



# SSpS MISSION

Called by the Spirit ~ Embracing the World

Missionary Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit  
Paraclete Province — USA and Caribbean  
August 2019



Ministry in Athens, Greece

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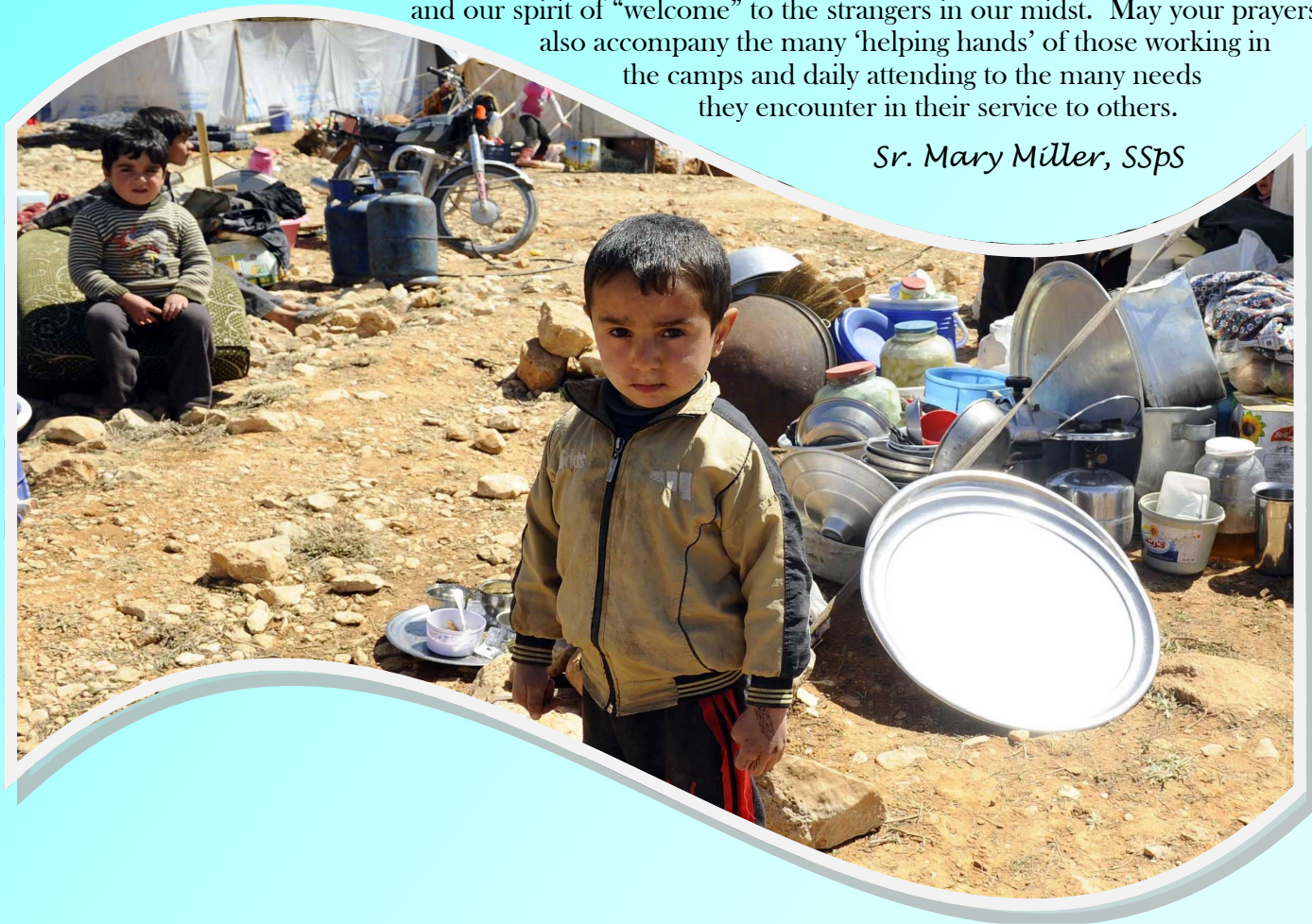
# Focus on Mission...

In the last quarter of the 19th Century ( 1875-1899), the foundation years of the Mission Society and Congregations founded and co-founded by St. Arnold Janssen, Bl. Maria Helena Stollenwerk and Bl. Josepha Hendrina Stenmanns, and Mother Mary Michaela (Society of the Divine Word priests and brothers—1875, Missionary Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit—1889, and Missionary Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit of Perpetual Adoration—1896) mission outreach followed the immigration routes of German trade and shipping with ministry extended to the German-speaking immigrants to Argentina, Togo, Papua New Guinea, the United States, Brazil, China and.... After setting down roots in these places, outreach and evangelization was expanded to the local native populations.

Today the plight of the immigrant and refugee is at record proportions throughout the world. Our conscience is awakened to the call to respond and minister to the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of these people throughout the world. Initially, our SSps Sisters responded through advocacy for peace and justice, for humane treatment for all immigrants and refugees, and for nations to extend arms of welcome and hearts of love to those seeking relief and safety from poverty, war, abuse, and other dangers.

During the past decade, our Sisters have broadened our response to this call for love and mercy, welcome and acceptance to people “different” from us.... The Sisters of our Generalate in Rome opened their hearts and home to migrant families (women and their children). They provide a place of safety as well as opportunities for the family members to enter into and adjust to the local Italian culture. Sisters in South Sudan, Uganda, Greece, and at our USA / Mexican border are daily reaching out and responding to the needs of refugees and migrants. The stories of “Life and Mission” in this issue, as well as other recent issues of SSps MISSION, highlight our SSps response to this crisis. It is our hope that these few examples bring to birth in each of us an empathy for the suffering peoples of our world. Many the stories also arouse in each of us a response to do what we can to respond to the crisis with our prayers, our personal efforts toward advocacy, and our spirit of “welcome” to the strangers in our midst. May your prayers also accompany the many ‘helping hands’ of those working in the camps and daily attending to the many needs they encounter in their service to others.

*Sr. Mary Miller, SSps*





*At 'Home'*

*with my Family in a Refugee Center  
in Uganda*

*Sr. Rebecca Chann David, SSpS*

*I am happy to share with you the story of my reunion with my family. I could not go to South Sudan because the horrible civil war in the country had not yet ended. Instead, I had a family reunion in a center near to our SSpS Sisters in Uganda, Africa.*

Pictured above: (L-R) Sr. Rebecca Chann David, SSpS,  
her sister Angleina Nyaloi, her nephew Joseph, SSpS Sisters in Uganda, and her mother, Maria Daklat.

It was March 21, 2019, when I left for Uganda to see my family. I had waited a long time to receive my visa and the yellow fever certificate. Luckily I received them both! Then came the frightening news about the Ethiopian airline crash! One of my flights was also with the Ethiopian airlines. I was frightened! When asked by my Provincial, Sr. Dorota Maria, if I will be okay, I paused and said "I will be fine." I did not want to change airlines and waste money. I believed in God's mercy and love. I decided to go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation before I left. In case something would happen to me I would be in God's hand.

When I arrived in Entebbe Airport Uganda, the Sisters came for me. One of our Nigerian SSpS Sisters, Sr. Celestia, a member of the Ethiopian Region, arrived in Uganda the day before. My family traveled the whole night to North Uganda where the Sisters live. The Sisters gave us a warm welcome! Since the convent was small for all of us, Sr. Benigilda arranged accommodations for me and my family with another religious congregation at the Marian Brothers compound. I stayed there with my family (my mother, Maria Daklat; my sister, Angelina Nyaloi; and her son, Joseph) for six weeks.

My mother, Maria Daklat, my sister Angelina Nyaloi and her son, Joseph and I lived near our Sister at the religious compound of the Marian brothers. It was difficult to listen to some of the stories they shared on how God saved them during the Sudan Civil War in 2013-2014. My mother shared that some of the village people were collected into houses and were burned. Others were brought out of the church and were killed and the church was burned. Since they lost everything, my mother and other women went into the 'bush' to cut grass for building some little huts. The soldiers arrested them and they were locked in prison for half a year. They did hard labor for the soldiers. However, the worst enemy was hunger! My sister, Angelina, said the war was so bad, bodies laid everywhere especially on the sides of the roads and no one could bury them. It was difficult to walk on the roads because of the terrible stench. They could not cover their nose because the soldiers were around and they would say "These are people like you, and you cover your nose!" Even more, the snakes, the wild animals, and animals of the fields fed on the bodies. After a long time, big cars came to clean the places and the bodies were pushed into big holes and buried.

As a family, we shared memories of my father, David, and my brother, John, who have passed away. We believe they are resting in God's eternal peace, love, and mercy.

We also had a good reunion, as we enjoyed many happy, joyful, and humorous stories from our mother. I convinced my mother not to return to South Sudan due to the absence of peace in the country. Now she lives in the Bidi Bidi Refugee Camp with a young woman from our Nuer Tribe. Because my sister's husband does not want to move to the Uganda Refugee Camp, my sister and nephew returned to South Sudan. Our SSpS Sisters are also caring for my mother. They go to the Bidi Bidi Camp and visit her.



The small huts (homes) of the refugees.

Members of the St. Arnold Janssen Family (SVD priests and Brothers and our SSpS Sisters) are serving the most needy refugees at the Bidi Bidi Camp in Uganda. It is the largest refugee camp in the world. There are three hundred thousand refugees living in this camp. The camp is divided into five zones and there are four chapels in each zone. Our Sisters travel every day to serve God's people as they rotate each month in the five zones. The Sisters are serving the women, children, youth, and young girls, as well as those afflicted with leprosy in the camp. They created projects to help women do handiwork for decorations and knitting projects for making bedsheets, as well as tailoring projects, all of which help the women to support themselves. Occasionally, from the four chapel areas, the Sisters bring women from the camp to their convent. For 3-4 days, the Sisters have a time for prayer and recollection with the women and share meals with them. The women experience the abundance of God's love for them through the ministry of the Sisters. They are so happy, and they take time to share their African dances and perform the African "lulu" of joy.

The Sisters sponsor some young South Sudanese girls from the refugee camp to attend the Ugandan boarding high school. They too come to the Sisters' convent for recollection and prayer services. In addition, they work with children and children animators and help the youth participate in the life of the parish as altar servers. Of special concern, the Sisters provide basic needs and some medications to the persons suffering with leprosy.

I am most grateful to our Sisters of the Ethiopian Region, especially those serving in Uganda, and all our SSpS throughout the world for their prayers during this time of family reunion. Let us continue to pray for peace in South Sudan.

# WITNESSING GOD'S LOVE

## Among the People of Badessa, Ethiopia



By: Sr. Josefa Twapita, SSpS

A Sister from Angola in Mission in Ethiopia

I came to Ethiopia nine years ago. At first I was assigned to one of the remote areas called Weragu. There I experienced love and care as well as the challenges due to the location of the mission itself. After six years, I was sent to Badessa where I have been working until now. Sadly this community mission is about to close.

As the new year began, we were all wondering what would happen to the people who for the past 17 years have been supported by the project held by the SSpS. The answer lies in God's hands for He is the only provider for people. Yet, a slight hope arises as we reflect and look back on these past years.

### **BADESSA MISSION**

Badessa is situated in the southern part of Ethiopia and its population numbers 1.7 million. The people are called *Walaitta* and have a rich and diverse culture.

The Badessa Mission was started by our Sisters in the Region who saw that the people have life and life in abundance. They were inspired by the words of the Prophet Micah: "This is what Yahweh, your God, asks of you, to act justly, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:8)

Such inspiring words helped us through the years, especially to some of us who later came to be part of the endeavor to share the Good News of God.

From the beginning of this mission, Sisters were able to practice what the Prophet preached. For each one strives to bring justice to the people so that they live with dignity. Thus many people benefitted from the project held by the SSpS which is dedicated to life enhancement; poverty reduction; gender sensitivity integration (literacy programs) and family / community based development; education of women and girls; health; socio-cultural

HTP (Harmful Traditional Practices). I was given the responsibility to care for the youth, especially girls from the secondary school to university level ages. Most of these girls come from distant villages and are brought to Badessa to continue their education in grades ten to twelve and then to the university. Sisters provide the girls with weekly food, school fees and materials, and house rent.

The girls are also guided to discover their potential and inner capacities through weekly English and computer classes, as well as skills training such as embroidery during the summer holidays. They are given tutorials in mathematics, chemistry, physics, and Amharic (the common spoken language in Ethiopia) for many of the girls know only their own local language.

### CHANGING CULTURAL PRACTICES

For me, it has been an experience to treasure as I learned a lot from this people and their culture. However, there are many things that I do not agree with, especially concerning the Harmful Traditional Practices (HTP). [Note: HTP include traditional practices with preference for a male child, female genital mutilation, early and forced marriage (often with an older man), marriage by abduction, encouraging girls to be silent and subservient, and shouldering all the domestic tasks. Girls and women live to serve a man.]

In Ethiopia, these practices are carried out mostly with the young girls between birth and age 15, and occasionally on adult women. In the villages around Badessa the common age is between the ages of four and ten, although reports suggest that the average age is falling in some areas in Ethiopia.

Within the project we have a program which tries to teach the young girls to say “no” to such practices since it is harming many young girls and women. But we have a long way to go, due to the cultural misconceptions concerning the circumcision of young girls and women. We try our best to support these young people, but when many return home they are still forced by their families and subjected to the practice.



Some of the participants in the projects sponsored by the Sisters in Badessa, Ethiopia.

We have had some success, but sadly, also a number of unsuccessful instances. Sometimes girls are reluctant to tell us the truth as they want so much to continue being part of the project.

Our hope is that those girls who were participants in the project can cherish what they learned and teach their children how to say no to such violent practices in the future.

Overall, many girls reached the university and were able to complete their courses. They are now working in different fields. Some are even employed in the government institutions.

Thanks to the efforts of each Sister who worked in this project and other lay partners, we can say that God has blessed us with many good people who were able to overcome poverty and are now living with dignity.

As the project in Badessa Mission ends, we can say that we have done our best to act justly, love tenderly, and walk humbly with our God.



At this moment in human history, marked by great movements of migration, identity is not a secondary issue. Those who migrate are forced to change some of their most distinctive characteristics and, whether they like or not, even those who welcome them are also forced to change. How can we experience these changes not as obstacles to genuine development, rather as opportunities for genuine human, social and spiritual growth, a growth which respects and promotes those values which make us ever more humane and help us to live a balanced relationship with God, others and creation?

Pope Francis: World Day of Migrants & Refugees 2016

# Looking Ahead

## News from our Sisters in Athens, Greece

*Sr. Hemma Jaschke, SSpS*



In November 2017, I had the chance to visit the SSpS Euro-Project engaged with help for refugees in Athens, Greece. On my second visit from January 17-22, 2019, I had the opportunity to witness first-hand how our project with the refugees had developed.

### **The Community of Sisters**

The most obvious change was the different composition of members of the community. From the very start, the community was conceived as a “Community in Movement” and accordingly there was a lot of movement during the past year. Since December 2018, there are four Sisters in the community: Sr. Ada Lick from Austria who was actually there from the beginning, Sr. Preethi Silva from India, Sr. Ewa Plizcak from Poland, and Sr. Carmen Elisa Bando from Argentina. There were also big changes in the JRS (Jesuit Relief Service) with whom we work. Last summer, Ms Francisca Onofre, a young Portuguese, took over the management of the JRS in Greece from Maurice Joyeux, S.J. She has a colorful team at her side. It consists of fulltime officers (for the most part local men and women) and a constantly changing group of volunteers (mostly young people from France and Portugal). Together with the Sisters and

some refugee women who are engaged as helpers, this group has the responsibility for the JRS shelter and the various things it offers such as legal aid, psychological counseling, a store for clothing, a tea-house business, and the “Magis” store.

### **The Ministry Work of the Sisters**

The Sisters work as co-responsible persons in all areas of the project. Sr. Ewa, the leader of the community, is very much engaged in the “Shelter”. She teaches English, but she is also a trained psychologist and as such an important companion for children and adults in their personal search for answers. She is also responsible for the volunteers of JRS.

Sr. Preethi, with her facility in various languages, can easily approach the people in the “Shelter”. She has an open ear for the many different escape stories from the refugees.

Sr. Carmen Elisa is a teacher. Until recently she served as the Mission Secretary in our Generalate in Rome. She is responsible for all things concerning education, for the so-called “Magis-Store”, which is located on the second floor of the house where the Sisters live. This is an initiative aimed at giving the

the refugees prospects for the future and to motivate them to invest in their future. There is space for language classes in English, French, and Greek. Computer courses are offered. There is a library, a play room for children, and a “quiet” room to which one can withdraw once in awhile.

The English classes are very much appreciated and attracting more and more people. Since the groups are large and all those eager to learn are people between the ages of 17 and 65, the levels of learning are naturally very different. Therefore, Sr. Francisca, SSpS, who was there for a month as a volunteer, and Sr. Carmen Elisa Bando were immediately commissioned to help with the classes.

The small group given to Sr. Carmen Elisa had a young Afghan woman who had graduated from secondary school and demonstrated a real interest in and talent for languages; two young women from Iran who had some basic knowledge; and a 65 year old man from Afghanistan. He was illiterate, but had such astonishing fine audio perception that he could repeat the English words flawlessly after hearing them once. Slowly he also began to copy the English words in Latin script. Hassan made a deep impression on me with his great eagerness to learn and his radiant friendliness.

Sr. Ada Lick takes care of the sick and injured, not only in the Shelter, but also the refugees in the surrounding neighborhood who make use of what the JRS offers. It is important to her to keep the Shelter clean and in an orderly condition. She pays constant attention to the fact that the place with all the different cultures and the often changing groups of volunteers remains a descent place to live even though it is simple and often subject to improvisation.

## Networking

The Sisters started to make many connections during the past year. On Monday, I could accompany Sr. Ada and a team of Sisters of Charity of Mother Theresa of Calcutta on their weekly tour of street work. After preparing sandwiches and hot chocolate in the Sisters’ house, we travelled in a small bus with a group of volunteers through town in order to visit the homeless and above all the addicts in their places. Since these people are chased away from the big public places by the police again and again, they live dispersed on many streets and places. On this trip, we met a very mixed group of Greeks, refugees, and migrants. The often hopeless waiting and life without any prospects in Greece, drives refugees into addiction or into the drug-dealing business. The living conditions are simply beyond description. Addicts, men and women, live on the street, literally in filth.



Sr. Ada Lick attending to a child.

Besides giving them something nourishing for the body on our weekly visits, we talk with them and we pay attention to them as our fellow human beings. At least once a week they are noticed, face to face, and addressed in a personal fashion. That is more important than bread and chocolate for many of them.

Sr. Ada, who is always equipped with her medicine and first-aid bag, is not hesitant at all to take care of wounds you would not want to see, or to alleviate sicknesses that are more difficult to bear for any person who is homeless. Here too, the human kindness afforded them has a healing effect.

## Refugees in Greece

According to the information our Sisters have, there are currently about 60,000 refugees in Greece. In Athens, many live in empty, old hotels or unused buildings the city has made available to them.



Our Sisters In Athens, Greece:

(l-r) Sr. Ewa Plizcak, Sr. Preethi Silva, Sr. Carmen Elisa Bando, Sr. Ada Lick



There are refugee camps, a number of shelters, and private places to live. For those who have none of these provisions there are only the streets, the parks, and other public places. On our tour at the harbor, we also saw makeshift living places often arranged with blankets and canvasses at the outside walls of empty buildings.

The dire situation of the refugees in Greece is ongoing. The conditions in the big camps are most deplorable; an additional difficulty for the refugees is the wet and cold weather. During the coming months, we will explore whether and how we, the Missionary Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit, can broaden our service to the refugees.



Sr. Preethi Silva attending to children in the shelter.

The motto of the JRS “accompany—serve—advocate” sums up the engagement of our Sisters there pretty accurately. For many refugees, it is increasingly important to find help and support in the process of integration and in the effort to work toward a new perspective for their future.

While during the past couple of years their aim was always to get to the “West” of Northern Europe via Greece, now many refugees want to stay in Greece.



Sr. Ada Lick spending time with some women.

### Encountering the Volunteers

In particular, what impressed me this time during my stay were the volunteers with young and older people who put their time as well as personal resources at the service of the refugees. For the young volunteers at JRS, our Sisters are important partners and persons of reference. A young Portuguese woman who was standing in the kitchen of the Sisters holding a sweet local mandarin orange in her hand expressed this very spontaneously: “Here with you it is like at home. We all like to meet in the kitchen.”

For people in flight, it is so important to be acknowledged as a person by other persons and to find welcome. In all our powerlessness, which is a feeling all volunteers live with, I was also deeply aware of the fact that the presence of compassionate people makes a huge difference.

***The Kingdom of God means...***

*to be with and to identify with people, especially the threatened, the oppressed and the downtrodden; to give life to those who have none; to remove all oppressive relationships of one person over another, or one nation over another, to bring them mutual solidarity; to liberate people from any kind of fear; not to condemn people, not to nail them to their sinful past or negative experiences, but to give them in all circumstances a new future, and hope that brings life, to love people without distinction, without selection, without limits; to oppose what is untrue, what is no longer relevant and has no future, a legalistic mentality which overlooks the actual person and promotes only uninspired conformity, and prayer that is not in spirit and truth but mere routine. In short, Jesus' words and deeds reveal the kingdom of God as God's rule concerned with the radical well-being and humanness of men (women)."*

*Excerpt from: "The Sermon on the Mount: Studies in the Synoptic Gospels" by Herman Hendricks*

# *My Family Ancestry*

*Today, many people are interested in finding  
their cultural roots,  
searching to discover where they really came from.  
Also there is real enmity shown to people  
who may be from a different country,  
a people of different color, or speaking a different language.*

*When I was reading Fr. Ronald Rolheiser's book,  
Wrestling With God,*

*I was struck by this sentence:*

*"In a manner of speaking, to be made  
in the image and likeness of God  
is to have a microchip of divinity inside us."*

*While I was in Antigua, our dog "Tiggy" had a microchip inserted  
so that she could always be identified as belonging to us.  
If she got lost, she would be returned to her home.*

*The thought came to me  
that this microchip is really what the Holy Spirit does for us.  
The Spirit of God, dwelling in our heart  
helps us to realize that each of us is a child of God  
and that our home is with our loving God.*

*We all have the same microchip.*

*We know who we are and where we are going.*

*If everyone is a child of God,  
does color, nationality, language, poverty, or wealth,  
even religion make us different from each other?*

*What a blessed people we are  
since we all belong to one big family,  
the "Family of God".*

*As we see so much division in our country and our world,  
let us beg the Holy Spirit to gift us  
with a mind with which we can perceive  
that the whole of creation is so wonderfully connected...  
that all are one in YOU!*

*As a member of God's Family,  
let us be Spirit-driven Witnesses in the world!*

*Sr. Pat Snider, SSps*

*Directress of the Holy Spirit Missionary Association*



Sr. Catherine Mueller  
70 Years

# Celebrating Our Jubilarians

*Grateful for their many years of faithful,  
dedicated service to God, our Congregation,  
and the People they served,  
we continue to pray  
that the Lord will bless them  
with peace, joy, and love!*



Sr. Mary Joseph Hofschulte  
70 Years



Sr. Maria Agnes Petersmann  
70 Years



Sr. Jeanne Blie  
60 Years



Sr. Mary Agnes Fahrland  
70 Years



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Editor: Sr. Mary Miller, SSpS