-in and stay-at-home ring a quiet beckoning call to us as missionaries. Listen. Hear God's call; hear Jesus' words: "Come aside and rest awhile." Can you not pray one hour with me? Martha, you are busy about many things; but Mary has chosen the better part. Peace I give to you, not as the world gives do I give." In the suffering, in the uncertainty, and even in the fears we hear the Spirit calling and whispering to us to step aside, to be still.

**Dear Mission Friends and Supporters, we wish to assure you and your loved ones of our daily prayers of support during this time of the coronavirus pandemic. May our loving God be with all who are suffering and protect medical personnel, health-care providers, and first responders as they carry out their daily responsibilities. We invite those of you who can to join us in mission through your generous financial support for the Mission Ministries of the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters.**

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The Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters are an international—intercultural community of 3,000 Catholic, religious women, serving in 48 countries. Missionary activities include pastoral work and catechesis, education, nursing and health care, social work, adult education, and many other services to promote human dignity.



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