



SSpS MISSION

Called by the Spirit • Embracing the World

Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters | USA & Caribbean | AUGUST 2021

Hope In Darkness The Missionary Life



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holy spirit sisters usa



Sr. Theresa ThanhThao Nguyen, SSpS & friends on the occasion of her final profession and mission mandate to the USA Province - St. Kitts.

Focus on Mission...

Throughout the coming months the Liturgy of the Church, especially in the Sunday Gospel proclamations, call us to be imitators of Christ in our lives as we encounter others. It is a call to LIVE our baptismal call to discipleship, nourished through the Eucharist, the "Bread of Life", and trusting that God walks with us!

At the same time, we are emerging from the tensions and fears of the COVID-19 pandemic, yet continue to be cautious and supportive of one another. Trusting that God walks with us!

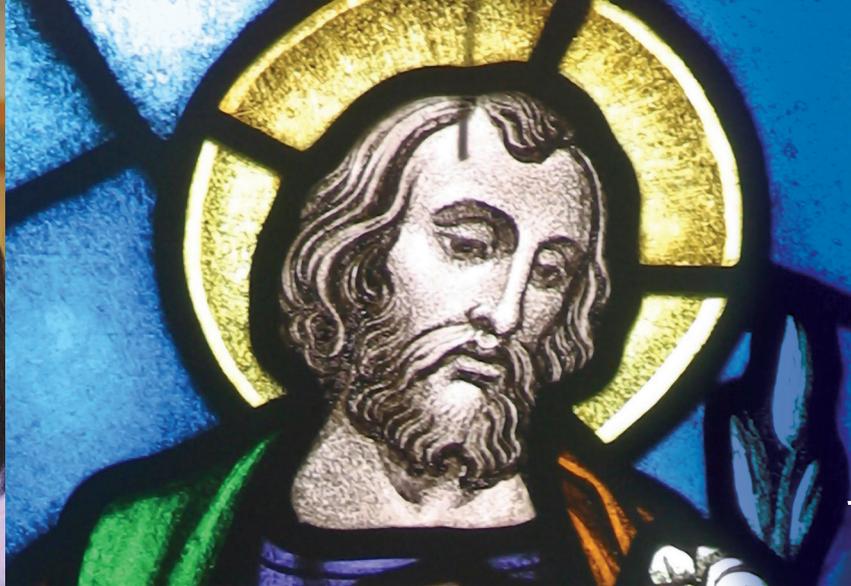
Our stories this month reflect various aspects of our SSpS call to MISSION! Sr. Arnolda Kavanamur shares her journey as a kidney organ donor for our Sr. Kristina Lajar. How rooted in TRUST that journey is! Trusting in God's journey with them; trusting in the medical expertise of the doctors and medical staffs performing the surgeries; trusting in the prayers of family, friends, and SSpS community members; trusting in the healing power of God!

Sr. Louise Marie Mareanu, our Sister from Papua New Guinea currently in mission in Ghana, reflects on the important role of *community* in our missionary vocation and service. The elements of life-giving community living (togetherness, respect, listening, giving and receiving, peace and harmony) are also the elements of loving *family life*.

As we continue to honor St. Joseph throughout this year, we are reminded of his daily protection and care for the universal Church and family life. May that special care and protection embrace each of you and your loved ones!

So, how is God calling YOU to mission?

- Sr. Mary Miller, SSpS



St. Joseph

Patron of The Church

By: Sr. Margaret Anne Norris, SSps

Pope Francis' apostolic letter, *Patris Corde*, released on the 150th anniversary of the proclamation of St. Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church on December 20, 2020, features seven reflections on the person of St. Joseph. Pope Francis declares "After Mary, the Mother of God, no saint is mentioned more frequently in the papal Magisterium than Joseph, her spouse."

A succession of popes had seen St. Joseph as a prime healer for contemporary woes and they sought new ways to draw his intercession. In 1847, St. Pius IX ordered that a feast of the Patronage of St. Joseph be celebrated everywhere on the third Wednesday after Easter. In 1870, he declared him the Patron and Guardian of the Universal Church, and further raised the status of his feast day. Leo XIII's encyclical *Quam Pluries* (1889) invokes St. Joseph against the religious and social crises of his day. Besides expressing familiar sentiments on the saint's singular virtues, he asks the poor to take St. Joseph, not Socialism, as their guide to justice.

In 1914 the ancient Litany of St. Joseph was endorsed by Pius X as he promoted devotion to St. Joseph. In 1922 Benedict XV added the name of St. Joseph to the Litany of Divine Praises. In 1930, Pius XI named St. Joseph a special protector of Russia to counteract Soviet persecution of Christians and invoked him again seven years later against atheistic Communism.

In 1955, Pius XII replaced the Patronage of St. Joseph with a new feast of St. Joseph the Worker on 1 May, the traditional day for working class, Socialist, and Communist festivities. Since then, new images of the saint tend to feature carpenter's tools rather than lilies. To call down blessings on the Second

Vatican Council, St. John XXIII made St. Joseph its special patron in 1961 and inserted his name in the Canon of the Mass in 1962. St. John Paul II's apostolic exhortation *Redemptoris Custos* (1989) broadens his predecessors' concerns. He emphasizes the reality of the saint's marriage and paternity: self-giving love is what matters. It places St. Joseph on the front line of efforts to renew the family, society, and the Church. In 2013 Pope Francis, following the desire of Benedict XVI, added Joseph's name to all 4 Eucharistic prayers and on July 5, 2013, he declared: "We consecrate Vatican City State to St. Joseph, Guardian of Jesus, the Guardian of the Holy Family. May his presence make us stronger and more courageous in making space for God in our lives, so that a life of grace grows stronger in each of us every day."

In the newest letter, Pope Francis speaks to the fatherly qualities of St. Joseph, "Each of us can discover in Joseph – the man who goes unnoticed, a daily, discreet and hidden presence – an intercessor, a support and a guide in times of trouble. Saint Joseph reminds us that those who appear hidden or in the shadows can play an incomparable role in the history of salvation."

By being constantly attentive to God, open to the signs of God's presence and receptive to God's plans, and not simply to his own, St. Joseph is a "protector". He is able to hear God's voice and be guided by his will. For this reason he is all the more sensitive to the persons entrusted to his safekeeping. He can look at things realistically, he is in touch with his surroundings, he can make truly wise decisions. Let us pray for his intercession in our own everyday lives.

St. Joseph is a
"protector".
He is able to
hear God's voice
and be guided
by his will.

A Call to Action!

Sharing the Gift of Life

Sr. Arnolda Kavanamur, SSpS

"You gave a beautiful and healthy kidney to your friend, and the kidney is working 90%. Almost like a normal kidney," said my surgeon as he visited the next day after my surgery. It was a relief to know that the kidney was healthy, beautiful, and most importantly, functioning. I felt reaffirmed that I made the right decision, invoking a sense of gratitude. To be generous requires courage to take action. Therefore, discerning God's plan in our lives is necessary because through attentive listening we make decisions that lead us to happiness, fulfillment, and a life filled with gratitude. A number of Sisters from other Provinces requested if I could share my story. Today, May 19th, 2021 marks Sr. Kristina Lajar and my one year anniversary of Kidney transplantation. I thought it would be a good time to share my kidney transplantation journey not because I have to, but because my story can help those who are thinking about sharing the gift of life with people who desperately need an organ transplant.

Sr. Kristina Lajar, SSpS was diagnosed with kidney failure in 2013 and had been on peritoneal dialysis for six years. She was connected to the dialysis machine for 3-8 hours every night, which was excruciating and sometimes she was bedridden. I became aware of Sr. Kristina's situation a few months after I arrived in the U.S. in December 2013. I did not know her back then, but somehow I hinted that I would be willing to donate as we walked around the garden one afternoon that summer in 2014. I was in Epworth, Iowa but had gone to the Convent of the Holy Spirit, Northfield, Illinois for a break. I did not pursue the idea of the donation because it was her choice. We did not discuss it again until September 2019. I was returning from my vacation in Papua New Guinea and had to stay overnight at the Convent then travel on to St. Kitts, in the Caribbean. Unfortunately, my flight was canceled due to two infected wounds I had sustained from the long trip from Brisbane to Chicago. Therefore, I had to stay for ten days at the Convent.

One afternoon, Sr. Kristina and I took another walk around the garden. The idea of donation popped up again, urging me to ask for her blood type. "I'm O+," she said. With excitement, I exclaimed, "Oh! I am O+ as well." Out of the blue I said, "Maybe I could help." I prayed about it that night and told Sr. Kristina the next day about my decision. We both decided to talk to Sr. Dorota, our Provincial and Barbara, the Nurse Director of our convent. Barbara contacted the University of Chicago Kidney Transplantation Center right away, and we were directed to the website to fill out the form for organ donation volunteers. Meanwhile, I had recovered and left for St. Kitts.

Around December, I was notified to contact the University of Chicago Medical Center to verbally express my intention. I emailed the hospital and left my contact details. A few days later, my nurse coordinator contacted me for the first time and outlined all the procedures involved leading up to surgery. By the end of December 2019, I was scheduled to do a living donor evaluation process, so in early January I traveled to Chicago. At the University of Chicago Kidney Transplant Center, I met members of my team individually for the first time. The meeting involved education and informed consent, medical and psychosocial evaluations, and pre- and post-operative care and required follow-ups. After the evaluation, I was cleared for transplantation surgery by my Living Donor Transplant team. I was a match.

I traveled back to St. Kitts, and in early March I was notified of a possible date for the surgery: March 25th. I was advised to travel two weeks prior to the surgery for more tests to be carried out. By then the coronavirus

outbreak was already spreading in many countries, including the U.S. A week before the surgery, Gov. J.B. Pritzker, Governor of Illinois issued a 'stay-at-home' order. Hospitals in Illinois postponed all elective surgeries due to the coronavirus pandemic. Our surgeries (Sr. Kristina's and mine) were also postponed indefinitely.

In early May, I received a call from the University of Chicago Medical Center that the surgery had been rescheduled for May 19th. After much anticipation and preparation, on Tuesday the 19th, at 6:00, a.m., we arrived at the hospital accompanied by Sr. Dorota and Sr. Mary Lauren. I was called on first. After my procedure was halfway through, Sr. Kristina was called. My surgery took over two hours, while Sr. Kristina's surgery took four hours. Praise God, both our surgeries were successful. I stayed for two days due to minor issues, was discharged, and quarantined at home for 14 days. Physically, my post-op recovery went very fast and my incisions healed within a week.

In retrospect, the journey was not always a smooth ride; there were many speed bumps along the way. However, when you respond to a 'call to action' willingly and generously, God will see you through all your ups and downs. From the preliminary appointments up to the pre-op, I had anxiety and stress, fear of not being a match, or wondering if there would be any serious illness found during the Living Donor evaluation process. I had stress from traveling back and forth from St. Kitts to Chicago. I became worried about my family's reaction to my decision to donate. I became worried about a possible kidney failure. All in all, the experience was stressful, but I trusted God would see me through it because I believed it was his plan. As the surgery came closer, it became clearer to me that God was in control all along.

Consequently, I did not think about possible repercussions of my choice in the weeks and months leading up to the surgery. All I was concerned about was to stay healthy so as to be fit for the surgery. I did not weigh the effects or benefits of the donation. I made the decision immediately, without considering the options or even questioning them; it was simply an immediate response to help. However, reality hit me hard

during recovery. It was after quarantine. Although I was allowed to leave my room, I felt I wanted to be alone. I felt sad, empty, restless, and hopeless. I knew that something was wrong but could not figure out what was going on. When the sisters asked about how I was doing, my immediate response was "I am okay." I got angry when I was told, "What you did was heroic." I wanted people to stop saying that and leave me alone. Until one day, a nurse came to my room to check on me. She noticed I was not my usual self. She asked if I was okay. I told her that I was fine. However, when she left the room, I started crying. After feeling much better, I called my nurse coordinator, and she connected me to



my social worker. We talked for about 45 minutes. She helped me put things into perspective and gain clarity. I eventually got in touch with my therapist and had three sessions with her.

The sessions with my therapist helped me to make sense of the emotions I was experiencing while coping with the loss of my kidney. In order to deal with grief, I had to do an exercise. The exercise was to talk to my body. I was told to look at the gifting kidney as a child given away and to give it a name. So I named my gifting donation, Rose. I told my body that it was ok to miss Rose. It was ok to feel empty, hopeless and angry and that I will be ok without her. Rose is giving life to another human being and she has found a new home. I did the exercise several times. Eventually, I went from grief, to acceptance, to letting go.

Although a piece of me will be missing forever, I will be always grateful that piece of me is giving life to my sister, Sr. Kristina. She will be forever part of me. The profound act of kindness has not only saved Sr. Kristina, but it has also transformed my life to see beyond myself, deepening my faith in God, embracing what life brings and living life meaningfully. Everyday I find myself striving to live my authentic self, which makes me happy. I am convinced that what I did for Sr. Kristina was divine intervention from God. He gave her a second chance to live because He loves her so much. I believe situations happen in our lives for a reason because God works in mysterious ways, which we will never fully understand but can only cooperate in His plan. He puts situations right in front of our eyes to test our faith. By doing so, it helps us to develop and grow in our own faith journey.

I could have not gone through this journey without the support of the sisters in Province, friends and family. Sr. Judy Vallimont is one who was with me throughout all my pre-op visits to the hospital and meetings with my Living Donor Transplant team. Like my team, she helped me understand the process so I could make an informed decision. There were many other sisters who supported me in so many ways, including the staff of Maria Hall, which I am very grateful for. Besides, this event took place during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, so I will be forever grateful for my phenomenal team at the University of Chicago Medical Center, who made my healthcare experience successful and heartwarming, and sacrificed their loved ones to carry out their duty to save lives. From the preliminary, to pre-op appointments, to post-op recovery, the team helped me to understand and make an informed decision with courage and confidence, tusting that I was in safe hands at all times.

We are called to be life-giving to each other. By giving and receiving, we live a fulfilled and meaningful life. As religious sisters, we are called to uplift the downtrodden by sharing our gifts through our service, believing that God is in everything we do. Sr. Kristina is determined to do something meaningful with her life. She is pursuing a career in nursing, which is a great service of care, love and compassion, giving hope to those who have been in a similar situation as hers. As for me, I do not know what life will bring but I know for certain that I am very healthy, and I am living a normal life. I forget that I am living with one kidney, but I am trying everyday to maintain a healthy lifestyle. An act of kindness can bring sunshine to someone's life, nurturing and cultivating goodness, enabling that person to be good and kind to others. Every action we take or decision we make, whether big or small, what we do impacts other people and what they do impacts us as well. Let us therefore continue to be kind to one another, seeing the goodness in one another and celebrating it. Congratulations in advance to Sr. Kristina Lajar, SSpS who successfully completed her pre-nursing program online and graduated with an associate degree in Health Science (pre-nursing) from South College, North Carolina. If it was not for God's intervention, she would not be achieving this milestone in her life. So, to God be the Glory.

All in all, the experience was stressful, but I trusted God would see me through it because I believed it was his plan.

In Search of Life's Rhythm

A COMMUNITY SEEKING GOD

Sr. Louise Marie Mareanu, SSpS | Missioned in Ghana

NATIVE OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA



As our SSpS Sisters in Ghana prepare for the celebration of its 75 years in communion with the Holy Triune God, with one another and all people, we behold our uniqueness as SSpS religious missionaries as we bring hope to today's broken world. Our SSpS Constitution 308 calls us to "search for a rhythm of life that takes into account the growth of each sister, the development of the community and our service to the people of God." Therefore our togetherness at meals promotes friendship and love, a sense of community that provides the opportunity to listen to one another with the language that fosters unity. Thus, a genuine sense of community builds an atmosphere of peace, harmony and respect for one another.

What do I seek in religious community life today? I seek concern and love for one another. I seek politeness, an open heart to accept the way that I am. I seek a listening ear that can understand me and someone that I can trust and who respects me. I pursue a sharing community that shares life together – giving and receiving, and where there is effective communication that builds oneness in our uniqueness and diversity of cultures. Only then together we can proclaim "I am because we are"; only then together we can sing "we are one". As SSpS we can heal the broken world by beginning with ourselves. Thus we must heal our communities because we are a family called to serve with love, commitment and dedication.

Our presence as SSpS is a sacred calling that has a capacity to influence others as integral persons; a calling that requires prayer, work, planning, monitoring and evaluating to develop the unique SSpS within us. Consequently, driven by love, our passion for our vision and mission, and our mission we can achieve our goal to make the Holy Triune God known to all people.

A community finds its rhythm in life in love, in unity and harmony in the Triune God. Thus, it brings about transformation

and sustainable change to our neighbors. It is when we value one another in love and care that we are able to ply the rhythm of our life as SSpS within, with and through the most Holy Triune God transmitting, radiating and manifesting it to others. It is when we love our neighbors that we are able to enjoy the rhythms of differences, our internationalities, and our interculturalities in the diversity of unique individual SSpS.

It is therefore crucial to community to constantly dip our fingers into the holy water to pray and anoint ourselves on our heads so that our thoughts may be filled with peace and grace; to anoint our eyes so that we can be able to see vividly and to discern proficiently; to anoint our ears so that we are able to hear the cries of the poor and to hear the whispering word within ourselves. We also need to anoint our lips to proclaim the Good News of Jesus and our mission profoundly. We anoint our hands to help heal broken lives and that one may be able to do good and bring hope to others. We anoint our feet that we are able to walk our journey, to stand up for justice boldly and never to grow tired. Our hearts need to be anointed with compassion, love, and genuine kindness to those in need. We anoint our spirit for a renewal and strength for mission so that we are able to join hands with others to build bridges to reach out to the heart of the whole suffering world. We are anointed for service so that with fortitude we can respond to the daily demands of God's grace. With the God of Creation, our source of life, we can be faithful in our missionary service and in radically following Jesus who globally has called us into this unique family of SSpS.



We Travel with Faith Not by Sight

Sr. Evelyn Lobo, SSpS



*“Leave your country,
your people and your father’s
household and go to the land
I will show you.”*

Genesis 12:1

Catholic Charities in March requested the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) for sisters to volunteer at 19 Catholic Charities border sites in California, Texas, New Mexico and Arizona. They were responding to the huge numbers of unaccompanied migrant children and families crossing the southern border. Of these, Laredo, McAllen, Tucson, Yuma, San Antonio, and San Diego faced

significant numbers of arrivals and the challenges of caring for the many families and children during the COVID-19 pandemic. Nearly 250+ Sisters responded to help with this emergency situation.

Thousands of people from northern Central America (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras) and other regions (Cuba, Nicaragua, Ecuador, Haiti, Jamaica) and others are leaving their homes to seek asylum in United States because of violence, persecution, climate change, rising poverty, dangers to their lives, and COVID-19. Seeking asylum is legal under both domestic and international law – even during a pandemic. People arriving at the U.S. border have the right to request asylum without being criminalized, turned back to danger or separated from their families.

On arriving at the US-Mexico border, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement grants them temporary asylum papers. They are then



dropped off at one of the Humanitarian Respite Center, a transitional shelter like La Frontera Shelter in Laredo where I ministered. Every day we met 30 to 80 families: single mothers, single fathers and parents with children (<5 years) and few single women, men and pregnant women.

La Frontera Shelter serves as a last stop before they reunite with their sponsoring family member or friends. They are in our care from few hours up to 2-3 days. The only thing they carry are the temporary asylum papers, no shoe laces, no hair clips/bands, nothing except for the clothes they are wearing and shoes. Yet they are filled with joy, relief, hope. They are in U.S. with documents, in the care of the people of the Church and will soon be with their husband, mother, father, brother or sister. All of us do everything we can possibly do and give our best.

At the shelter, they receive a mask, bottled water and test for COVID 19. They are registered and assisted with getting in touch with their sponsors to purchase their travel tickets. They are offered change of clothing, shoes, personal hygiene, showers, warm meals, drinks, baby food, diapers, bed to sleep, travel snack bag, rides to the money exchange office and bus stations to purchase tickets. Often I accompanied them on their way to the airport or bus station where we exchanged our goodbyes and final words, a blessing (Qué Dios les bendiga. May God bless you).

Once again, they resume their journey and continue their travels to an unfamiliar, unknown, unpredictable perhaps unwelcomed life in United States. Will they find life? So far on their journey, they have been misled, lied to, taken advantage of, robbed, exposed to the hazardous roads and in some cases, raped or kidnapped for ransom. Yet they travel in faith and hope. When they began the journey, they knew their chances of making it to the other side were slim. In the end they may be deported. None of this discourages them to travel on. They



continue to travel, trusting, hoping, and placing their lives and the lives of their children in God's hands.

I began my journey going to a place I had never been to or knew anyone (except Becky, the executive director). Each day was unique. Each day was hot. Each day was intense, demanding. Each day was an opportunity to be a blessing. Every moment was an invitation. What more could we be and do for the journey? All was grace. I felt at home with the staff of Catholic Charities, local volunteers, religious sisters, Bishop of Laredo and asylum seekers. We deeply cared for each other and looked after each other. We were one family of the Divine Creator.



I am grateful to the Provincial Leadership Team for giving me this opportunity to serve and the JPIC team, Sr. Rose Therese and Lori Brayer for their support. The words of Fr. Greg (founder, Homeboy Industries) best describe my time at La Frontera Shelter located at the Laredo- Nuevo Laredo border.

"We can't save anyone. We can only show up with them and be transformed by the encounter. We are invited to stand at the margins so that the margins can get erased. You don't go there to make a difference, you go to the margins so the folks make YOU different".

- Fr. Greg Boyle, 2021 Mystics Summit.

I hope you find me different as I sure do.
Solace of Migrants, Pray for us.



Master I Want to See

“What do you want me to do for you?” These are Jesus’s words to the blind Bartimaeus who answered “Master, I want to see.” (Mark 10:51) It reminds me of myself at about the age of ten, when I was in our big back yard in Seattle, Washington. Nature has always been a marvel for me. When I saw the cherry and plum blossoms on the trees, it was hard for me later to realize that those beautiful and delicious cherries and plums came forth from all of that.

When I got older, I still remembered that experience and the marvel came again when I, as a missionary, sat in the sand on the Australian seashore seeing and hearing the tremendous power of the surf beating on the shoreline. It made me feel very small but aware of the “bigness” of a God who could bring all this about. I began to wonder how I could have any significance in a world that only God could bring forth. “Master, I want to see.”

My only solution was that I could be a tiny part of it all. The ocean was made of many drops of water – I could be a drop. The sand was made of many grains – I could be a grain. The fruit was a product of the growth of the tree – hopefully my growth can bring forth some kind of fruit. Recently there was an article in a Magnificat booklet, written by Cardinal Nguyen Van Thuan, who was imprisoned by the Vietnamese government for thirteen years, with some of the same thoughts about the ocean and the sand. God speaks to us in our need no matter where we are. As he wrote, “God brought each of us into this world for a purpose. Even if I am only a grain of sand or a drop of water in the ocean of life, the sand and the ocean would not be complete without me.”

This summer, hopefully during vacation time, let’s take some time thanking God that we are a small part of creation. The world would not be the same without each one of us. Let’s try to help one another become those little insignificant drops, grains and blossoms that make a beautiful world for all of us in which to live and to grow. (Right now, I’m trying to teach three ducks how to fly so that they can get out of our inner court and rejoin their families. As a part of God’s world, we all need one another.) The Holy Spirit uses everything and everybody to speak to us and open our eyes!

Sr. Pat Snider, SSpS

Holy Spirit Missionary Association, Directress



Congratulations!

Sr. Theresa ThanhThao Nguyen, SSpS celebrated her Perpetual Profession on Saturday, June 26, 2021 at the Convent of the Holy Spirit in Northfield, IL. Please join us in prayer for our dear Sister as she continues to serve God and His people!

Join Us In Mission



Meet Sr. Barbara Miensopust (Jamaica) and Sr. Edel Maria Deong (St. Kitts) who share aspects of their mission service through an interview and images on YouTube. Through your prayers and generous support, YOU are in mission with us!

 **YouTube** @holy spirit sisters usa

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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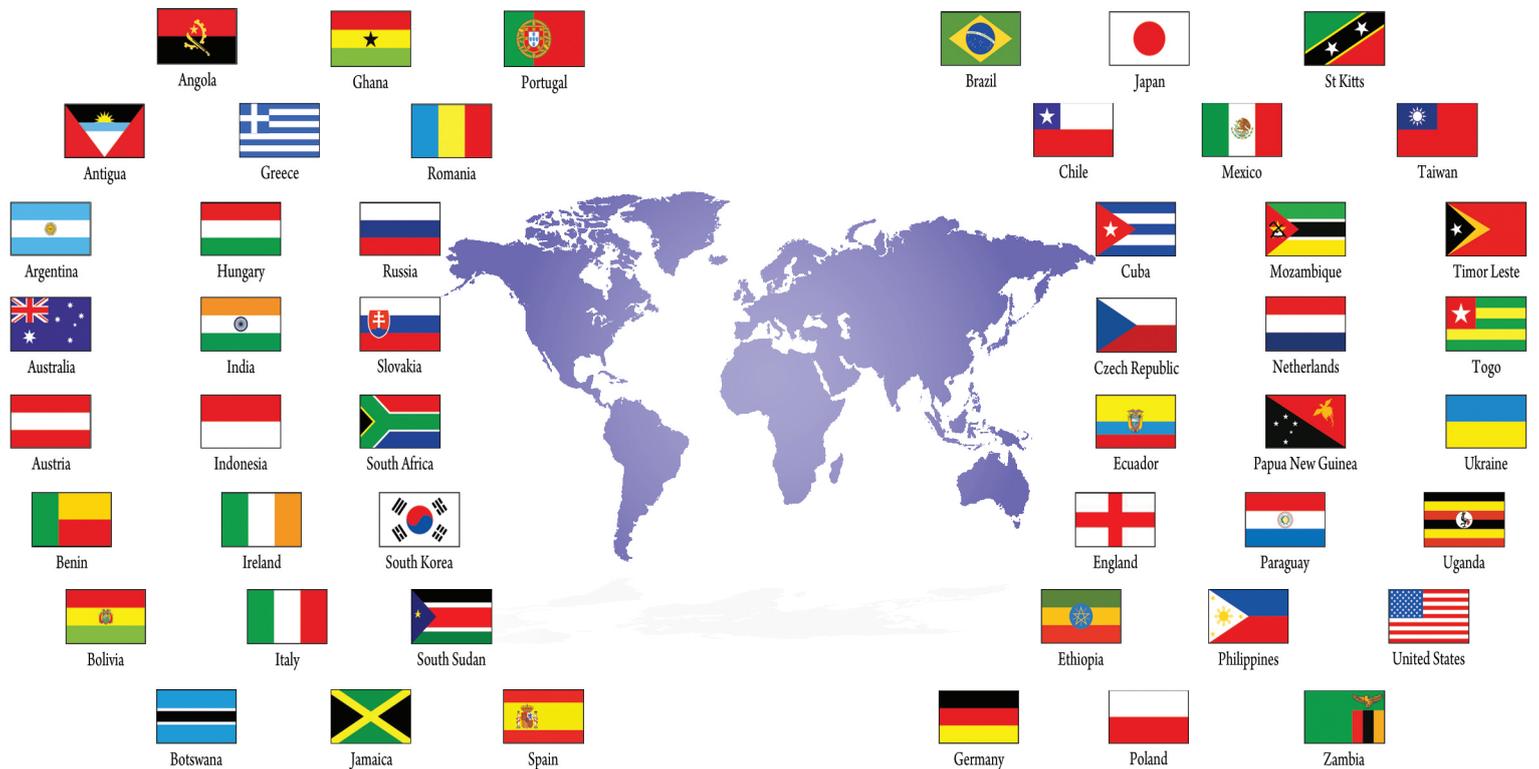


Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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.



Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters

Called by the Spirit - Embracing the World