



SSps MISSION

Called by the Spirit ~ Embracing the World

Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters

Paraclete Province — USA and Caribbean

November 2019



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Focus on Mission

This morning, with the chill of autumn days in the air, the bright sun illuminates the various colors of changing leaves. One cannot help but marvel at the wonders and beauty of creation! How grand is God's love! Daily, we are invited to share in God's care for creation and all of life through our efforts to protect our environment, to do what we can to use our natural resources wisely, and to promote safe, sustainable living conditions for all people. **MISSION!**

During the month of October, our Holy Father, Pope Francis, invited all Communities of the Catholic Faith and others to dedicate the month to the renewal of our baptismal commitment of discipleship in Christ... **MISSION!**

Christ was **SENT** by the Father to reveal and show the world of His time the image of God – the God of **LOVE, COMPASSION, INCLUSION, and MERCY!** The Apostles and early Disciples experienced this first hand and incorporated these values in their personal lives. In time, their call to discipleship, their response to Christ's invitation to follow, was not merely an opportunity to be infused with the spirit of Christ but was given as a command to **"GO!"** **GO SHARE THE GOOD NEWS!**



Each of us has also been **INVITED** to discipleship! We have received of God's goodness, love, mercy, and compassion. Our Baptism is a command to **"GO!"**

It is not a matter of "going" to another place. It is a matter of "being in another way"! It is not so much a matter of "doing" great things, but rather a "way of doing even small, insignificant things with love, compassion, and mercy – just as Jesus did!"

Have you ever experienced the **JOY** of a listening ear? The **GENTLENESS** of a helping hand? The **SIMPLE GESTURES** that tell another **"YOU ARE SPECIAL... I CARE ABOUT YOU.... I UNDERSTAND...."**? Every time we act in these common, ordinary ways, we carry out our baptismal call to discipleship, to mission, to **GO!** When we meet another with respect and dignity, we fulfill our mission mandate. When we reach out in loving generosity, we share in mission . We are missionaries, every time we.....!

During the coming holiday season, the holy days of Thanksgiving, Advent, and Christmas, may our "missionary" spirit be reflected in **"HOW WE ARE"**, knowing that it is in the simple gestures of love, joy, peace, compassion, and mercy that the Christ is born anew in the hearts of others.

With gratitude for your many acts of prayer-filled and financial support you shared with our Sisters in ministry throughout the world during this year, we wish to assure **YOU** of **OUR** prayers and blessings for the new year 2020!

Sr. Mary Miller, SSps

"It is not the state in life that makes us a missionary. It is how we live it!"

Bl. Maria Helena Stollenwerk

*Blessed
Maria Helena
Stollenwerk
Co-Foundress
SSpS/AP
Feastday
November 28th*



*“You
did not choose me.
But I chose you...
and I appointed you
to bear fruit,
fruit that will last...”
Jn 15:16*

Blessed Maria Helena Stollenwerk, along with St. Arnold Janssen and Bl. Josepha Stenmanns, formed the foundation stones of our Congregation, Missionary Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit. The Church honors her feast day each year on November 28th. For us, her missionary daughters, she is an example of the baptized person who responded to God’s call to live the Gospel of Jesus in the circumstances of her daily life as well as dedicate her life to sharing the message of God’s love with peoples of the world, through the lives of our missionary Sisters throughout the world.

Who is this woman who was “Baptized and Sent...”?

As a child, Helena Stollenwerk could read and knit at the same time! In reading the periodicals of the Holy Childhood Association while tending her work in the field, she learned to listen to the voice of God in her heart. She began her mission of caring, as God cares, by saving every penny for the abandoned children in China.

As a teenager, Helena perceived and felt God’s way of seeing and doing things for the missions. The burning desire to go to the missions to care for others continued to blaze in her heart. On December 30, 1882, she rose early in the morning, helped with the threshing, and then left her family to follow her call to mission.

In the mission kitchen of the Society of the Divine Word, in Steyl, Netherlands, Helena encouraged the other young women who were waiting for Fr. Arnold Janssen, SVD, to found a mission congregation for women. As challenging as the waiting was, she listened, prayed, and learned to place her trust in the Holy Spirit. She wrote, “Trust God completely at all times. The Holy Spirit will help us in our anxieties and needs, even in the most difficult of situations.” In 1889, after waiting for seven years, the Congregation of Missionary Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit was finally established.

Helena, now known as Mother Maria, gradually read the signs of the times and realized that she would not be going to the missions. Her missionary vocation was taking a different direction. In the strength of the Holy Spirit, she responded to God’s way of seeing and doing things by being a missionary where she was, but not in China where she so desired to go. The Holy Spirit stabilized her missionary vocation in a new and creative way by asking her to prepare her Sisters for the missions! She earned the name of “beggar” in her frequent prayerful intercessions for her Sisters who went to mission as far as Argentina in 1895 and to Togo in 1896.

Mother Maria’s missionary vocation took another direction when Arnold Janssen, for the third time, asked if she would transfer to the second Congregation of Sisters he

founded, the Sister Servants of the Holy Spirit of Perpetual Adoration (SSpSAP), the contemplative branch of the three mission societies. Listening to God and recognizing what God was really asking of her, Mother Maria responded freely and positively to the Holy Spirit’s prompting. On December 8, 1898, she transferred to the fledgling community. She moved from Co-foundress and Congregational Leader to that of a novice. She devoted her life to prayer for the missions and for the intentions of the missionary Sisters, priests, and Brothers. Hardly a year went by as a cloistered “Pink” Sister, when she showed signs of tubercular encephalitis, an infection which led to her death on February 3, 1900.

Fr. Arnold was in Vienna, Austria, when he was informed of Mother Maria’s death and immediately requested that she be “honored as foundress”. She was a sign of blessing for Ikuko Terumichi, a Japanese woman and music teacher who was cured of a deadly disease of the intestines in 1962 and was the cause for Mother Maria Helena’s beatification in 1995. Today, she continues to be a blessing for each Holy Spirit Missionary Sister in the 49 countries where we proclaim God’s love, compassion, and mercy through missionary service.

Bl. Maria Helena Stollenwerk was chosen to go and bear fruit that would last. May she also communicate God’s love and life to each of you. May she be a blessing to YOU!

Sr. Anita Marie Gutierrez, SSpS



Mission for Peace

In preparation for the 15th General Chapter of our Congregation, we (SSpS Sisters) are called to reflect on peace building and reconciliation. As missionary women living in communion, we realize that there is woundedness and violence in, among, and around us. Our call to be instruments of peace is a commitment... to ensure that people, especially the poor and marginalized, are safe from harm, have access to law and justice, are part of the political decisions that pertain to them, have access to better economic opportunities and enjoy better livelihoods.

Stories of various missionary activities of our Sisters around the world illustrate the fact that a group of thoughtful and committed women can certainly change the world. Moved by the Spirit and in communion with each other, we become heralds of peace to the society, be it to individuals or communities. For example, the migrant workers in Korea, women who are victims of violence in India, sick prisoners in Togo, or the traumatized population in South Sudan.

Our peacebuilding initiative may seem rather insignificant or slow in this fast moving world. However, John F. Kennedy said; "Peace is a daily, a weekly, a monthly process, gradually changing opinions, slowly eroding old barriers, quietly building new structures". Let us continue to do our part wherever we are and let the Spirit do the rest.

Sr. Gini George, SSpS - Rome

Our SSpS Community in Jeju, Korea, is a result of the 2nd Provincial Chapter in Korea that invited us to 'widen the circle of communion' with people in other parts of Korea. Responding to the invitation of the local Church, the Province started a community in Jeju, Korea, in December 2018. Our initial plan was to work with migrant workers but soon we discovered that God had other plans for us.

Island of Asylum Seekers - KOREA

Although the number of refugees in Korea had been increasing continuously, it was not obvious until April 2018, when over 500 Yemenis applied for refugee status at the Jeju immigration office. They came through Malaysia, using the free visa policy of Jeju, which is a place for enhancing tourism in the area. Our Sisters in Jeju supported the refugees with shelter, food, and medical assistance. More than 300 people have been served at the Migrant Pastoral Center Naomi during the first year.

In April 2018, the government decided to close the border of Jeju so that the refugees could not travel to the mainland anymore. If they tried to cross, they were detained on the island. People from countries such as Yemen, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan could not enter anymore, and those in Jeju could not go to the mainland.

By November 2018, most of the Yemeni Asylum seekers received "humanitarian status" which allowed them to work, live, get medical insurance, and move freely on the Korean Peninsula. More than 50 people are still waiting for their status and are stranded on the island. Currently, people from India, Vietnam, Morocco, and other countries are also seeking asylum. This situation makes our ministry here indispensable. Day by day, our story with refugees in Jeju gets more colorful and challenging.

Sr. Cristina Evelina Gal, SSpS - Korea



Stop Violence Against Women - INDIA

A Woman's Cell has been operative through Uday Social Development Society, a Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) wing of the India Central Province of the SSs Sisters since its inauguration in 2017. It was formed in order to stand up against and prevent violence perpetrated towards women in India. It is an urban, community-based program providing various services to women, such as legal aid, counseling, mutual consensus, referral service, rehabilitative approaches, and so forth. The cell is working consistently towards supporting victims and getting due justice for them. Currently, this venture is experimenting to see whether clients could get justice without taking the cases to the civil court. All the issues considered until today have been resolved at the family level. As part of the strategy, 13 women have been selected as core team members and are trained to address the cases of domestic violence in the slum areas.



Sisters Shyni, Ancilla, and Lizy with the Core Team members, staff, and guests.

Since its inception, 80 cases have been registered and given legal assistance. About 42 cases of domestic violence, 3 cases of rape, 16 cases of sexual harassment, and 19 cases of quarrels among families were settled. In the last two years, Uday Society had organized several legal trainings, workshops, legal camps, and exposure visits to change the mindset of women and the community. Initially, many women did not raise their voice against violence because they believed that violence is acceptable and is part of their culture. However, because of their intense training, women have started to oppose violence at home and outside.

On June 28, 2019, more than 200 women, lawyers, and other like-minded persons participated in a program to celebrate the foundation day of the Women Cell. The main objective of the program was to review and analyze the progress and challenges of the endeavor. At the end of the program, the participants came to the conclusion that gender-based violence is strongly prevalent in families and communities and that there is an urgent need to empower women and provide them opportunities where they can express themselves fearlessly. Then, it was decided that the operation of the forum would be expanded to many more areas in the State of Madhya Pradesh. During the celebration, the thirteen women who are the core members of the Cell were honored for their outstanding contribution in resolving conflicts among families and reducing the violence in their respective slum areas.

Sr. Lizy Thomas, SSsS - India



HOPE

in the **Midst** of **Trauma and Violence**

SOUTH SUDAN

Sr. Maria Fe Divino, SSpS

“I hope that you know that you are not alone, that our God is with you, as you nurture others”. These inspiring words gave me courage and reassurance as I prepared myself to return to South Sudan. Being a nurse tutor at the Catholic Health Training Institute (CHTI) for two years opened my eyes to the realities and life in South Sudan. After a short break, I returned to South Sudan to take up my new responsibility as the Deputy-Principal of CHTI that trains nurses and midwives. The Institute based in Wau is a venture of the South Sudan Solidarity Project. *

I have come to love the people, our students and our staff, and my fellow solidarity members. Wau, South Sudan, is a second home for me. People are still suffering from violence and massive poverty. Most of them continue to live in camps with fear and mistrust because they cannot count on those who are supposed to protect them.

I firmly believe we are making an impact on the lives of our students and the country as a whole. During a recent meeting of the Board of Principals with the Ministry of Health, the government expressed its gratitude for the quality of health care and human resources our school is providing. Our school has been



selected as a model school from among 25 Health Training Institutes in South Sudan based on the performance in the National Board Examination and Job Performance Evaluation of our graduates. Indeed, something to celebrate and hope for!

Above all, the diversity of our communities consisting of religious men and women from different religious Congregations, ages and cultural backgrounds is by itself the best way of witnessing and proclaiming the Good News in a country torn by tribalism and power struggles. In this difficult time of distress and suffering of the people of South Sudan, we have chosen to remain by their side, witnessing the power of God’s love over hatred and division. For our students and the people around us, our living together is a confirmation that peace within diversity is possible. We risk our lives not because it is heroic, but because we are impelled by God’s love who is in solidarity with those who are suffering and in great need.

* Note: The South Sudan Solidarity Project is a collective commitment of Religious (women and men) working together in partnership with the Church in South Sudan. Its aim is to create self-sustainable educational, health, agricultural, and pastoral institutions and programs that will help to empower the South Sudanese people to build a just and peaceful society. Our SSpS Sisters are part of this collective endeavor.



Prison Ministries

Healthcare of the Prisoners: A Unique Experience - TOGO

Monseigneur Nicodème Barrigah, Bishop of Atakpame, requested the SSpS in Togo to provide healthcare for prisoners in the civil prison of Atakpame, through their health center. We began the apostolate in April 2019. One of the Sisters, along with two nurses and a medical assistant, visit the prison once a month offering free medical checkups and medicines. During our visits, we discovered that the prevalent illnesses among the prisoners are malaria, skin diseases, and high blood pressure.

There are around 400 inhabitants living in gruesome conditions in the prison. The four of us are able to attend to only 150 of them per visit. There is one medical assistant appointed by the government who attends them once a week, which is almost as bad as having none at all. These visits to the prison have helped me become more compassionate and realize the value of freedom. The prisoners, at every moment of their life in the jail, need our constant support psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually. We hope to give them the best treatment possible whenever we attend to them.

Sr. Sarojini Surin, SSpS

A Call Center in the Prison - ROME

During a spiritual accompaniment training program in June, we were invited by one of the chaplains to visit the Rebibbia Prison in Rome. Besides listening to the stories of those who have been involved in prison ministry for a long time, we met with some people who are engaged in an interesting project. The project is a Call Center for Bambino Gesù Children's Hospital which operates from the jail.

For the past few years, some inmates of the Rabibbia Prison have had the opportunity to work for the hospital through this project. On a daily basis, they answer hundreds of telephone calls requesting medical attention at the Pre-registration Center. The trained prisoners manage the enquiries and requests for appointments made by parents of the sick children. Since 2011, more than 30 inmates have been trained by an interdisciplinary team and are employed as Call Center operators. Currently, there are 10 operators working in a well-equipped office.

Due to this initiative, the prisoners are able to have paid jobs that allow them to remain in the productive social fabric.

Furthermore, it is a unique opportunity that helps them to regain appreciation for life and values such as care, family, solidarity and compassion. They revealed that they are touched and transformed by the stories of hope and pain they hear everyday. Through these stories, they connect with their own stories, families, experiences of pain, vulnerability and hope.

This visit helped us to realize that the voices and stories we hear do not remain in a void. They can awaken, connect, and intensify the goodness and beauty of the human heart regardless of the circumstances or situations in which we find ourselves. Transformation happens wherever people are willing to build bridges of compassion, which often may go unnoticed by the society. It is inspiring to encounter people in prison, a place that generally reminds us of crime and punishment, who offer their time, talents, ideas and energy to make the world a better place. They also turn the prison into a place of encounter and transformation.

Sr. Maria Cristina Avalos, SSpS - Rome

BUILDING INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

The 68th United Nations Civil Society Conference 2019

The 68th United Nations Civil Society Conference (UNCSC 2019) was held in Salt Lake City, Utah, from August 26-28, 2019, deliberated on “Building Inclusive and Sustainable Cities and Communities” based on Sustainable Development Goal 11 (SDG 11): Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. The theme is considered very relevant due to the rapid growth in cities and urban settlements, which is expected to rise by 68% by 2050. SDG 11 calls forth for collaboration between governments and stakeholders at the local, national, and global levels and those of us working on the ground know well the importance of collaboration and participation.

They made the entire experience a positive one for all the visitors through their planning and effective implementation, prior to and during the conference.

Some of the themes focused were impacts of climate change, migration, importance of multilateralism, good practices highlighting the collaboration between governments and civil society, and the role of civil society, as the need of the hour.

In the opening video message by the UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres stressed the importance of well-planned and managed cities for inclusive growth and harmony among diverse people. These themes are highlighted in the Outcome Document of the Conference, which was deliberated through the civil society organizations, an effort in which VIVAT also participated. It was adopted at the closing session. (<https://outreach.un.org/ngorelations/content/68th-untied-nations-civil-society-conference-outcome-statement>).

Youth participation was enlivening from the preparatory stage. Youth Climate Change Declaration 2019 shows their commitment to change (<https://outreach.un.org/ngorelations/content/youth-climate-compact-0>).

Seven VIVAT Members participated in the UNCSC 2019.



Sr. Helen Saldanha, SSsP, Co-director of VIVAT International addresses participants in a workshop at the UNCSC 2019

UNCSC 2019 is said to be the most attended conference of the UN with over 5000 participants from all walks of life representing UN entities and civil society groups. Throughout the conference it was more than clear that SDG 11 is so very connected with other Sustainable Development Goals which were highlighted by thematic sessions, workshops, youth climate declaration and civil society outcome documents.

Salt Lake City was the first city, other than New York City, to host such a conference in the United States.



Holy Cross Sisters living and working in Salt Lake City through their Congregational Justice Coordinator, Florence Deacon, OSF, played an important role in planning for the workshop during the conference along with the New York Office and VIVAT members in the United States.

The theme chosen for the workshop resonated with their commitment to integrating migrants into inclusive and peaceful communities. The panel, moderated by Florence Deacon had three resource persons, namely Myrna Trillo, MCSC, Emmie Gardner CEO of Holy Cross Ministries, and Veronica Fajardo, CSC, Peace House, with a brief introduction on Global Compact on Migration and civil society by Helen Saldanha, SSpS. Rose Therese, SSpS, Province JPIC Coordinator of the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters, recorded the minutes of the event. The NGO Committee on Migration (a network of over 55 UN NGO's) and many UN NGO organizations co-sponsored and supported this workshop.

In conclusion, I would like to say that the UN Civil Society Conference is an opportunity to dialogue, reflect, and deliberate on the role and contributions of civil society to the world. This is a space for interaction on different issues.



(l-r) SSpS Sisters, participants at the UNSC 2019
 Sr. Aprilia Untarto, Sr. Helen Saldanha,
 Sr. Rose Therese Nolta

The Civil Society Unit of the UN Department of Global Communications, throughout the year and most specifically through these biennial conferences, provides space for dialogue between government and nongovernmental initiatives, and delves into important issues such as people's participation, multilateralism, inclusion of civil society, and Sustainable Development Goals.



Sr. Helen Saldanha, SSpS Co-Director of VIVAT International



VIVAT International is a Non-Government Organization of more than 25,000 Sisters, Brothers, and priests from 13 Religious congregations working in 120 countries for the promotion of human rights through advocacy on the international and local levels. VIVAT was founded in the year 2000 by the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) and the Missionary Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit (SSpS).

“Earth’s Crammed With Heaven”

Have you ever been enjoying nature and suddenly blessed with an experience that spoke to you strongly of God’s presence? For me, it was a vacation spent by the Pacific Ocean on a beach near Brisbane, Australia when I was missioned there. That powerful surf was something that I had never really seen before. At night, I could hear it pounding on the shore. It brought home to me the enormous act of creation by a very loving God. Since then, I have had a special love for water. It brings peace and a sense of friendship with all of nature. So when I came across these few words of Elizabeth Barrett Browning from “*Aurora Leigh*”, I could really identify with them:

*“Earth’s crammed with heaven
And every common bush afire with God;
But only he who sees takes off his shoes.”*

Going back to the 13th century, St. Bonaventure taught to work up to loving God, start by loving the very humblest and simplest things then move up from there. “The creator’s supreme power, wisdom, and benevolence shine forth through all created things.”

The Soul’s Journey to God (1,9-10)

The reason that I am looking at this particular area in my own life is because the theme of our next General Chapter is “Immersed in the life of the Trinity: transforming the world with compassion”.

I know that the Trinity is God’s Life of Love that love calls for us to be in loving relationship with all of God’s creation. If you are like me, this all sounds very challenging! All of creation takes in all of God’s people. Today, in our global society and broken world, this presents a very big picture. The Holy Spirit is referred to as the “God of Love” so let us go forth with the mission mandate we received at baptism and see if we can move up as St. Bonaventure says to “mirroring God’s loving presence in the world today”.

Sr. Pat Snider, SSpS
Holy Spirit Missionary Association



**WORLD
MISSION SUNDAY
2019
MEMPHIS, TN**

In celebration of World Mission Sunday 2019 at St. Joseph Parish, Memphis, TN, a Vigil was held to raise awareness among young people about mission and the importance of praying for the needs of all our sisters and brothers around the world.

During the Vigil, there was time to listen to testimonies of young people who shared their experience of having participated in the World Youth Days in Poland and Panama, and how world events changed their perspectives on the topic of faith. Sr. Skolastika Wea, SSpS and a seminarian, Sam Lollar Lee, SVD each shared their vocational story. Fr. Joaquin Li, SVD shared his priesthood experience in Paraguay. Mr. Jaime Torres shared his conversion experience... how he went from being a gang member to preaching the love of God. Through music he shared how he lives his faith, convinced that God loves him and loves everyone.

The climax of the Vigil occurred when candles were lit and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament was accompanied with Taize-directed prayer during which the participants prayed for the needs of the world.

A bi-lingual Sunday Mass was celebrated outdoors followed by recitation of the Rosary. On conclusion of our prayers, balloons in the mission colors of the continents (RED - the Americas, GREEN - Africa, YELLOW - Asia, BLUE—Oceania, and WHITE - Europe) were launched.

The festive weekend concluded with a picnic for everyone!

Sr. Monica Darrichon, SSpS

SSpS MISSION Magazine: (Quarterly: February, May, July, November) ANNUAL RENEWAL \$10. / yr.

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