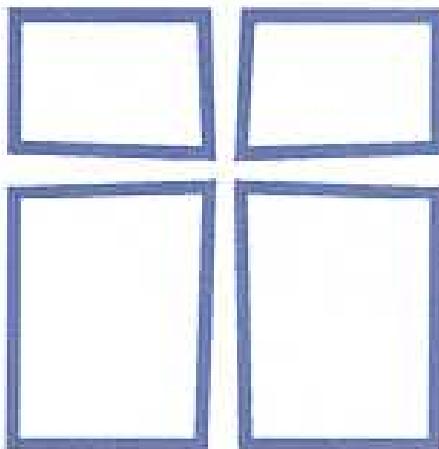

Theodosia



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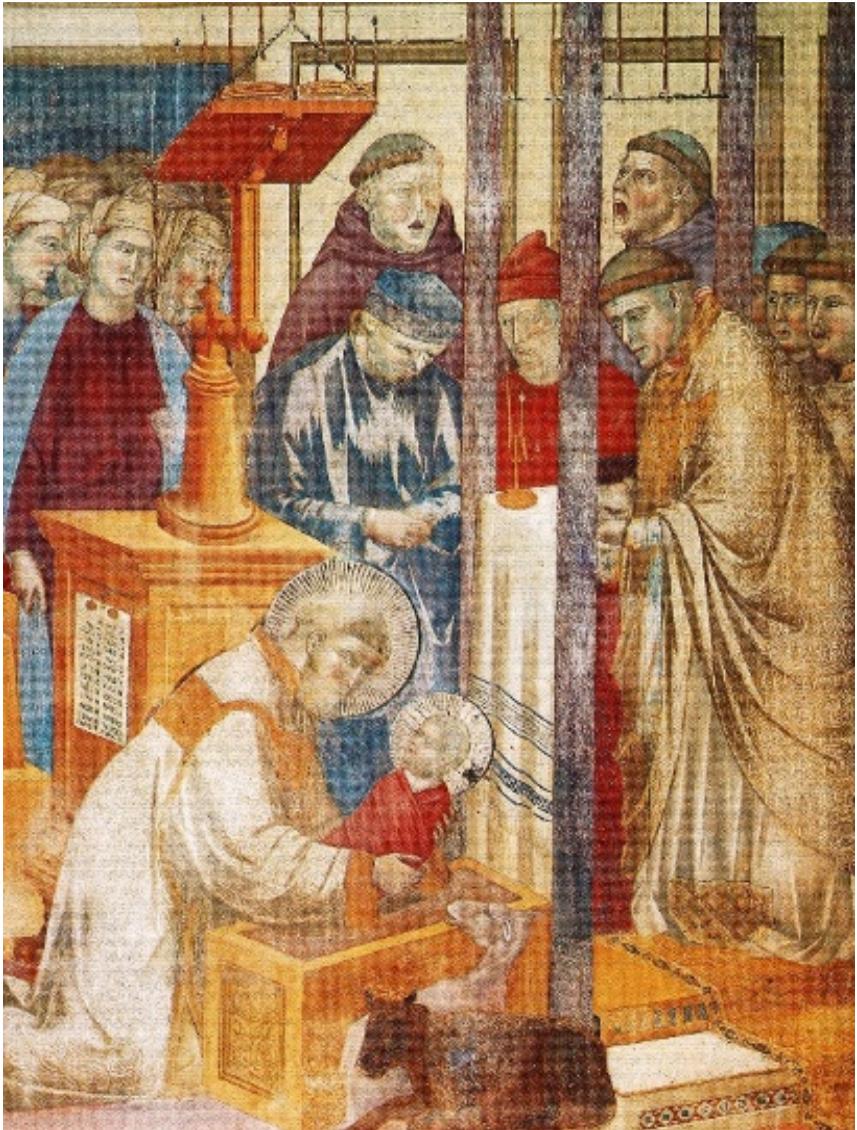
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In 1221, St. Francis celebrates Christmas in Greccio.
From a fresco of Giotto in the upper Church of San Francesco, Assisi.

Editorial

Corona time is showing us how events organized by people can get postponed, or even cancelled. But it is not so with the events of salvation: Salvation history happens always and everywhere. We are on the verge of Christmas. Perhaps the possibilities of external celebrations are somewhat limited. But the real mystery of Christmas is not affected: We celebrate God in His incarnation.

Francis of Assisi was fascinated by the Incarnation. For him, it was a starting point in his understanding of God. The great God makes himself humble and becomes a man like us. Francis was so touched by this mystery that he had the Nativity scene re-enacted in Greccio, for the first time in history (cf. 1 Cel 84). Through his Incarnation, God's proximity in this world becomes tangible.

Two years ago, Pope Francis went to the place where Francis of Assisi had organized the first celebration of the nativity. There, the pope signed for all the faithful with the beautiful words, "The Enchanting Image of the Christmas Crèche". He writes further, "The manger is indeed like a living Gospel emerging from the pages of the Sacred Scripture."

He encourages us to continue to cultivate this mystery, nourished by much popular piety, in all its diversity. In this celebration, he sees an important aspect of the transmission of faith.

Christmas celebrations are full of colors and expressions. Today we get to know about the "Christmas Celebrations in India". The multicultural composition of the Indian population is also reflected in the celebration of Christmas.

In 1938 and 2021, the Catholics of Hungary had the privilege of organizing and hosting the "International Eucharistic Congress". Three sisters, inspired and moved by this event, tell us about this great celebration of faith, from which joy and power emanated.

We continue with the series: "You will be My Witnesses". Today we meet Sr. Lucia M. Grabner from the Province India Central as a witness of our time. Her heart has been beating for poor children and music for decades.

On September 16, 2021, we were privileged to experience the "Laying the Foundation of the New St. Joseph's Home for Seniors" at the Motherhouse. We witnessed how precious objects were placed in a container in the foundations, which will tell future generations about our values.

We are being continued to be affected by the Corona pandemic. In response to a request, sisters from different regions of the world have sent us "Personal Experiences during the Corona Period". We are happy to share them with all of you.

The editorial team reports under "Personal", an interview conducted on the occasion of the 80th birthday of Sr. Christiane Jungo.

Even if the external function of the General Leadership had been restricted, there are still "Information from the General Leadership".

Sr. Christiane Jungo

The Enchanting Image of the Christmas Crèche

“Admirabile signum”

Pope Francis

Theodosia take the official translation of the Apostolic Letter on the meaning and importance of the nativity scene in preparation for Christmas. Pope Francis signed this message on the 1st Sunday of Advent, December 1, 2019 in Greccio. We have taken the text from the press bulletin of the Holy See.

1. The enchanting image of the Christmas crèche, so dear to the Christian people, never ceases to arouse amazement and wonder. The depiction of Jesus’ birth is itself a simple and joyful proclamation of the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God. The nativity scene is like a living Gospel rising up from the pages of sacred Scripture. As we contemplate the Christmas story, we are invited to set out on a spiritual journey, drawn by the humility of the God who became man in order to encounter every man and woman. We come to realize that so great is his love for us that he became one of us, so that we in turn might become one with him.

With this Letter, I wish to encourage the beautiful family tradition of preparing the nativity scene in the days

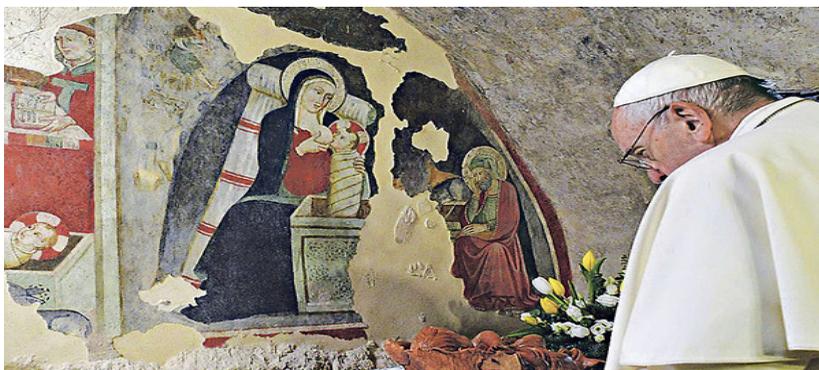
before Christmas, but also the custom of setting it up in the workplace, in schools, hospitals, prisons and town squares. Great imagination and creativity is always shown in employing the most diverse materials to create small masterpieces of beauty. As children, we learn from our parents and grandparents to carry on this joyful tradition, which encapsulates a wealth of popular piety. It is my hope that this custom will never be lost and that, wherever it has fallen into disuse, it can be rediscovered and revived.

2. The origin of the Christmas crèche is found above all in certain details of Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem, as related in the Gospels. The evangelist Luke says simply that Mary “gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a

manger, because there was no place for them in the inn” (2:7). Because Jesus was laid in a manger, the nativity scene is known in Italian as a presepe, from the *Latin* word *praesepeum*, meaning “manger”.

Coming into this world, the Son of God was laid in the place where animals feed. Hay became the first bed of the One who would reveal himself as “the bread come down from heaven” (*Jn* 6:41). Saint Augustine, with other Church Fathers, was impressed by this symbolism: “Laid in a manger, he became our food” (*Sermon* 189, 4). Indeed, the nativity scene evokes a number of the mysteries of Jesus’ life and brings them close to our own daily lives.

But let us go back to the origins of the Christmas crèche so familiar to us. We need to imagine ourselves in the little Italian town of Greccio, near Rieti. Saint Francis stopped there, most likely on his way back from Rome where on 29 November 1223 he had received the confirmation of his Rule from Pope Honorius III. Francis had earlier visited the Holy Land, and the caves in Greccio reminded him of the countryside of Bethlehem. It may also be that the “Poor Man of Assisi” had been struck by the mosaics in the Roman Basilica of Saint Mary Major depicting the birth of Jesus, close to the place where, according to an ancient tradition, the wooden panels of the manger are preserved.



Pope Francis in Greccio, beginning of Advent 2019. Image: Osservatore Romano

The *Franciscan Sources* describe in detail what then took place in Greccio. Fifteen days before Christmas, Francis asked a local man named John to help him realize his desire “to bring to life the memory of that babe born in Bethlehem, to see as much as possible with my own bodily eyes the discomfort of his infant needs, how he lay in a manger, and how, with an ox and an ass standing by, he was laid upon a bed of hay”.[1] At this, his faithful friend went immediately to prepare all that the Saint had asked. On 25 December, friars came to Greccio from various parts, together with people from the farmsteads in the area, who brought flowers and torches to light up that holy night. When Francis arrived, he found a manger full of hay, an ox and a donkey. All those present experienced a new and indescribable joy in the presence of the Christmas scene. The priest then solemnly celebrated the Eucharist over the manger, showing the bond between the Incarnation of the Son of God and the Eucharist. At Greccio there were no statues; the nativity scene was enacted and

experienced by all who were present.[2]

This is how our tradition began: with everyone gathered in joy around the cave, with no distance between the original event and those sharing in its mystery.

Thomas of Celano, the first biographer of Saint Francis, notes that this simple and moving scene was accompanied by the gift of a marvellous vision: one of those present saw the Baby Jesus himself lying in the manger. From the nativity scene of that Christmas in 1223, “everyone went home with joy”.[3]

3. With the simplicity of that sign, Saint Francis carried out a great work of evangelization. His teaching touched the hearts of Christians and continues today to offer a simple yet authentic means of portraying the beauty of our faith. Indeed, the place where this first nativity scene was enacted expresses and evokes these sentiments. Greccio has become a refuge for the soul, a mountain fastness wrapped in silence.

Why does the Christmas crèche arouse such wonder and move us so deeply? First, because it shows God's tender love: the Creator of the universe lowered himself to take up our littleness. The gift of life, in all its mystery, becomes all the more wondrous as we realize that the Son of Mary is the source and sustenance of all life. In Jesus, the Father has given us a brother who comes to seek us out whenever we are confused or lost, a loyal friend ever at our side. He gave us his Son who forgives us and frees us from our sins.

Setting up the Christmas crèche in our homes helps us to relive the history of what took place in Bethlehem. Naturally, the Gospels remain our source for understanding and reflecting on that event. At the same time, its portrayal in the crèche helps us to imagine the scene. It touches our hearts and makes us enter into salvation history as contemporaries of an event that is living and real in a broad gamut of historical and cultural contexts.

In a particular way, from the time of its Franciscan origins,

the nativity scene has invited us to "feel" and "touch" the poverty that God's Son took upon himself in the Incarnation. Implicitly, it summons us to follow him along the path of humility, poverty and self-denial that leads from the manger of Bethlehem to the cross. It asks us to meet him and serve him by showing mercy to those of our brothers and sisters in greatest need (cf. Mt 25:31-46).

4. I would like now to reflect on the various elements of the nativity scene in order to appreciate their deeper meaning. First, there is the background of a starry sky wrapped in the darkness and silence of night. We represent this not only out of fidelity to the Gospel accounts, but also for its symbolic value. We can think of all those times in our lives when we have experienced the darkness of night. Yet even then, God does not abandon us, but is there to answer our crucial questions about the meaning of life. Who am I? Where do I come from? Why was I born at this time in history? Why do I love? Why do I suffer? Why will I die? It was to answer these questions

that God became man. His closeness brings light where there is darkness and shows the way to those dwelling in the shadow of suffering (cf. *Lk* 1:79).

The landscapes that are part of the nativity scene also deserve some mention. Frequently they include the ruins of ancient houses or buildings, which in some instances replace the cave of Bethlehem and become a home for the Holy Family. These ruins appear to be inspired by the thirteenth-

century Golden Legend of the Dominican Jacobs de Varagine, which relates a pagan belief that the Temple of Peace in Rome would collapse when a Virgin gave birth. More than anything, the ruins are the visible sign of fallen humanity, of everything that inevitably falls into ruin, decays and disappoints. This scenic setting tells us that Jesus is newness in the midst of an aging world, that he has come to heal and rebuild, to restore the world and our lives to their original splendor.



Francis celebrates Christmas.
Miniature from a 14th century manuscript, in the Capuchin museum in Rome.

5. With what emotion should we arrange the mountains, streams, sheep and shepherds in the nativity scene! As we do so, we are reminded that, as the prophets had foretold, all creation rejoices in the coming of the Messiah. The angels and the guiding star are a sign that we too are called to set out for the cave and to worship the Lord.
6. It is customary to add many symbolic figures to our nativity scenes. First, there are the beggars and the others who know only the wealth of the heart. They too have every right to draw near to the Infant Jesus; no one can evict them or send them away from a crib so makeshift that the poor seem entirely at home. Indeed, the poor are a privileged part of this mystery; often they are the first to recognize God's presence in our midst.

“Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us” (*Lk 2:15*). So the shepherds tell one another after the proclamation of the angels. A beautiful lesson emerges from these simple words. Unlike so many other people, busy about many things, the shepherds become the first to see the most essential thing of all: the gift of salvation. It is the humble and the poor who greet the event of the Incarnation. The shepherds respond to God who comes to meet us in the Infant Jesus by setting out to meet him with love, gratitude and awe. Thanks to Jesus, this encounter between God and his children gives birth to our religion and accounts for its unique beauty, so wonderfully evident in the nativity scene.

The presence of the poor and the lowly in the nativity scene remind us that God became man for the sake of those who feel most in need of his love and who ask him to draw near to them. Jesus, “gentle and humble in heart” (*Mt 11:29*), was born in poverty and led a simple life in order to teach us to recognize what is essential and to act accordingly. The nativity scene clearly teaches that we cannot let ourselves be fooled by wealth and fleeting promises of happiness. We see Herod's palace in the background, closed and deaf to the tidings of joy. By being born in a manger, God himself launches the only true revolution that can give hope and dignity to the disinherited

and the outcast: the revolution of love, the revolution of tenderness. From the manger, Jesus proclaims, in a meek yet powerful way, the need for sharing with the poor as the path to a more human and fraternal world in which no one is excluded or marginalized.

Children – but adults too! – often love to add to the nativity scene other figures that have no apparent connection with the Gospel accounts. Yet, each in its own way, these fanciful additions show that in the new world inaugurated by Jesus there is room for whatever is truly human and for all God's creatures. From the shepherd to the blacksmith, from the baker to the musicians, from the women carrying jugs of water to the children at play: all this speaks of the everyday holiness, the joy of doing ordinary things in an extraordinary way, born whenever Jesus shares his divine life with us.

7. Gradually, we come to the cave, where we find the figures of Mary and Joseph. Mary is a mother who contemplates her child and shows him to every visitor. The figure of Mary makes us reflect on the great

mystery that surrounded this young woman when God knocked on the door of her immaculate heart. Mary responded in complete obedience to the message of the angel who asked her to become the Mother of God. Her words, "Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word" (*Lk* 1:38), show all of us how to abandon ourselves in faith to God's will. By her "fiat", Mary became the mother of God's Son, not losing but, thanks to him, consecrating her virginity. In her, we see the Mother of God who does not keep her Son only to herself, but invites everyone to obey his word and to put it into practice (cf. *Jn* 2:5).

At Mary's side, shown protecting the Child and his Mother, stands Saint Joseph. He is usually depicted with staff in hand, or holding up a lamp. Saint Joseph plays an important role in the life of Jesus and Mary. He is the guardian who tirelessly protects his family. When God warned him of Herod's threat, he did not hesitate to set out and flee to Egypt (cf. *Mt* 2:13-15). And once the danger had passed, he brought the family

back to Nazareth, where he was to be the first teacher of Jesus as a boy and then as a young man. Joseph treasured in his heart the great mystery surrounding Jesus and Mary his spouse; as a just man, he entrusted himself always to God's will, and put it into practice.

8. When, at Christmas, we place the statue of the Infant Jesus in

the manger, the nativity scene suddenly comes alive. God appears as a child, for us to take into our arms. Beneath weakness and frailty, he conceals his power that creates and transforms all things. It seems impossible, yet it is true: in Jesus, God was a child, and in this way he wished to reveal the greatness of his love: by smiling and opening his arms to all.



Part of a nativity scene in Gallus church Amden, Switzerland

The birth of a child awakens joy and wonder; it sets before us the great mystery of life. Seeing the bright eyes of a young couple gazing at their newborn child, we can understand the feelings of Mary and Joseph who, as they looked at the Infant Jesus, sensed God's presence in their lives.

"Life was made manifest" (1 *Jn* 1:2). In these words, the Apostle John sums up the mystery of the Incarnation. The crèche allows us to see and touch this unique and unparalleled event that changed the course of history, so that time would thereafter be reckoned either before or after the birth of Christ.

God's ways are astonishing, for it seems impossible that he should forsake his glory to become a man like us. To our astonishment, we see God acting exactly as we do: he sleeps, takes milk from his mother, cries and plays like every other child! As always, God baffles us. He is

unpredictable, constantly doing what we least expect. The nativity scene shows God as he came into our world, but it also makes us reflect on how our life is part of God's own life. It invites us to become his disciples if we want to attain ultimate meaning in life.

9. As the feast of Epiphany approaches, we place the statues of the Three Kings in the Christmas crèche. Observing the star, those wise men from the East set out for Bethlehem, in order to find Jesus and to offer him their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. These costly gifts have an allegorical meaning: gold honours Jesus' kingship, incense his divinity, myrrh his sacred humanity that was to experience death and burial.

As we contemplate this aspect of the nativity scene, we are called to reflect on the responsibility of every Christian to spread the Gospel. Each of us is called to bear glad tidings to all, testifying by our practical works of mercy to the joy of

knowing Jesus and his love. The Magi teach us that people can come to Christ by a very long route. Men of wealth, sages from afar, a thirst for the infinite, they set out on the long and perilous journey that would lead them to Bethlehem (cf. *Mt* 2:1-12). Great joy comes over them in the presence of the Infant King. They are not scandalized by the poor surroundings, but immediately fall to their knees to worship him. Kneeling before him, they understand that the God who with sovereign wisdom guides the course of the stars also guides the course of history, casting down the mighty and raising up the lowly. Upon their return home, they would certainly have told others of this amazing encounter with the Messiah, thus initiating the spread of the Gospel among the nations.

10. Standing before the Christmas crèche, we are reminded of the time when we were children, eagerly waiting to set it up. These memories make us all the more conscious of the precious gift received from

those who passed on the faith to us. At the same time, they remind us of our duty to share this same experience with our children and our grandchildren. It does not matter how the nativity scene is arranged: it can always be the same or it can change from year to year. What matters is that it speaks to our lives. Wherever it is, and whatever form it takes, the Christmas crèche speaks to us of the love of God, the God who became a child in order to make us know how close he is to every man, woman and child, regardless of their condition.

Dear brothers and sisters, the Christmas crèche is part of the precious yet demanding process of passing on the faith. Beginning in childhood, and at every stage of our lives, it teaches us to contemplate Jesus, to experience God's love for us, to feel and believe that God is with us and that we are with him, his children, brothers and sisters all, thanks to that Child who is the Son of God and the Son of the Virgin

Mary. And to realize that in that knowledge we find true happiness. Like Saint Francis, may we open our hearts to this simple grace, so that from our wonderment a humble prayer may arise: a prayer of thanksgiving to God, who wished to share with us his all, and thus never to leave us alone.

FRANCIS

Given in Greccio, at the Shrine of the Nativity, on December 1, 2019.

[1] Thomas of Celano, *First Life sketch*, 84: *Francis-Sources (FQ)*, 250.

[2] Cf. *ibid.*, 85: *FQ*, 250.

[3] *Ibid.*, 86: *FQ*, 251.

Christmas Celebrations in India

Diverse festive cultures stand for signs of life and courage, of love and hope

Sr. Laisa Thalackal, Gholeng, Mid India Province, Sr. Elsit Ampattu, General Councilor Ingenbohl

Two Indian sisters share their stories about the multicultural celebration of Christmas. A celebration, that connects people and encourages them to share. Unlike in our country, the festivals also take place in nature, especially among tribal people. In addition, various Western colonial states have left their traces. The pictures here are taken at Kunkuri in the state of Chhattisgarh.

The Christmas celebration is a joyful commemoration of God coming into the world as a human being to share love and life with all creation: "God so loved the world

that he gave his only Son to humankind." (John 3:16).

The beauty and richness of India includes the fact that there are



Crib in a village



Christmas celebration – an experience of joy

different religious beliefs and festivals. In celebrating multicultural festivals, each state of the country has its own flavor and celebrates according to its culture and tradition, making India an epitome of "unity in diversity". It has a long tradition of Western influences on Christmas celebrations by the Portuguese, Dutch, British and French. Southwest India has also adopted some of the oriental rites.

Time of goodwill and fellowship

Christmas is celebrated regardless of caste and creed, poor or rich. It is a festive season for the entire country; many celebrate and participate in

Christian fellowship. The Christmas message is spontaneously shared by politicians, media personnel, celebrities and businessmen in various cities across India. Christmas leads to a celebration of love and togetherness in innumerable communities. People sing, dance and share joy with one another. Consciously or unconsciously, this is the real meaning of Christmas: the feeling of belonging to one another; that we are all brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ.

States and cities like Goa, Kerala, Mangalore, Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata are homes to thousands



Christmas celebration with drum and dance

of Roman Catholics. Therefore, Midnight Mass is considered an integral part of Christmas celebrations where all family members gather. Afterwards, those attending Mass enjoy a grand feast with delicious treats. For this day, churches are decorated exceptionally with Christmas trees, flowers, scented candles and glittering lights.

In most parts of India, Christmas is an opportunity to show kindness of heart so that religious institutions, families, individuals reach out to the less fortunate and share gifts and festive meals. This ensures that everyone in a community can afford some joy

during the holidays. It also gives the underprivileged some hope and relief from their life situations, motivating them to look forward to a better tomorrow. Visiting the local shelter for homeless and underprivileged children, lepers and orphanages is a common practice during the Christmas season.

Singing and dancing in nature

Since 1894, the Ingenbohl Sisters have been carrying out their mission with various tribal groups in North India. Through the pictures in this article we get an insight into the Christmas celebrations especially among

tribal groups. In the states of Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand, most Christians belong to tribes such as Oraons, Mundas, Khadias, Santhals, Nagesias and many other sub tribes. All of them have their own dialects, culture, rites and rituals, dressing patterns and food habits. Tribal people are gifted to live in the midst of nature, surrounded by hills and valleys, vales and ravines, rivers and streams and, above all, the vast forests inhabited entirely by wild animals and birds, snakes and reptiles. Thus, in many folk songs God's creation is praised. At each festival, the focus is on gathering in nature with singing and dancing. Harvesting is completed before Christmas season. After completing the harvesting, the tribal people start preparations for Christmas eagerly and enthusiastically.

The small children are taught by the elders to make small sacrifices by keeping a piece of straw that becomes the straw in the crib for Baby Jesus to make him warm. The children carry out this task honestly and sincerely. Houses are decorated; white washed and traditional houses are smeared with mud and cow dung. There are sweets made of rice flour, carol singing with traditional

music, with various instruments used such as mandar, dholak and nagada (various drums). The stature of the baby Jesus is carried from one family to another by singing and dancing to share the peace and joy and people generously offer grains and some offerings. Tribals understand the deep meaning of Christmas. They all want to be at home for Christmas with their family members; and to enjoy and share the love, warmth and joy of each other. Most of them wear new clothes for Christmas, if possible. The Holy Mass celebration is very grand, joyful and full of life. The Christmas songs are heart touching and very meaningful. After the Christmas mid-night Mass, the traditional dance is performed in the church campus and everyone participates in it. People share the prepared food, rotis (bread) and hadia (rice beer) with their neighbors and friends. The celebration continues following days after Holy Mass or Church service in joy and thanksgiving. The people spread the Christmas message as blessing of peace, as beauty of hope, in the spirit of love and courage for the whole humanity.

This article was published in the "Weltweit, No. 6/2020" and was made available to the Theodosia for reprinting. Thank you very much.

International Eucharistic Congress in Hungary

Sr. Gabriella Légrádi, Sr. MáriaVasko, Sr. EszterMária Pehm, Hungary, Europa Mitte Province

Three sisters enthusiastically share their impressions of this great event in words and pictures. For them, the bridge between the two Eucharistic Congresses of 1938 and 2021 is also important. The same refrain from the hymn of the Congress connected the two events: "Christ, give us your peace! Unite us through this bread!"

A short review

Pentecost Monday 2017 marked the beginning of the preparation period for the International Eucharistic Congress, which began on September 5, 2021. We Holy Cross Sisters were also involved in the preparations. At the local level, we participated in the devotions in the parishes that took place on Christ the King



Holy Cross Sisters at the Congress

Sunday and Corpus Christi throughout the country. Not only had the local parishes participated in this event, but also people from other countries. We invited sisters from the European provinces to pray online within the community. We organized two such prayers, on June 16, 2019 and during the Carnival season in 2021. Our goal was to strengthen common prayer by bridging borders, language, and cultures. A total of 20 sisters from three provinces prayed together. A highlight of the preparations was our personal participation in the Congress. The pandemic prevented many sisters from coming, but we had a beautiful spiritual experience with our 14 sisters who attended the Congress.

It gives us great joy to share something with our readers from our personal experiences, impressions, and adventures at the Eucharistic Congress in Budapest, September 5-12, 2021.



Arrival of the Pope

Sr. Gabriella Légrádi shares

I would like to mention three things that impressed me deeply and I recall them with joy and pleasure as a source of strength and encouragement for my daily life.

- a) The pandemic has greatly hindered the possibilities for the sisters from other countries to come for the Congress. So, it is understandable that it was a great joy to have the sisters from Slovakia for the opening Mass and the sacramental procession on the eve of the

closing Mass. For me, it was a feeling of being touched and uplifted to realize that our Congregation, the Holy Cross Sisters, who live and serve across different continents, was represented by this small international team. The joy of the encounter, the spiritual preparation and the silent prayer before the Blessed Sacrament in our chapel strengthened the experience of belonging together beyond boundaries. While welcoming our guests, we became aware that we carry all our fellow sisters in the world and

together with them we bring all the concerns of our Congregation to Christ.

- b) It was an extraordinary gift for me to participate in the programs during the week of the Congress. The common lauds led by a different pastoral group each day, the variety of languages heard in the lectures and faculties, witnessed to a rich and vibrant Church. More than once I had the feeling that here the heart of the Church was beating. There were many young participants, but almost all age groups were represented in the various programs. The rich repertoire of songs and music during the liturgical events, the different styles in which the praises of God were sung, created a special atmosphere for all. The rites of the Christian churches of the East and the West, the ecumenical presence showed the world the living miracle of the Church of Jesus.
- c) The most profound spiritual experience for me was the Holy Mass in front of the Parliament on the eve of the closing service and the procession of lights with the Blessed Sacrament. Almost 300,000 faithful followed Jesus Christ, who was in our midst in

the Sacrament of the Altar, which was placed in a huge sacramental monstrance along the 2.5 km stretch from the altar in front of the parliament to the altar at the Heroes' Square. Chanting and meditations over loudspeakers along the way helped participants to truly accompany Christ, to walk with Him and to follow Him. The hymns and prayers were sung alternately in several languages and people joined in enthusiastically. The hymns were displayed on projectors to help us join in and truly accompany the Lord in



Festival site

common prayer. It was touching to see so many people waiting on the roadside for the procession with lighted candles, singing loudly and praying as they joined the procession. Many religious and a great many young people, families regardless of age, with children in their arms and in their strollers, elderly people, all with a joyful smile and a true fraternal communion, experienced this miracle from the afternoon until late at night. Jesus truly went ahead of us, and we followed Him with enthusiasm and joy. Many tourists looked at the praying, singing and joyful crowd. I was completely captivated by the experience of this miracle. For me, those few hours were a foretaste of heaven. There we will be together from all tribes, languages, peoples and nations and we will see and worship our Lord Jesus Christ face to face!

Sr. Mária Vasko remembers

I look back at this Eucharistic event with gratitude. It was really great to experience the warmth in the presence of Jesus because the preparation, the waiting, the arrival, the feast, the reunion, the gift and the mission are important for all the guests. It did not end

with the Pontifical Mass, but he sent us on a journey to pass on all that we have received through the Eucharist. A special thanks to all relatives, sisters, friends, who came to celebrate together, and to accompany with their prayers these days. May God reward them richly!

Sr. Eszter Mária notes

A long time has passed since the Congress, as I write this review. A great experience - being with hundreds of thousands of people gathered around the altar, following Christ in the procession, praying, singing, meeting and talking, seeing the faith of others, waiting for the Holy Father and feeling the childlike joy when he arrived - is slowly becoming quieter as it gets integrated into everyday life. And as the many words spoken about Jesus in the Eucharist, which I believe also came from Him, gave me a new enthusiasm and strength, are now becoming more silent in me, this one stands out: "For all of you!"

What was important to all three of us during the time of preparation and also during the days of the Congress is to create a link back to the Congress of 1938 in Budapest, because it was a profound experience for the Hungarian Church and also for our fellow sisters.

The chronicle of 1938 reports

The 34th International Eucharistic Congress was held from May 25 to 30, 1938.

May 25: Opening of the 34th Eucharistic Congress in Budapest. Two Sisters from the Provincial House are allowed to represent the house, except for the sisters who have to accompany their children.

The dear Savior must be pleased with the efforts of His own. All through the morning it was rainy and stormy. It was thought that it would not stop. But when the time came to open the Congress, the clouds parted and the sun began to shine. In a short time its rays had dried the large space at Heroes' Square in Budapest, and the celebration could take place undisturbed.



Solemn procession

May 29: Today, on the closing day of the Eucharistic Congress, we also had Adoration Day in the Provincial House. We thanked the Lord for the immeasurable graces that He had bestowed on the entire Catholic Church through this Congress. It was an unspeakably solemn manifestation of our faith, love and faithfulness. How the evil enemy had tried to thwart this manifestation, and then this triumph. He did not succeed. He had managed to keep 40,000 foreign participants away. Nevertheless, the foreign countries, indeed the whole Catholic world, were strongly represented.

How sublime were the individual parts of the Congress: The Children's Communion on Thursday! Most touching was the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament by the men on Friday night, beginning at 11 p.m., and

continuing on to Saturday. Purpose: to atone for the atrocities committed and still being committed in Spain by the Communists. 160,000 men participated in this prayer of atonement, with lighted candle in hand. At midnight, the Archbishop of Toledo celebrated Holy Mass at the festive altar and all the 160,000 men received Holy Communion. A whole series of special trains had brought these men to the capital, and the same trains took them back to their villages after 01.30 a.m. It was quite touching - this nocturnal demonstration of faith. The participants came back completely overwhelmed.

On Sunday, during the final procession, the devout crowd persevered, despite thunderstorms and downpours. Under the crash of thunder, the blessing of the Blessed Sacrament was given at the Heroes' Square.

You will be My Witnesses, Acts 1:8

Witness of our time – Sister Lucia M. Grabner

Sr. Shashi Pakki, Hazaribag, India Central Province

Sr. Lucia M. Grabner is in India for 66 years as a musician and "mother" of many children. Though the two tasks are different, what Sr. Lucia M. has in common is that what she does, she does it wholeheartedly, and she is interested in encouraging people and bringing out the best in them.

"Let me only make my life simple and straight, like a flute of reed for thee to fill with music." Gitanjali No. 7, Rabindranath Tagore.

Her biography

Anna Grabner was born in Achau, Austria, in 1929 and grew up during the period of the Second World War, when Vienna came under the occupation of the victorious Russian army. Anna with her family had experienced the severe aftermath of the war. In crucial wartime schooling of the young girl was erratic and frequently classes were held in cellars to protect from the air-raids. In those horrible moments when life was under constant threat, people had no choice but to surrender their lives into God's hands. It is rightly said that in times of tribulation, people grow closer to God. In such decisive moments Lucia Grabner heard the call of God. After completing her schooling, as a young girl she entered the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross in

Laxenburg, after a few months she was sent to the Mother House to complete her formation. She made her first profession on 23rd April, 1953 and was named Sr. Lucia.

After her profession, Sr. Lucia was assigned in Theresianum,



Sr. Lucia with Sr. Rosily Kolencherry, her Provincial Superior

Ingenbohl to teach music. As a young sister, she taught music for six years, generously sharing her talent with the young students and enlivening the school campus with the vibrations of her music. When she expressed her desire to go to India as a missionary, she was sent to London to learn English for two years. This paved the way for her mission in India. Fr. Angelo, S.J., from Bettiah, in North India had requested the then Mother General, Sr. M. Elena Giorgetti, for a music teacher who would take up the ministry of liturgical music in the parish church of Bettiah. As Sr. Lucia was trained in music she was chosen for this task. In 1955 she had arrived in India accompanied by Sr. Johanna Brandastätter.

Musical activity

Since then she had begun her mission of teaching music and leading the choir at Bettiah Parish. Sr. Lucia took charge of the church music by organizing a choir of young boys, girls and the youth of Bettiah. She taught music and trained the voices of the youth and contributed the best singing to Bettiah Parish especially during big festivals like Christmas Easter and all the big functions of the church. The people of Bettiah began to enjoy the wonderful melodies of the choir, which

helped them to lift their hearts to God. Although Sr. Lucia was especially trained in Western music, she did not limit herself to that, but rather developed a taste for Indian music according to the needs of the time and the local people. She took interest in Hindustani Classical Music of North India and for a couple of decades she taught music in St. Teresa Girls' High School, Bettiah.

Sr. Lucia's passion for music led her to study the Indian Music known as the Hindustani Classical Music of North India. Teaming up with Sr. Euginia, belonging to Sisters of Charity of Nazareth (SCN), another accomplished musician, and Fr. Edmund OFM Cap started to adopt the classical music as the liturgical church music. The then Bishop of Patna Rt. Rev. Bishop Augustine Wildermuth S.J. encouraged the team in their endeavour. Both the musicians worked together and published a hymn book titled, 'Sthuthi Gaan' (song of praise) for liturgical purpose. She also travelled to several schools to teach music. While keeping busy with music, she also gave time to set up the new convent at Tripolia, Patna, from 1968 to 1973.

One cannot appreciate enough her musical development with the

adaptation from one style to another: Coming from Western music, she got involved with Indian music, which was completely different from the style of music she had known and learned. To do this, she had to learn a new language again. After learning Hindi and Hindustani classical music, she began composing church music in Hindi. The team organized music courses and summer seminars and trained a good number of young religious and Catholic students to become efficient leaders to lead the church music in different parishes. She also

trained young candidates and sisters of Holy Cross by moving from community to community to teach music. Regarding her mission of music, Sr. Shashi Pakki from Central Province notes the following:

“Sr. Lucia with a gift for music could recognize the budding musicians. As a young candidate studying in Ranchi I came in touch with Sr. Lucia Grabner. She would train the candidates and teach liturgical music along with light rhymes and round songs. Those who are musical enjoyed her classes thoroughly. After my college studies when I came



Sr. Lucia with former members of her Children's home

to novitiate in 1973, Sr. Lucia started taking music classes to the novices. When she noticed my little taste for music she touched my hidden talent and brought me forth as a good musician. She trained me in Hindustani Classical Music. Today I am an efficient musician with my 'Sangeet Prabhakar' that is a Bachelor Degree in Music. I lead the choir in the chapel in the church and I compose songs both in Indian and Western music. Music has become part of my life! I accept her as a 'GURUJI' meaning the Master. In India any art is learned from a Guruji after touching the feet and receiving the blessings from the master. I highly appreciate my Guruji for guiding me and leading me to become an effective Musician. I remain grateful to her and keep singing to make the world a little more better and joyful place to live; I am just one among the many. Most of the sisters of the Indian provinces are trained by her and our voices will echo with gratitude for sharing her gift of music! May God Bless her!"

Her children and the children's home

In 1973 when sister Lucia went for home leave she came in touch with an Austrian Organization, known as SOS Kinderdorf which runs orphanages in a family style.

She was inspired to set up a house in India for the disadvantaged children either orphaned or with a single parent and to bring them up in a family set up. In a residence on the way to Canary Hill Road she established Children's House and named it Koyal Kunj meaning the 'The Nest of Cuckoo Birds'. Over the past 49 years, Sr. Lucia was both father and mother to 24 inmates, 13 girls and 11 boys. She settled all of them well who hold good jobs and take care of their own families. Gradually the number of children increased to almost 30. She wanted to offer her motherly care to these unfortunate children and to bring them up like a family siblings. With the help of benefactors she educated all these young boys and girls and made their future bright by settling them well. Though it is a tough job, she loved the children and still continues to live in their midst with the grand Children.

The Children whom Sr. Lucia brought up have imbibed the values of deep faith and are disciplined as they were brought up in a loving family atmosphere under her motherly care. They always remain grateful, loyal and respectful towards her, even though they are settled far away in different parts of the country. Sr. Lucia continues to be an effective

channel of God's compassionate love for the past 69 years of her professed life. She is admired for her courage, dedication, and faith with which she carries on the humanitarian ministry in a unique way.

Mrs. Saroj one of the first inmates says; "We learned many good things from Sr. Lucia and we grew like a family. She was a good cook and she used to make variety of dishes during festivities. In Hazaribag, we were among the first ones to go to school by bicycle. There are many sweet memories! We are grateful to her for what we are today! We owe very much to Sr. Lucia! Almost all the members of Koyal Kunj are settled in different places like Delhi, U.P., Mumbai, Gujarat, Muzaffarpur, Hazaribag and in other parts of Jharkhand. Though we are spread far and wide we

keep connected and come to Koyal Kunj from time to time. In 2003 when the establishment of Koyal Kunj was celebrated, we were all present with our families and felt the warmth and rich experience of 'Nani Ghar' (Grandma's Home) with Sr. Lucia. Every year on 9th June we celebrate Sr. Lucia's Birth day as 'Koyal Kunj Day' On 9 June 2019 we celebrated Sr. Lucia's 90th Birth day on a grand scale. She is our loving mother, a teacher, and a care taker. She is like a mother bird that takes care of every chick. Now she keeps busy with her grand children. This is how she continues to live her compassionate love of Jesus! We are extremely grateful to Sr. Lucia!

"Gratitude is the fairest blossom which springs from the soul".
Henry Ward Beecher

Laying the Foundation of the New Home for Seniors in Ingenbohl

Sr. Eva Teresa Zanier, Ingenbohl, Provincial Councilor, Province Switzerland

The custom of laying the cornerstone has always been found throughout the world. In the Bible, Psalm 118, verse 22 mentions a "cornerstone" (Ps 118:22). The laying of the cornerstone does not coincide with the actual start of construction - in most cases with the beginning of the ground work, i.e. the excavation of the foundation pit. The first groundbreaking is usually celebrated with a different ceremony.

Excitement and expectation marked the mood on Thursday, September 16, 2021, as the foundation of the new building to house the "New St. Joseph's home for seniors" was laid. Representatives of the builders, guests from local politics, and we sisters were in attendance at the blessing and laying of the foundation stone.

The memorable day began with a simple but impressive Holy Mass. In front of the altar was an empty container made of stainless steel (dimensions 40x40x40), which during the intercessions was filled with selected objects - significant for us sisters - as so-called time capsules. According to Wikipedia, a time capsule is "a container for the storage of things, which is opened only after the expiration of a certain time interval by persons, with the purpose of preserving and documenting time-typical



Filling of the container during the intercessions

things for subsequent generations."

Question for the reader: What objects would you choose? Below are our "symbols" with

corresponding intercessory prayers:

Bible: Reference to Mt 25:35-40. Mother Maria Theresa trusted completely in God in her life and lived the works of mercy in her daily life.

Lord, let us always be an example of Mother Maria Theresa in her trust in God and in the deeds of charity - today and tomorrow.

Five-franc coin: Father Theodosius lived in trust in God's providence. We enclose an excerpt from the book of Father Veit Gadiant, who tells us that our founder bought the monastery hill with a five-franc piece in his pocket.

Lord, may the courage and energy of Father Theodosius inspire us again and again - today and tomorrow.

Age statement/provincial statement/ Guidelines for leadership/informational pamphlet at a glance:

The mission statements and guidelines describe what is important to us.

Lord, help us and the staff to be guided by Christian values and that we continue the journey in everyday life in good cooperation - today and tomorrow.

Daily newspaper: Besides happenings in the church and world, society and science, we are informed about the life of the people in the Canton and in our country. The year 2021 is marked by the Corona pandemic, which has considerably restricted public and church life for more than a year; many people have lost their lives. After more than 20 years, the U.S. soldiers have withdrawn from Afghanistan; the Taliban have come to power. Terrible storms and floods have caused great damage and devastation in Switzerland and neighboring countries and claimed many lives. The diocese of Chur received Joseph Maria Bonnemain, a new bishop, on St. Joseph's Day. Father Peter Camenzind of Schwyz became Vicar General for Central Switzerland.

Lord, we entrust to your care the people in the Church and the world, from near and far - today and tomorrow.

Sisters Directory: We thank for each sister of our province. The majority of us will one day spend the last stage of our lives in the new St. Joseph Center for the elderly.

Lord, strengthen in each sister the awareness that she has a mission through baptism and profession until her last breath.



Blessing by Fr. Emmeram

At 4:00 p.m., in the presence of the invited guests as well as a number of Sisters - in pouring rain - the blessing and laying of the foundation stone took place at the building site. In the weeks and months before, "the project had become visible to all through the careful and competent demolition of the Marienhaus and the digging of the foundation pit by the Aregger Company," as Sr. Tobia Rüttimann mentioned in her welcome and introductory words. After a short speech by Mr. Philip Kiefer, Halter Company, and Mrs. Landamman Petra Steimen-Rickenbacher, the construction site was solemnly blessed by

Father Emmeram Stacheder.

Excerpt from the prayer of blessing:

We ask for your blessing on all the people, who will come in and go out of this house and for all who live and work here.

We ask for your blessing for everything, that is done in this house. Give us and all who will come, your good Spirit, who will guide us in the paths of life. Amen

A retrospective view

Excerpts from Theodosia No. 3, 1966



Sr. Tobia Rüttimann, Sr. Matthia Honold, Architects and engineers

On September 14, 1971, 50 years ago, the foundation stone for the Motherhouse Church and the crypt was laid. This solemn act was presided over by Dr. Johannes Vonderach, the then diocesan Bishop.

Five years ago, on June 23, 1966, the cornerstone was blessed and the copper case was filled with meaningful objects. Why this date? Because the building of a convent church is a rare event, as many sisters as possible should be witnesses. Therefore, the blessing already took place during the General Chapter 1966.

A document was placed in the copper case with the following words (somewhat shortened):
"In the name of God Almighty, to whom we consecrate this

sanctuary, whose protection and blessing we invoke for all who pray therein, we reverently place in its foundation this document, for a pious memorial to the generations to come. O Lord, I love the house in which You dwell, and the place, where your glory abides. (Ps 26:8).

Touched by the beauty of this Psalm, the founders of the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross, Ingenbohl, Father Theodosius Florentini (1808-1865), and Mother Maria Theresa Scherer (1825-1888), built a worthy house for the Lord.

In the course of decades, it changed its shape, according to the need, and the architectural

history of the time. After the first church, built in 1857/58 and solemnly consecrated on October 4, 1860, had become too small, Mother M. Theresa initiated the planning for the second church in 1876.

At the laying of the foundation stone on July 11, 1878, Eugenius Lachat, the Chief Shepherd of



In 1966, Sr. Friedegard Stössel prepares the objects for the copper container

Basel, gave the ecclesiastical blessing in the presence and at the request of Kaspar Willi, the diocesan Bishop of Chur, who was already ailing....

With the renovation of the entire convent complex, a third convent church now became necessary....

In May 1966, the General Chapter of the Congregation of the Holy Cross was held, and on June 23, delegates from 14 provinces and the mission territories of India and Formosa attended the ceremony in which the foundation stone for the new church was blessed. The actual laying of the foundation stone will take place at a later ceremony. The new church, like the earlier one, will be consecrated in honor of the Exalted Holy Cross..."
Ingenbohl, June 23, 1966

The document bears the seal and signature of the Most Reverend Bishop of Chur, as well as the signatures of the 49 members of the General Chapter, the important men of Ingenbohl, the architects and the engineers.

Personal Experiences during the Corona Period

Sisters from different Provinces and Vicariate Brazil

In response to the request of the editorial of the Theodosia, a number of sisters have come forward with personal experiences and reflections on the Corona period. The following is a continuation of the contributions. Some sisters themselves were sick, others provided help during emergency situations, still others were simply affected inwardly and had new experiences.

We thank all the sisters who shared their reflections with us. The pictures show sisters in different situations, but are not related to the texts.

Covid-19 – a Great Terror

Sr. Moreen Kahindi, Namcongo, Vicariate Uganda

The world has faced a number of uncertainties, sicknesses, wars and calamities which have been easily solved within a given time. However, the world has faced a terror in the 21st century that in one way or another, it will live to remember. This Terror is COVID-19 pandemic.

Corona virus was firstly identified in Wuhan city, Hubei Province, China in December 2019. This brought a lot of fear in our country Uganda especially in 2020. On the 18th of March, the President of Uganda, Yoweri K. Museveni pronounced a lockdown and all the students were suspended from schools and Universities.

At the onset of the lock down in Uganda the country banned public

gatherings, cancelled all public transport, closed schools and restricted movements. We were put on the Standard Operating Procedures like social distance at least two meters from each other, washing hands with soap and sanitizer, wearing masks etc.

The period of lock down which was to be for 32 days extended to months, till a year had gone by and it could not be contained by the people of the country. "Covid has come to stay." said an angry student who was tired of staying at home, "We feel so limited to one environment, we can no longer participate in social networks like sports." On our side as religious, we were limited to community life. During meals each sister was given a plate, cup, spoon and fork to be kept at individual level. Some sisters would forget their plates in their rooms and come empty handed

for the meals. What a strange experience it was!

Some institutions like University of Kisubi which could not wait for the official opening of schools opted for Electronic Learning. As time went on, we were asked to accomplish the semester online, a new system that was unfamiliar to us. The challenge was that the lecturers sent us assignments which were hard in a way that answers could not be found on Google. There was no way of accessing the school library for research. We were given a very short period of time to finish up



Intensive care

the work. It was indeed a hard time for us and many of our companions were left behind due to lack of either the means or the instruments effected by economical and digital gap. Many students could not attend and write the exams during lockdown because their parents could not afford to provide appropriate data and there was a lot of disturbances in the internet connections.

During this pandemic, prayers and supplications have been made to God as usual in a desperate situation. This was more realized in our community especially when some of our sisters in Bulimbo, Namugongo and Busunju contracted the Virus. It was really a trying time for us. In spite of our studies, we took care of our sick sisters who were emotionally affected, by giving them a call and texting them encouraging messages. This kept them hopeful and eased their mental turmoil.

It is still a question of where this night-mare came from and when it will end. One thing is certain that it may not end so soon, as we expect. But we believe that prayer is the greatest weapon to rely on along with observing the precautions set by the government. *"Oh Lord helps us to*

overcome this Terror” is our prayer.

Something that I Learnt from Corona Outbreak

Sr. Neeta Alva, Vijayapura, India South Province

Corona Virus or Covid-19 led to a dramatic loss of human life globally. Millions of people lost their jobs and basked into extreme poverty. Being in a remote village in the State of Karnataka, India, I could only glue to the Television news to get a glimpse of heart breaking events day after day.

It was a difficult and challenging time. In this helplessness, the words in the book of Sirach “Good things and bad, life and death, poverty and wealth come from the Lord (11:14)” became a reality to me. Covid-19 offered me an opportunity to reflect on the deep impact and spiritual challenges it posed to the world, country and our communities. As a result of the lock down the churches, mosques, temples and other worship places sealed their doors. Jesus’ words to the Samaritan woman clearly asserted that worship is not about places, sites and structures. The Lord says “The hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in

Jerusalem....when the true worshippers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth” (Jn 4: 22-23). The worship happens when people (the mystical body of Christ) gather together in His name. The online Eucharistic celebrations including retreats and veneration to the Blessed Sacrament became meaningful.

Every created thing even the wonders of the world built as memorials will be dilapidated and collapsed. What is important for me in this situation is to look beyond towards our ultimate reality, the Almighty God and Creator. This became vibrant when I saw the covid victims on ventilators and oxygen concentrators. Searching for a vacant bed in the hospitals gave a message that how insignificant we are! Rich or poor, learned or illiterate when succumbed to this virus, we are all on the same level.

When the whole world was in turmoil, the little village we reside was peaceful. The people were fully aware of the seriousness of Covid-19 and remained home bound. But the life of the poor, widows, migrant workers was pitiable. In spite of the lock down the sisters identified the needy and distributed the food kits. People who neglected hygiene



Distribution of food packets

learnt self care in a multitude way and adjusted to new work schedule. Using the technology we maintained social connection with the single senior citizens, bereaved families etc. People who aren't necessarily friends have become important for us and made our mission more relevant and meaningful. Our people have learnt to adjust with any type of situation even the most difficult ones.

Persistence during Pandemic

Sr. Kirthi Kiran, India Central Province

During the corona virus pandemic, I saw people struggling and I began to think and reflect how we can help the suffering people around us. Many people were in my thoughts and prayers. It was

the right time to reach out to people in compassion.

In spite of the fear of getting infected and external restrictions we couldn't stop ourselves from distributing handmade masks to all who passed by our Holy Cross School gate, Hazaribag. The mask was either unavailable or available at a high price at that point of time. We were happy to see the smile on the faces of people as they received it. About 2000 people were secured with masks. Food packets were distributed to families in slum, to rickshaw pullers, Co – workers and the families of building laborers. It touched my heart when one old man said, "Today we can have food for our family" and he said, "May God bless your good works."

During Covid-19 pandemic, some of our school staff were also infected. I called them personally talked and encouraged them. Pandemic taught me to love, to listen, to care, to respect, to help, to take care of oneself and others. To be positive and courageous. I am filled with gratefulness to God for the gift of life to me and every person. I realized everything needn't be perfect in life for me to be happy. I started appreciating myself, everything and everyone around me. I have personally felt drawn to God in this pandemic.

It was also a time of struggle for us educators. Every teacher contacted each and every parent to know about their situation. Online classes were not an easy job for us. But sacrifice, dedication and hard work of our staff made everything possible.

The experience that I got from the COVID - 19 pandemic, makes it apparent that my life is transient in the arena of geological history. The people were very careful and kept up all the protocol during the first wave of pandemic and did not infect many in Jharkhand state of India. But second wave brought much calamities, infection and death even in the religious houses in and around Hazaribag. We

were all very much fear stricken when we lost many priests and religious.

In the midst of various calamities, crisis, struggles and pains, the corona virus pandemic has created multiple opportunities to face the challenges of life. Due to lock down when everything came to a standstill, it is the exploration of the digital world that brought a big difference to communicate and keep the social life going on. The pandemic did change my outlook, I became more reflective and contemplative on the realities of life and began to spend quality time with God and one another.

Covid-19 Pandemic - Personal Experience

Sr. Shashi Pakki, India Central Province

'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble' Ps 46:1

On 17 February 2020 I travelled by train to my home in Andhra Pradesh. There I contracted Covid-19. On my return I got admitted in Holy Cross Community Health Centre, Tarwa, 20 km. away from Hazaribag. As it was in the initial stage, neither the Corona terminology like 'quarantine' and 'pandemic'

nor the testing kits were in wider use. All the same I was kept in isolation and it was there that I spent almost two months fighting with Covid-19. Here I revived my physical, spiritual and emotional stamina.

At this time the country went into a systematic lockdown. I was familiar to the isolation ward at Tarwa. I could adjust with the loneliness at first but as the days passed by I felt being away from the community and the sisters. Of course the medical personnel made their quick visits just to observe my condition and to supply all that I needed.

My physical fatigue and

helplessness gradually led me to deep spiritual reflections. I began to reflect on the beautiful and marvelous creation of God. At the same time I was feeling sad about the creation of Corona Virus by humans with its fatal effects on people all over the world. The deep rooted cause behind this malicious virus is nothing but the misuse of freedom. But God in His love and mercy can do nothing more than just love us with our faults and failures. It is this unconditional love of God that gave me strength to accept this challenge with confidence, courage and hope. I trusted that the same God who walked with the Israelites will walk with me into the future.



Sewing face masks

The little depression that I went through during my sickness led me to a deeper spiritual communion with God. It was indeed the unique experience of my loneliness that opened my way to an intimate relationship with God. The ritualistic spirituality gradually gave way to find God deep down in my heart and in my being. I began to gaze at Him everywhere; in the nature, in myself, in others, in people around and in all the creation that is given to me as a great gift. I began to pray for the healing of the sick world.

When one door is shut then God opens another to continue the flow of life. So is it during the Covid-19 when the communication seemed completely disrupted by the lock down the digital world worked wonders. The facilities made it possible to be in touch with our friends and dear ones and to keep up our social life to certain extent. It is then that I realized the value of community and the richness of social life. The precious moments we spend in the company of each other is quite often is over looked without giving any importance or

appreciation. But the spiritual vacuum created by closing down the worshipping places was being revived by the on line services with deep spiritual inputs. The number of deaths that took place during Covid-19 did remind me of the shortness of my life on earth and the eternal abode that is in wait. Thus the Corona pandemic challenged me and transformed me to lead a life worthy of my call. It brought a big difference in my outlook that 'whether I live or die I belong to the Lord. Therefore I shall live my life in gratefulness to God.'

Suffered from Covid 19 - What the Corona Period Taught Me

Sister Anna Xaver Engler, Hegne, Baden-Württemberg Province

Corona dictated life style had set in: everyone knew the hygiene rules and adhered to them. With the right information, and being tested thrice a week as the saying goes, "In the day with confidence" - so until January 12, 2021.

That day, I got a call from the nursing director. They told me to come by. Surprise: Corona positive! Heard, but not really

arrived! As if in a dream, I packed up my seven things - into quarantine! Only the next day came the bitter realization: It is me who has Corona, not the others. I thought back: I was in the community for a full three days, at church, at work - with Corona. The thought that I might have infected my fellow sisters took full hold of me. My prayer was like looking into the void: Dear God, don't let the other sisters be infected!

After three weeks I returned to the community - to my great astonishment: none of the sisters had contracted Corona. For me, I keep saying: I have experienced a miracle.

Today, I notice two world stories inside me. More than 20 years ago, I worked for two years in a hospice in Frankfurt for people suffering from AIDS. My experience, my horizon, my religious world was in a state of transition towards a broader way of thinking. Values such as trust, acquired a foundation in life.

Corona is different, not an epidemic, but a pandemic over the whole world. In this short time, the

realization of how close we are to each other across the globe, matured.

Also, a new understanding of the Founder's mission filled me: I am to promote, where I am, with the people, their way of life and to share life, to stay together courageously on the way with my talents and strength of today.

A broader understanding of obedience also dawned on me: apart from instructions of superiors, one also listens to instructions of responsible persons as well.

I am grateful that I got through Corona in a not too difficult form. Thanks to the fellow sisters who cared for me and accompanied me during the time of quarantine.

Article 45 of our Constitutions continues to walk with me in a new light: "We experience God's presence not only in personal and community prayer, but also in the encounter with people and the events of the times."

What did the Corona Time Teach Me?

Sr. Irene Zölzer, Wels Hospital, Europa
Mitte Province

It is good to remember what good God did for me during this time of the pandemic. Yes, this time was a time of grace - even if it was a bit of a journey through the desert. For two months, no Holy Mass, no reception of the sacraments. Many things had to be renounced during this time. However, there was a rich ecclesiastical offer through the media, and we sisters were happy to join in the celebration of Holy Mass. But living with this situation was a learning process. My thoughts kept going to the people in the mission countries, who can seldom celebrate Holy Mass, and I felt solidarity with them. I had new experiences in praying the psalms of the Liturgy of the Hours. This prayer became for me a source from which I could draw comfort, trust, strength and confidence for the day. Another help was the community, which I experienced as a place of security. The conversation with my fellow sister was especially good during this difficult time! The prayer and the blessing "Urbi et orbi" of the Pope remain

unforgettable to me. I experienced this hour on the evening of March 26, 2020 as a great gift from heaven. It is true that whoever believes is never alone - we are always in God's loving hand - may whatever come, HE guides us.

What does the Corona Time Teach Me?

Sr. M. Leokadia Ebel, Hegne, Province
Banden-Württemberg

Many experiences relate to the second and third waves. The first one with all the discussions about the cause and origin of the virus had distracted me a bit from the human tragedy. But then the tremor across the world made us breathless.

What was significant for me was the fact, that fear is a poor teacher. To actively adapt to the rules, measures and regulations with great determination brought a certain routine into my everyday life. And that was a new experience, how the strict discipline was accepted in the community. I wonder if such a thing would have been possible in "normal" times! Amazing! I had a lot of alertness, how the progressions in the nursing home are, but I did not let the virus

become a "big, guzzling animal" for me and my close environment.

Of course, this was also easier for us, none of us contracted the sickness. Since external contacts (doctor's visits, shopping, visits) were limited to the utmost, a feeling of vacuum and helplessness developed at first. Then I discovered the gift of time. Books, spiritual poems, prayer, waiting and being quiet got more space again and a sparkle over the "unemployment". But without contacts and relationships, even if partly on the phone, such a time is difficult to get through. Above all, I called older people of whom I knew lived alone. (This referred especially to the time when I was working at the Hotel St. Elisabeth).

Then I moved to St. Anne's in August. As never before in my religious life, my fellow sisters in the affected provinces and vicariates became a prayerful concern. Overall, my thinking became broader, and the affected countries, and their suffering, became the focus of attention.

Gratefully, I received the news that reported the protection of nature, of the climate, as airplanes and cars were reduced in use. I/we learn to be more responsible for people and nature.

With further hazards and a fourth wave, strict discipline and responsibility, but a trusting and joyful heart is needed.

My Experiences during the 10-day Quarantine

Sr. M. Werenfried Maier, Hegne, Baden-Württemberg Province

"The word crisis in Chinese is composed of two characters. One means **danger**, - the other **opportunity**." John F. Kennedy

First reaction: Uncertainty, I sense **danger**, whether I might be infected! Then follows an inner "grumbling" - I am tested negative, what's the point? Since I take the medical findings seriously and respect them, I began with the acceptance of the facts: ten days "one-room retreat", no presence-contacts, food is in front of the room door, day after day the same!

I realized on the 2nd day that I needed a good structure for this time. I grabbed the opportunity and wrote down a daily schedule for myself:

6:30 a.m. Rising - breakfast - lauds - meditating on the day's impulse - working on files that I had quickly moved into my bedroom before quarantine began - lunch - prayer time - armchair

time (legs raised) - exciting reading - 2:00 p.m. Rosary (10 steps back and forth, be careful of the wall) - sifting through files, sorting - 5:30 p.m. vespers - supper - radio news - sudoku-extreme or puzzles - compline - amen!

My experiences during this time:

1. The day structure was extremely helpful!
2. A tiny virus - wanted by God as it seems - rules over me!
3. Lack of contact (phone calls are no substitute for eye contact) makes me reluctant even at the first reunion with the sisters.
4. God brings me to my knees: I can't live my day the way I want to, His natural laws offer me one of many opportunities to hear HIS voice anew in isolation.
5. New gratitude for my health, my physical stability.
6. New gratitude for my community that has sustained me during this time (prayerful support, phone calls with encouraging words, loving card greetings at the door, the first daisies, etc.)

Personally, I am convinced that the Kennedy quote also has something to say to us sisters: Crises are not only a danger in

our existence, but also offer the opportunity to rethink in various areas - to think and perhaps also to give thanks!

What Teaches Me during the Time of the Corona Virus

Sr. Beatrica Krstačić, Vicariate Brazil

I notice that the time of the Corona virus set my inner structure in motion. Little by little, I began to experience the people on the street - those I always encountered - in a different way. They seemed close to me, despite distance, more similar to each other. I learned that the masks hold a secret - the present God, suddenly recognizable in all alike.



Food packet over the wall (Brazil)

I felt life circulating in my surroundings, whether in nature or in everyday chores. I felt a more conscious life, more connectedness and responsibility towards people and nature.

The time of the Corona pandemic and its consequences gave us more time for meditation and deepening our own lives. I had previously felt certain superficiality in my celebrations and actions. There was an about-face in the way I encountered reality. I began to be interested in people, in their lives, in their reality.... For example, a couple often took us along on the trip, but I knew nothing personal about them. Now the woman poured out her heart, spoke of her difficulties in living together. Now she lives more joyfully and begins to participate in the church community, thus finding strength for her life. Another example: I visited Mrs. Edinalva, with whom I worked for seven years in the pastoral care of prisoners. I did not know much about her life. While visiting her house, she told me about the 30 years of her married life, a very difficult time. I listened to her, gave her some encouraging

words and promised to pray for her. After a few weeks I met her. Full of joy, she said her situation had improved by 60%. God is great. These events awakened in me the need to help in another way, to work. I know that God will guide me. Interpersonal solidarity urges me to be more connected to the lives of others and, with the same sensitivity, to accompany people around the world with prayer. God has opened my eyes to a greater mercy and thus helped me forward in my religious life, overcoming limits and difficulties in everyday coexistence.

The experience of suffering and death of so many brothers and sisters was a time to let something new spring up, even if not always so visible. For our part, this requires attention not to lose sight of the new while still wrestling with the past and death. I have seen that the simple factor of wearing a mask has made me see, observe and listen more, in order to better understand my neighbor. In this way, new life appears to me for the future, a new way of living relationships, of living resurrection.

Personal

Sr. Elsit Ampattu, Sr. Dorothee Halbach, Sr. Christiane Jungo

The editorial team of the Theodosia would like to briefly report something special. On May 9, Sr. Christiane Jungo celebrated her 80th birthday. As the leader of the team, her dedication and creative ideas have enriched our team work for almost 15 years. On this special occasion we had a dialogue with her, and are very glad that she agreed to have this interview with us.



Sr. Christiane at the statue of Theodosius in Ingenbohl

Sr. Christiane, when you reflect on your work in the editorial team of Theodosia, what images and stories stand out?

The foremost image for me is that of Mother M. Theresa, who in 1886 started the Theodosia as a quarterly magazine for all the Holy Cross Sisters. In spirit, she saw

this magazine as a bridge to all the sisters. It had served as a channel to exchange experiences, opinions and spiritual suggestions. It is an honor for me to be part of articles with different contents. I get to know tasks and thoughts of fellow sisters, and for that I am grateful.

Then there are others, more down-to-earth aspects: Do we get enough contributions together in time? What could be of interest to the sisters? How do we encourage sisters to write, to share? How does it affect the sisters who write, if I partly edit their texts, shorten them, adapt them stylistically or simplify them?

With your many talents, you remain open, creative and young at 80. Share with us the secret of your vibrancy.

I grew up in a large farming family, familiar with changes in nature from an early age, used to working, not seeing work as a

burden, basically thinking positively about people and events, and being convinced of the import of a song that says: "What God does, is done well."

As children, we didn't have many toys, but we were all creative in spending our time. I am always interested in everything that concerns people. In addition, since my youth I have been reading a lot, love biographies and history, like listening to stories from others, collect poems and other beautiful texts, and do some writing myself.

You interact with many people. Now and then you are seen with different groups on the hill. Would you like to tell us something about it?

It has so happened that in recent years we have had many groups visiting our convent or/and the tomb of Mother M. Theresa. These groups couldn't be more different: Employees of our houses, women's associations, groups of seniors, annual meeting groups, alumni of our schools, employees of social institutions, parishes, etc. (The groups are not

primarily interested in the architecture and art of the convent, but in the values, the life and work of our founders and fellow sisters around the world. I am proud to be a part of the Ingenboehler story and like to pass it on to others. Visitors often feel inspired by the example of our founders, how they shaped a piece of the world - mostly under difficult circumstances.

You feel connected to both your community and your family. What makes an impact on you to this day, and what inspires your life?

I am the beneficiary of many gifts: a family with good cohesion, the large religious community with its tradition, appropriate professional tasks, encounters with diverse people, many role models among the fellow sisters, joy in the Bible and the liturgy, desire and imagination to create something, to take life seriously, but not tragically, etc. I am grateful for all that I have been given, and would like to share it in various ways, thus enhancing life and joy. I am glad to live - even if the present situation, so full of questions and uncertainties.

Information from the General Leadership

Appointments

On September 28, the General Leadership appointed as Provincial Leadership for the Province India Central for a term of three years:

Provincial Superior:

Sr. Veena Akkal

Assistant:

Sr. Usha Kiran Toppo

Councilors:

Sr. Reema Mathew

Sr. Anupam Minj

Sr. Roseline Kujur

Sr. Celine Sangita Beck

Official start: 08.12.2021

On November 12, 2021, the General Leadership appointed as Provincial Leadership for the Province India South for a term of three years:

Provincial Superior:

Sr. Archana Padikara

Assistant:

Sr. Mercy Thennattil

Councilors:

Sr. Flavia Mendonca

Sr. Shanty George

Sr. Edith Gonsalves

Sr. Shijy Joseph Edassery

Official start: 22.02.2022

We sincerely thank the newly appointed and reappointed sisters of the Provincial Leadership for the Provinces of India Central and India South for their willingness to take up this challenging task. We wish them strength, courage and confidence for the assigned task and God's blessing to accompany them.

We also express our heartfelt thanks to the outgoing Provincial Superiors, Sr. Rosily Kolencherry and Sr. Flory D'Souza and the outgoing Provincial Councilors, and wish them all the best, and God's abundant blessings for their future work.

Quarterly
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