SSpSWW E-Newsletter

Missionary Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit

Congregational Newsletter *March - April 2024* *No. 205*

Compassion Triumphs!

Happy Easter!

We rejoice in Christ's Resurrection, where love conquers darkness and compassion prevails over the forces of evil, violence, and war.

As Jesus rose from the dead bringing life and hope, we joyfully proclaim the eternity of life and the resurrection that is taking place within each of us at every moment.

Let's awaken in ourselves the power of hope that the Lord of Life brings us! He gives us the courage and energy to face the challenges of the present time with love and compassion for all who suffer.

As his disciples and messengers, let us sow the seeds of kindness, nurturing the blossoming of a new humanity.

Helping Women Heal Themselves in Patagonia

Providing a way out of domestic violence, joblessness, and criminality in Patagonia, South Argentina, SSpS sisters work with women to help bring back their self-esteem and build bonds.

One of the strongest pastoral activities we are involved in is working with women in South Argentina. It is a project for empowering women, and we have carried it out for several years in Patagonia. The residents lack basic services, suffer family violence, abuse, lack of proper food, crimes related to lack of work, and a consumerist culture.

The project helps its members build bonds and develop self-esteem as they learn to value their identities, gifts, and potential. With personal and group support, each woman is accompanied in her healing, forging a self-confidence that helps her find herself, learn healthy ways and unlearn unhealthy ones, listen, share, and generate creativity through workshops inspired by the valiant women of the Bible.

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The workshops include knitting, crafts, school support, creating a space for listening and personal growth, and sharing faith and knowledge. The meetings include activities such as celebrations for Women's Day, Mother's Day, and interculturality, as well as opportunities to evaluate the workshops, walks, and retreats.

The workshops begin with the women expressing their feelings and reading a manifesto before starting the program.

The participants are grateful for the support, the freedom they attained with inner healing, and more trust in God. They learn to listen without judging, to organize themselves, to communicate compassionately, to let go of what doesn't help them, to persevere and be patient, and to enjoy what life offers them.

Sr. Alfonsia Sija, SSpS - Province Argentina South

Hope Against Trafficking in India

The SSpS initiated training programs and organized a help desk in Odisha in Eastern India to help young village women, who might be vulnerable to increasing human trafficking and migration.

A mother's stepsister offered her daughter work in a distant city, but the girl could not be traced later. Despite efforts, the girl could not be found. The mother ended her search but believed her daughter would return home one day. This incident highlights the global issue of human trafficking, which the United Nations considers modern slavery.

Odisha, an eastern Indian state, is witnessing significant migration of its middle-class population to other cities for unskilled jobs, driven by low literacy rates, seasonal layoffs, lack of job opportunities, and a desire for a modern lifestyle. Despite the government's mandate to record migration locations, many continue to evade it.

Religious congregations in Odisha and Jharkhand have formed a "Migrant Help Desk" to guide unskilled workers to migrate safely. The initiative, a response to concerns about women's safety due to duplicity, exploitation, and flesh trade, works with the Arise Foundation.

Sr. Anita Bandod, seated left, with young women trained in beautician courses, display their efficiency in bridal makeover.

Retaining human power is crucial to prevent brain and resource drain, especially in rural villages. The Missionary Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit in INE initiated skills training programs to address human trafficking, focusing on beautician courses. These courses were successful because of their appeal to young women, who are creative and sought after in the beauty industry.

The International Day of Prayer and Awareness urges us to be vigilant about the plight of those in dire situations.

Sr. Anita Bandod, SSpS – Province of India East

Women Weave Networks for Women in Madrid

The Caritas Madrid Women's Care Center provides immigrants from conflict areas a place to share their lives and connect with others, and to facilitate their integration to a new environment.

The majority of the women we look after at the Caritas Madrid Women's Care Center are immigrants from various countries and cultures. Some have been living in Spain briefly, while others have just arrived. They need support, guidance, and help with basic services.

At the Center, we offer our presence alongside professionals and volunteers. We do whatever we can, according to our abilities and gifts, to provide a meeting place, advice, and attentive listening ears. We aim to facilitate the integration of women.

The Center helps us to question ourselves about the "gift" of the woman capable of connecting with others out of her vulnerability. A dynamic is born when these women care less for themselves than for those in worse situations.

Sr. Delia Maria listens to the women share their stories at the Women's Care Center. In the top photo, Sr. Elena Rodriguez with immigrant women at Caritas Madrid.

The women know each other because when they sit at the table, they share their lives, problems, difficulties, and vulnerabilities that close many doors to them. At the same time, they find out where the soup kitchens are, where to find the information posted on the job board, where the closets are, where they can process their papers, and go around the city together to look for resources.

Each thread of the story they share gives them warmth through venting and listening to one another. Each piece of information they share becomes a bridge to move forward. Starting from the same point of vulnerability, they weave networks to continue walking.

Sr. Clara Silalahi, SSpS - Region of Spain/Portugal

Empowering Girls Through Education in Ethiopia

The unwavering commitment of the SSpS mission in Chole through its education project has changed the lives of girls, contributed to the improvement of and sparked hope in their communities.

A project aimed at supporting education has empowered girls and transformed communities in Chole, Ethiopia.

Sr. Lovely Thomas facilitated the education of more than 100 girls regardless of faith, in a predominantly Orthodox Christian area. Through various initiatives, the project not only supported girls academically but also contributed to their holistic development. Despite challenges like political instability and academic hurdles, the project created an impact on the lives of students, teachers, and parents.

The girls are equipped with resources and skills for academic success by providing school materials, library access, and tutorials.

The international and intercultural Sisters' community serves as a testament to the prevalence of tribalism. Prioritizing support for young girls challenges cultural norms that marginalize women, often relegating them to domestic roles. The education project has been instrumental in supporting girls' education and holistic development. Providing school materials, library access, and tutorial classes has equipped the girls with resources and skills for academic success. Initiatives like the Teen STAR program have empowered girls to become agents of change in their communities.

Despite challenges such as high dropout rates and political unrest, the project has persevered, thanks to collaboration with government stakeholders and local non-government organizations that create a supportive education environment. The unwavering commitment of the SSpS mission to women's empowerment and transformation has not only changed the lives of girls but also ignited a spark of hope for generations. Each step reaffirms the belief in education's power to change lives, one girl at a time.

Extracted from the Mission Report of Sr. Lovely Thomas, SSpS – Region of Ethiopia

49 Years of Aiding the Homeless Celebrated in Nagoya

For 49 years since 1975, volunteer organizations have been providing relief for the homeless in Japan. An SSpS sister shares her experience in attending to a homeless man with dementia.

This year marks the 49th Year of Overwintering Activities for homeless people in Nagoya, Japan.

The history of overwintering activities for homeless persons traces back to 1975 when concerned citizens from Nagoya banded together to address homelessness and the lack of resources to support those in need during the harsh winter months.

When unemployment came after rapid economic growth, homeless people filled the front of stations, parks, and town squares in the big cities. Moved by the situation at Nagoya train station premises, some volunteers served them hot soup and rice balls.

Volunteer doctors offer their services to homeless people in front of parks and stations. The homeless collect aluminum cans (right) and receive 120 to 160 yen (US$ 1 to 2) per kilo.

Volunteer doctors established a clinic in 1985 and provided welfare programs, including public assistance. As a volunteer, I make monthly visits to the homeless places. We encourage the homeless to apply for assistance and move into welfare shelters, and ensure their safety, especially during the extremely cold season.

I visited a man suffering from dementia *(see photo),* and it was during this visit to his tent that I attended to his diaper changes and served him lunch. Unfortunately, before we could confirm his name and age, he died last autumn.

To witness the hardships of the less fortunate and the tireless dedication of volunteers is profoundly moving. It serves as a reminder that every act of kindness, no matter how small, can ripple outwards and touch the lives of those in need, igniting hope, and bringing about real change.

Sr. Lydia, Chiemi Hayamizu, SSpS - Province of Japan

SSpS Celebrates 70 Years in Taiwan

The seven decades of dedicated service and missionary presence profoundly impacted lives in Taiwan.

The year 2023 marked the 70th anniversary of our missionary presence and service in Taiwan. Four thanksgiving activities were held at Shu-Guang Elementary School and High School and Fu Jen University, respectively.

Alongside faculty, students, and members of the Saint Arnold family, we came together to express gratitude for the many blessings we received over the past seven decades. The celebrations at Shu-Guang Elementary and High Schools were school-wide events, while those at Fu Jen University were smaller in scale.

The celebrations at Fu Jen University were held at our new residence on the 10th floor of Yi-Sheng Students' Dormitory on November 27 and December 29 *(first photo below).*

Some of the activities during the 70th anniversary celebrations in the educational environment. At the top, creative prayer with young people.

The first celebration was for the members of the Arnoldus family, including our SVD brothers, the SSpSA, and our sisters working at Fu Jen.

The second gathering was for our past sisters' students and present sisters' friends and colleagues.

For the two celebrations, more than 110 people joined to give thanks and praise to God for the wonderful blessings on us and through us to students and colleagues.

Prof. Cecilia Liu, a former student of our sisters, further expressed her admiration for our sisters' dedication to education and caring for young people.

"These sisters and fathers are embodiments of truth, goodness, and beauty… They made an impact on others' lives with their own lives," Liu said.

Sr. Felisa Liou, SSpS - Province of Taiwan

1st Cuban Missionary SSpS Takes Perpetual Vows

A significant moment unfolded in Cuba with the first-ever final profession of Sr. Edisley who committed herself to a YES forever.

Sr. Edisley Mireya Rivera Licea *(right)* became the first Cuban to be a member of the SSpS after taking her perpetual vows on February 17, 2024, in the Region of Cuba. It was an event of gratitude and joy offered to the Triune God - a blessing for the Cuban Church and her diocese of Bayamo-Manzanillo, in the province of Granma, in eastern Cuba, where she comes from.

Sr. Edisley began participating in Church activities at the age of 12, later receiving the sacraments of Christian initiation. She later committed herself to the pastoral care of young people in the diocese. At this time, she felt called to live a different life, and as she continued her search in 2009, she began a process of discernment with the SSpS.

On August 23, 2012 she entered as a postulant. She started her novitiate on February 16, 2014 in Paraguay and made her first vows on February 18, 2016.

In 2019 she was sent to Chile for a cross-cultural experience and studies on theology and spiritual accompaniment. In 2023, she went to the Province of Mexico, where she completed her preparation for the perpetual vows. After formation and discernment. Sr. Edisley pronounced her "Yes" forever. She has received a missionary appointment to Cuba but will first go on a six-year cross-cultural experience in Angola.

Sr. Miriam Perez Aravena, SSpS – Region of Cuba

SSpS Sisters Immerse Themselves in Congo Mission

Sr. Miriam , fifth from left, joined sisters in Bandundu, Congo in February 2024.

Our sisters have planted seeds of hope in the heart of Congo amidst challenges and adaptation as they cultivate not only a lush garden but also lasting connections with the people.

From February 12 to 20, 2024, I joined our sisters in our new mission in Congo.

Located in the Diocese of Kenge in the province of Kwilu, Bandudu is just 400 kilometers northeast of the capital, Kinshasa, but reaching it by car can be a day-long journey due to the challenging road conditions. Compounding the difficulty, National Route 17, linking Kinshasa to Bandundu, has been temporarily closed due to militia activity and frequent ambushes.

In December 2023, our SVD brothers and the local community welcomed the sisters warmly and assisted them. They now reside in two modest rented houses within a vast SVD compound alongside an SVD community, a novitiate, a radio station, and adjacent SVD parishes.

Upon arrival at our SSpS houses in Bandundu, one notices the beautiful garden lush with salad greens, tomatoes, manioc, peanuts, and other vegetables that the sisters have cultivated.

Much like the plants taking root in this soil, our sisters are embedding themselves in the fabric of Congo. It's a challenging beginning. They grapple with adapting to the new environment, climate, and cuisine. Despite the hurdles, they are already effecting change, as shown by the flourishing garden. Currently, they are immersed in learning French, Lingala, or Kikongo, while forging connections in the parishes and communities.

The sisters planted vegetables in a garden in front of their rented house in Bandundu.

Let us support them through our prayers.

Sr. Miriam Altenhofen, SSpS – Congr. Leader - Rome

VIVAT International Has a New President

Sr. Miriam Altenhofen, SSpS, is the new President of VIVAT International assuming the post on January 25, 2024 during the regular Board of Trustees meeting.

She will lead VIVAT International from 2024 to 2027 in promoting life and human dignity for all, especially those forced to live on the peripheries.

Sr. Gretta Fernandes, SSpS - Executive Secretary, VIVAT International - Rome

Activities of the Congregational Leader Team

Sr. Miriam Altenhofen, Congregational Leader, traveled to Laupheim, Germany, from March 2 to 7. She was there to support the community as they welcomed the arrival of sisters from Wimbern. They were moving out of Wimbern to their new homes in Steyl and Laupheim. She began her General Visitation in Timor Province from March 13 to May 11 and made a stop in Papua New Guinea for the jubilee celebration marking 125 years of mission. Sr. Miriam will attend the 3rd International Treasurer's Seminar in Java, Indonesia, before returning to Rome on May 27.

Sr. Mikaelin Bupu participated in the Panel SEDOS Seminar in Rome on March 21. She was also part of the SVD Indonesian Tertiate from March 8 to March 10. Later, she will attend the 3rd International Treasurer's Seminar in Java, Indonesia from May 5 to 25.

Sr. Kreti Vidal Sanhueza went to Spain/Portugal for the General Visitation, starting April 1.

Sr. Mariana Camezzana was invited to meet the 15th International Formator's Course participants in the Philippines North Province. She also goes to Cuba to be part of the region's annual retreat and will join their chapter from April 20 to 21.

Sr. Tressa Sebastian went to Spain on March 2 for a three-week language course.

Sr. Jana Pavla Tóthová is conducting a General Visitation in Timor Province from March 13 to May 11, after which she will travel to Hong Kong on May 13 and will return to Rome on May 22.

Sr. Regina Visits Angola and Mozambique

Sr. Regina George, the General Treasurer, traveled on February 24 to Angola and Mozambique for a three-week visit to assist the two African regions in effective financial planning and management.

Through a series of workshops and hands-on sessions, Sr. Regina aimed to foster a deep understanding of financial stewardship, enabling the formation of treasurers.

Sr. Regina (the fifth from right) with a group of Sisters in Angola.

Refugees Bid Goodbye to the Community in Rome

Magalie and Richie bid farewell on January 3, 2024 to the Sisters, and to Charleine and her children, Patrice, Amy, and Luxelle, after a stay from July 2022. Charleine and her family left on February 22.

The Generalate House has been a welcoming home for refugee families fleeing from conflict areas, but due to plans to sell the property, these families had to find a new place to stay.

The Generalate Community offered two families from Congo and one family from Syria a safe and hopeful space, making them feel like part of a community, and helping those who had lost much.

"We've all gained a lot from this experience, learning about each other's cultures, beliefs, and stories," said Sr. Francisca Garcete, the leader of the Generalate Community in Rome. "The families have become a part of our community."

The Syrian family stayed for 8 months in the Generalate House. They left in November

With help from the San Egidio Community, the refugee families have now found a place to transfer.

"The sadness of leaving this beautiful place is deeply felt among us," said Hamest, a Syrian father of two, who found refuge in the convent.

"We are grateful for the love and support we've received here. It has given us hope because we found a second home," said Charleine, a single mother of three from Congo.

Safeguarding as a Way of Life

Sr. Bernadette Berre from Ghana *(left)* and Sr. Quintinha João Dinis from Angola *(right)* embarked on a transformative journey by enrolling in the Diploma in Safeguarding offered by the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome, Italy.

The one-semester diploma course provides a comprehensive introduction to safeguarding, covering its multidisciplinary aspects. But it is more than academic knowledge; it's a call to internalize its essence and to take concrete action.

Religious congregations, especially those working with women in various ministries, play a vital role. Safeguarding is about creating safe environments and protecting human dignity. It emphasizes protection, compassion, and justice - values deeply ingrained in our congregation. By integrating safeguarding practices into our ministries, we actively contribute to a safer, more respectful world.

Let's raise awareness within our congregation to promote human dignity and protect the vulnerable. *Link to the Course:* Courses Catalogue - Pontifical Gregorian University (unigre.it)

Facts & Photos

As we celebrate International Women's Day in March, we thank the women around the world who embody love and compassion, bringing happiness to many, and easing the burdens of others.

Congratulations to our SSpS sisters and all who stand in solidarity with those who fight for the dignity of women.

SSpS Worldwide

E-Newsletter

Thanks to all the Sisters, Provinces and Regions who contributed to the SSpSWW E-Newsletter No. 205.

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Thank you!

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