

COMMUNICATIONS SERVICE  
VIII/100 OCTOBER - NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2021



Spain

“Day Centre” Home for the Homeless

*Provinces : 2-22*

SPAIN • NORTH AFRICA • MOZAMBIQUE • INDIA  
OATACAMUND • MYANMAR • VIETNAM CONGO  
BRAZZAVILLE • FRANCE • INDONESIA CENTRAL  
AND EASTERN EUROPE • ITALY

*Path of Transformation : 24-26*

MIDDLE EAST • INDIA CHENNAI

*History : Italy, Spain 28-32*

First foundations in Italy and Spain



*Meeting Space*

FRANCISCAN MISSIONARIES OF MARY

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# Editorial



Christmas is the feast of peace and love. “Glory to God in the highest and on earth to those he loves.” This hymn of joy is not only a beautiful piece of music that we are accustomed to hearing on this feast of Christmas. It is also a revelation of the Word Incarnate who has come to join us in our humanity. The message of peace brought by the angels, invites us to joy, to the celebration of life, to the contemplation of the beauty of love which is expressed through the Infant in the manger. God loves us to the point of making himself one with us. Let us then be messengers of peace to sow seeds of love, of unity, of reconciliation where there is division, conflict, war. Together, let us dare to receive this mission with the conviction that in living the Gospel in daily life, we shall contribute to bringing joy and fraternity in the world and giving a smile once again to faces overshadowed by suffering.

The coming of Jesus on earth is a reason for joy because in Him, humanity as a whole is saved. “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that whoever believes in Him will never die, but will have eternal life” (Jn 3:16). For us, Christians, this feast is synonymous with joy, with thanksgiving for the salvation that God gives us in his Son; through Him we know the way that leads to God. Christmas is also the feast of the family, of fraternity, of meeting, of sharing gifts, meals, smiles ... It is the occasion of opening oneself to grace, to contemplate the mystery which fills us with wonder, but at the same time questions our faith in God who manifests himself to us in a manner that is simple as well as discrete. Is that not a challenge to our world today, where appearance, power and wealth are synonymous with success and happiness?

“Lord, make me an instrument of your peace”. This prayer of our brother Saint Francis of Assisi is the expression of a deep desire for peace. To wish for peace, is to accept and renounce violence which engenders uncontrollable and sad situations. The history of humanity is like an open book, in which we can read narratives which relate disasters caused by conflicts, quarrels, wars, in the course of centuries. Our contemporary world is not a shelter from these evils. Today more than ever, the world needs to hear a message like this: “I leave you peace, I give you my peace” (Jn 14:27). These words of Jesus after his resurrection come to comfort his disciples when they are sad, distressed, confused, disoriented. So we wish that the noise of arms be silent to allow us to hear the language of nature, the sweet voices of children who sing of the peace of Christmas. It is also the occasion to take time with the family, to consecrate more quality time together, to communicate with God, to admire lights in the streets, to listen to beautiful Christmas music which brings peace in public places. All this contributes to creating a fraternal ambiance which diminishes the pressure that life exercises over us in a world which fears silence and calm.

As disciples, the call of Christ to live the mission of nearness, of compassion, of witness, of love for one’s neighbour, is a reality today. The traumatic experiences which some provinces like Myanmar or Mozambique share show how much suffering dehumanises the Person and undermines the sacredness of life. There, people are stripped of their goods and separated from their families. Here, the potential of natural resources which is supposed to be for the benefit of the local population, becomes a source of conflict to the benefit of the strongest. Like good Samaritans, our Sisters are at the bedside of the sick, of displaced persons, of victims of violence. In collaboration with the local people, miracles are worked every day; fruits of their courage to witness, to love, and to live fraternity at the risk of their lives. By the side of these tragedies which din the light of Christmas, Spain has put in place a service of help for the poor, those without shelter, offering them lodging, food and listening. This awakens the hope that is in the person, and stimulates him/her to believe in better days to come. It is in this hope that our sisters of Eastern Europe, engaged in pastoral youth ministry, invite them to set up their tents to meet God in his word, and hear the voice which whispers in their hearts: “God tells you that you are divine”.

Dear readers, at the end of this year, it is with a great feeling of gratitude that we come through our review, Meeting Space, to wish you a joyous Christmas and a happy New Year 2022. May the hope of living a year of peace and happiness, be a reality for each one; together, may we share the joy of the Gospel so that each day may be CHRISTMAS.

**Agnès Diouf, f.m.m.**

## “DAY CENTRE” HOME FOR THE HOMELESS

*To be able to participate in this Centre as a “volunteer” is a grace; indeed, I discovered that it is a very Franciscan service. This type of service arose in a very simple way. I arrived from my mission in Peru with all my missionary baggage full of experiences and was a little anxious setting forth about what I could plan to do where there was already not only a parish, but also a parish that more or less had its pastoral services and where it would not be easy to include me among them because they were already staffed...*



*Waiting in front of the Centre's door*

### **Retracing our steps a little...**

One Sunday afternoon, together with Ana—an Ursuline Sister who had also arrived from the Bolivia-Ecuador Mission with the same concerns, we wondered what would be most useful for our “invisible” society, the one most vulnerable and Disadvantaged. We began to walk through the streets of Córdoba... a beautiful experience... We were about to stop at the Trinitarians when we heard something that sounded like a “social dining room”. We rang the bell and, without opening the door, the doorkeeper told us that were next to a Dining Room where we would be very well received... But everything was closed; it was a Sunday afternoon.

We returned Monday morning and a very nice youth welcomed us and explained how the whole organization functions, but we had to go to the “Day Centre” to speak with the director. This same youth, who was in front of the social dining room, contacted Edward by telephone

to make an appointment for our first interview the 14th of November 2018. On that day Isabel, another Ursuline Sister, also joined us...

After a short time, they had us fill out a “Volunteer Application”, a “Statement of Responsibility”, and a “Volunteer Commitment Agreement” -- everything with our signature, everything very legal, dated the 26th of February 2020. For me, what was lovely and significant about all this was to carry out this search in an Inter-Congregational manner: Franciscans and Ursulines seeking together to involve ourselves in this society and offer our simple services to the “invisible”, to those “without a roof on their heads”, to those “who sleep on the street”. It has turned out very well for us, and we have already given almost two years of service there.

The Trinitarians’ Institution offers a variety of services to those who use them: breakfast, meal, snack, laundry,



shower (they must come clean to the Centre, and be grateful for a shower), a locker (to keep their personal items), a large air - conditioned room where they can sleep and rest, a reading room, games and a room with three computers where they can search online for employment or participate in social media. They can enjoy an outdoor space (patio) and attend to their pets, something rather common among the homeless.

We work with them regarding hygiene and insertion into the work force, training, and the development of social skills through workshops. These are useful services that are very welcome among the youngest... They are of all ages and from different countries, as well as Spaniards with few resources or drug or alcohol problems. They have a large wardrobe classified as clothing for the “Liberated” (second-hand clothing in very good condition, is sold). We also give away well-used clothes to those who need them, or even sell them by weight because they can no longer be given to anyone; this helps them maintain a small economic fund. We also run junk sales (flea markets), organize collections to maintain some funds, and have institutions that help.

In my situation as a Franciscan and a younger sister, I lend my support every Monday to prepare and distribute breakfasts. I feel like a perfect waitress... and that pleases me. I do this with much tenderness and devotion... a very pleasant experience. When we complete this task, we dedicate ourselves to the Welcoming Service near the Institution, either by bringing clothes for the clothing room or spending time with those who come to the “Centre” to rest or sleep. Some come to make an appointment to wash their clothes and, when the time comes to open the

LOCKERS, they leave behind their clean clothes or accept others. This questions me a lot... “light in baggage”... Well yes, they teach us: we choose to be poor by a vow of poverty, but their very life has made them poor They have not chosen this.

### How can we change such an unequal world?

When we emerge from this pandemic, will we continue the same way with our acquired needs... our social commitments... our accommodations... our well-being...? What kind of society are we producing since this experience of the virus? What do we have left? Here, there remain these concerns and many more. There are many resistances in our consumer society.

**Anuncia Oña, f.m.m.  
Córdoba Community**



*Group of volunteers ( 3rd from the left :Sr. Anuncia Oña)*



## WHEN THE SPIRIT BLOWS

*The Little Sisters of Jesus (North Africa region) had planned to reinstall their novitiate in Algeria, but it was impossible to enter because of COVID-19 and the procedure to obtain a visa could take up to two years! Casablanca was chosen at the last minute but how to begin, for the house was not yet ready? The FMM responded to their urgent request to welcome the sisters for 6 weeks in Casablanca, Morocco.*



*The novices with their mistress*

When the Spirit blows, there is nothing else to be done but to listen and know that one expects anything for He settles down everywhere ... We would say He is without boundaries! Here is the proof. One fine day, He woke up, tamed vocations in Chile, in Rwanda, in Cameroon under the guidance of the Little Sisters of Jesus ... therefore, docile to the Spirit, the opening of the novitiate was foreseen. It seemed normal to open it in the land of Islam and precisely in North Africa in order to be closer to the "sources". It was precisely on this continent that Little Sister Magdeleine, under the influence of her father, a doctor, and sharing her passion for the inhabitants of North Africa, desired to become one of these little sisters that Brother Charles de Foucauld (who will soon be canonised) had wanted so much.

"The lived Gospel, total poverty, hidden among the abandoned populations and above all, in all its fullness ... Jesus Charity. Jesus Love", such was the ideal that Little Sister Magdeleine of Jesus wished to live and make her sisters live. That is why all the Little Sisters of Jesus, in the course of their formation, pass through an Islamic country to discover the charism which is born of friendship, proximity with one's neighbours: to allow themselves to be formed by their neighbours". Once the choice of the continent was made, Algeria could have well responded to the opening of this novitiate: but it was impossible to envisage this, frontiers were closed and the pandemic was in full swing. Would Morocco not bring this about? A novitiate already existed in this land. Among the existing fraternities, the biggest was in Casa,

but not big enough to receive 8 people, and these at the same time. “It is at the door by the side”, with the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, that hospitality was asked for to begin their journey. The charism of Blessed Mary of the Passion and that of Little Sister Magdeleine have many points in common!

Once the continent was reached, the country, the town and the fraternity, one had to wait till all were there before beginning, for quarantine was imposed according to its demands. Sister Kidist, novice mistress arrived first from Ethiopia, then one from Chile, Guisella, then Gladys coming from Cameroon, and finally Delphine, Theodore and Clarisse from Rwanda. The count is completed with Sr Dativa who will accompany them for a biblical initiation. All are young, do not know one another and are of different languages or dialects. It is truly a Pentecost! French will be added to the other common points of the charism.

On the 16th July 2021 was the installation of 5 pre-novices, of the novice mistress and of Sr. Dativa, on the 2nd floor of our fraternity. After a month and a half and several times during the day, the FMM community, ever watchful, meet one or the other in the corridors or the stairs; since these meetings, this crossing paths with another becomes frequent, a smile, a ‘good morning’ are exchanged ... the Little Prince would have said: they “are coming close to one another”. In another building, a big hall which serves as oratory, refectory and study room, a small kitchen as well as the big garden, have been put at their disposition. The first and only aim: to know one another, to learn to live together, to pray together, to be initiated together in the Word of God, searching for “the Alliance of God with His People” through the biblical books. Thus, every day around 2.00 p.m. six pairs of “thongs” and six bibles are left at the door of our chapel while the sisters contemplate and adore the mysteries of the Incarnation and the Redemption. They are initiated into living the spirituality of Nazareth in daily life, very simply in joy, sisterly service and openness for meeting Moroccan friends of the fraternity and the market place.

The first elements acquired were at Taroudant (in the south of Morocco) where they will make a retreat and take the time to listen and to respond to the question: “who is Jesus for me?” The Door, the Way, the Truth and the Life, the Vine, the Bread of Life?” There is no immediate or definitive answer, it will be all through life that they will respond for that takes time.

On the 15th September, the Cardinal and the community of the Little Sisters welcomed Guisella, Clarissa,

Delphine, Gladys and Theodette to the novitiate. We wish you a good journey and thank God for your presence among us. Your FMM sisters,

**Marie Joséphe Labrousse, f.m.m.’**

### Living the unconditional ‘yes’ of Mary

The unconditional “yes” of Mary at the Annunciation was the beginning of her long journey of discovery and one grasps it further through the contemplation of Mary all along this journey. The first step in this journey is her visit to Elizabeth, where two women graced by God with extraordinary intervention in their lives, meet one another and share their story. Their mutual love, service and encouragement enables them to go forward with more confidence and joy, despite the struggle that still faced them. Connecting with each other these two women are empowered to speak with prophetic voices. The force of their meeting leads them to proclaim in the midst of their history that God blesses the lowly and overthrows the oppressive institutions. Mary’s Magnificat is the climax of her visit and is the powerful prophetic utterance from the mouth of Mary.

Mary’s visit to Elizabeth in Luke and the wedding feast at Cana in John are seen as examples of her sensitivity to her neighbors’ need and, as a woman of active service, the characteristics essential in the life of a disciple of Jesus. Mary giving birth to Jesus, God’s own Son, in the unfamiliar, uncomfortable situation in a stable, was the living out of the unconditional yes to God. It showed her that her path would be hard, like that of many poor displaced women, yet she did not question God, but said her yes. It manifests her power of endurance and the inner strength in the face of pain and struggle.

The whole of Chapter 2 in Luke with many events connected to Mary point out that Mary is an exemplary disciple, a woman actively contemplating the Word of God...

**Part II-BOOK 7**

## PATH OF TRANSFORMATION

*“The process of transformation will allow the Institute to renew its capacity to carry out its prophetic role in accordance with its foundation charism” [communication of Sr Françoise Massey and Council 20/08/2016].*



*Province assembly*

The Enlarged General Council of 2018 had been an important milestone in the province of Ootacamund as we embarked on the journey of Transformation initiated by the Institute. The ‘U’ Process with its 3 moments of sensing – presenting – implementing has reset the clock of FMM Living. Generative speaking and Generative conversations had brought about an optimistic attitudinal change and Personal Transformation in the members. As we search for new ways of *‘Being and doing a series of younger generation conversations, community conversations, in-depth reflections and discussions on the Constitutions and writings of Mary of the Passion are the motivating factors to dwell deep into the reality of persons, context and the system.*

### **Provincial assembly**

Moment of inward journey and a collective reflection on the following questions:

- Who are we as a province? To what is God calling us as FMM body in the emerging world?
- What are we to *‘Let go’* of and what is not working well with us?

- What *‘Newness’* are we to *‘Let in’* to answer to the missionary calls of the times?

As this process of Transformation is challenging us to allow the context to create the new missionary awareness, in accordance with the 2019 Provincial Chapter document vision statement ...we commit ourselves to reflect the human face of Jesus by venturing into missions that involve risks (provincial chapter document May 2019) The mission priorities involving risks thus identified are:

- Children in Conflict; Youth in crisis; Widows and single women; Transgenders;
- Alcoholism and its adverse effects on Families; Restoration of the exploited nature and mother Earth; Prisoners.

Special Ministry Groups are thus set up and sisters are functioning effectively with well-organized outreach programmes. Children who are abused and exploited are healed of the trauma inflicted on them; misled youth are being guided on the right path and their energies are channeled productively; widows and single women are freed of their *‘social exclusion and oppression’*, and are



assisted to get back to the mainstream of the society. Prisoners are given counselling and their families are accompanied... Through 'Alcoholic Anonymous' groups sisters work towards the restoration of wholesome health among alcoholics. Peace, harmony and brotherhood is restored as well in some of the families affected by the ill effects of alcoholism. Transgenders are motivated to be aware of their potentialities. Efforts are being made to create job opportunities for them.

- Transgender Youth Gathering

Furthermore, the Covid pandemic that come with new challenges enables 'NEW SENSING' in order to REINVENT new responses according to the signs of the times. The vision of the Institute "to organize the body differently with adapted structures and functioning that ensure vitality and sustainability for 10 years and beyond".

In response to this vision, the Province has undertaken the process of "PROVINCE ASSESMENT" With the expert help of a Jesuit priest "To Renew; To orient; To evolve"... our Life and Mission towards greater apostolic effectiveness. In the first phase of the process, spiritual discernment was done focusing on:

- the Founding purpose of the communities; Initial Missionary priorities;

- the Evolution of Missionary priorities; Awaiting challenges of the mission ahead

### **In the second phase an Authentic Evaluation of available**

\* Human Resources; \* Material resources; \* Financial resources of the communities is being done to re-orient, replan and re-allocate our resources towards greater apostolic effectiveness among the people who suffer and are at the margins...

The Province has constituted a 'core team' of 15 sisters to move on with the process with renewed vitality...

As this journey of transformation offers continued challenges 'To live our name' as FMMS' let these words of Pope Francis echo in us: "We must restore hope to young people, help the old, be open to the future, spread love. Be poor among the poor. We need to include the excluded and preach peace".

**Pramila Jaddu, f.m.m.**

## CALLED TO BE A COMMUNITY OF HOPE, OF PEACE AND OF RECONCILIATION

*We are a community of five sisters, one Congolese, one Indian and three Mozambicans from the centre and south of the Country: Tete and Gaza. We have been present here since 2002 in the diocese of Pemba, Cabo Delgado, in the north of the Country and inserted in the district of Montepuez since 2015. Montepuez is 200 kms from Pemba Capital. Our main aim is evangelisation. Today, we bring humanitarian, psychosocial, moral and spiritual help to those persons displaced because of the war, in seven reinstallation camps, namely: Nacaca, Mapupulu, Ntele, Opajo, Masase, Maputo and Mapululu pilot, with a total of 11,819 families corresponding to 44, 919 people.*



*Many families come to the Camps and Centres for shelter*

### **Brief historical glance of Cabo Delgado**

The province of Cabo Delgado has an enormous potential for natural resources. In the course of the last fifteen years, important reserves of graphite, petrol and natural gas, gold, rubies (precious stones), have been discovered, which places Mozambique in the economic competition of world enterprises.

### **A bloody war without respite**

Practically speaking, till today, Mozambique continues an inhuman and bloody war which has caused more than 2,000 dead through beheading and being torn apart; thousands are wounded, caused by bullets in the course of an attempted flight.

### **Deep traumatisms need to be cured**

The inhabitants de Cabo Delgado, in particular in the districts of Mocimboa of Praia, Macomia, Muidumbe,



*We shift from place to place in the reinstallation camps*

Palma, Kissanga, Nangade and a part of Meluco are terribly horrified and psychologically marked by the atrocities by the barbarians. The whole population is a prisoner submitted to tyranny of the rebel terrorists. There are those who have been forced to assist at a gruesome act, they have seen their father, their mother, their brothers and their children beheaded and torn apart...

There are children who, till today, do not play, or smile, because they are marked by horrible images, having seen their parents and other members of their family cut up and pulled to pieces by the criminals. Children who, running away, have walked over corpses and over blood that was flowing. This is what they tell us when we speak to them. They are not at ease. There are whole families that have disappeared; one does not know what has happened to the other, whether he has died or has been taken away. In the camps, numerous people end up by dying of worry,

thinking that they will never again see a face of their family.

### Work in collaboration

We are working in close collaboration with the parish priests and the Christians. With the Diocesan Caritas of Pemba, the NGOs, government institutions such as: Health, the Municipal Council, the Minister of Geography and Land, members of the District Administration, Doctors Without Borders, certain religious institutions and all people of good will who wish to help. We are the voice of the people with the government. We conscientise people and organisations to help those who suffer, because of a lack of all that is basic here in Cabo Delgado. We have eleven humanitarian and government organisations in the district of Montepuez, each one working in its own domain more than what was foreseen, following the most urgent needs.

### Sowing peace and goodness

We receive great esteem, acceptance, confidence and respect from the part of the civil authorities and then ONGs, by our FMM presence, abnegation and disinterested work which brings us close to the people. In the diocese, religious men and women who come to sustain the work in the Camps, are sent to Montepuez to see our life experience with the displaced people. Why? God knows why. We are useless servants and daughters of Saint Francis and of Mary of the Passion, for whom poor people are masters and whose priority is Mission. We work equally with other Religious congregations, Lay Missionaries from different dioceses: Maputo, Chimoio, Mapula and some people of good will give their goods to displaced people. We have also received financial help from the generalate of our FMM Institute.

### Our activities

We work side by side with the people who are deprived of everything, led and challenged to be signs of hope as prophets of the exile as in the past.

We shift in the camps of reinstallation four times a week, generally from 8.30 to 3.00 p.m.

- We listen, dialogue, welcome people.
- We give assistance and psychological accompaniment to help to relieve traumatism.
- We give moral strength and transmit hope to a people torn by war.
- We welcome those who arrive constantly and are hungry, naked, wounded or sick.
- We give food, medicine clothing, blankets, school ma



*Distribution of buckets*

terials, household articles, plates, cups, buckets, basins, mats to make bed, useful instruments to work in the fields: rakes, axes, leather, pickaxe, files to sharpen sticks, cords, bamboo, local material for the construction of houses. We also see how to enrol and integrate children in new schools.

At the end of the day we are almost exhausted, but happy to be near and conscious of the pain and cries of the brother, or sister who suffers. In collaboration with the Minister of Health and Doctors Without Borders, we have helped people, transported the sick from the camps to the rural hospital and the camp hospital. We have found people who were fleeing because of people attempting to kill them

### The debts

- Many requests, many families come to the Camps and Centres for shelter.
- We are often incapable of finding a solution or an adequate response to what a brother or sister is suffering because of financial means or benefactors.
- How to begin? We feel a certain interior powerlessness: how and what sort of help to give to some people, when we see so much traumatisation in the region by displaced people.
- Moreover, long distances to be travelled, the expenses of a car, of fuel, bring considerable supplementary cost to the community.

### Blessed Maria Assunta Community

## ALL IS GRACE

*We, the FMM postulants, would like to greet all the Sisters in the love of God. We wholeheartedly thank God for the thousands of blessings he has bestowed on us during this pre-novitiate period. This period gives us the opportunity to deepen our experiences, to discover ourselves more and to discern God's call in each other's journey. After looking back on our journeys, we would like to share some of our feelings and reasons for gratitude.*



*FMM Pre-novices*

### **Hello Sisters, I'm Maria Nhu**

I thank my parents for giving birth to me, for raising me and for allowing me to know God. I would like to express my gratitude to the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary for helping me to have personal experiences with God. In addition, I am very grateful to the Sisters of the Hiễn Linh Community who taught, protected and supported me during the pre-novitiate time. The Sisters' guidance and corrections helped me to grow more in my human life as well as in my spiritual life.

### **Maria Thuan is glad to share with you...**

I want to withdraw because of the disagreements, because I meet people who can't stand it! Do you follow God or do you follow these people?" (Excerpt from *The Road of Hope*, no. 66, Cardinal Francis Xavier Nguyễn Văn Thuận). As I read this sentence, I questioned my vocation during the past three years and especially during the Pre-

novitiate year. I had some difficulties, sometimes I thought of giving up my vocation. It is in times of darkness and crisis of faith that the question: "Whom do you follow? Who's controlling you?" comes to the fore. I know that God's love has brought me back to Him. I would like to thank God for sending me a spiritual companion, sisters from the Hiễn Linh community, and classmates who supported and encouraged me in my first steps to follow God. I find myself growing in my prayer life, in my community life and gradually taking control of my thoughts, feelings and reactions. At this point, I realise that I have begun to love God and that I am ready to say: I follow God, not anyone, in the path of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary.

### **My name is Têrêxa Nguyễn Yến. I would like share the following:**

After a few days of entering the Pre-novice, a Sister said

to me: "Time goes by so fast, you should make the best use of it!" It is true, a year has gone by so fast with many blessings pouring down on me. I feel the love, support and guidance of all the sisters towards me. I am deeply grateful to the Congregation for giving me opportunities to learn, discover myself and God's call for me. I thank God for the past year. I have been "planted, uprooted and healed by God" and "God has made everything suitable for its time..." (Ecclesiastes 3:11a). So far, I am convinced that no matter how fast or slow time passes, God is always with me. Finally, I ask for the grace to be sensitive and flexible to God's will in the next journey.

**I am Maria Ruh and I would like to express my feelings to you...**

For me, the pre-novitiate stage is a day-to-day "exodus" journey towards transformation. I have discovered the good values that God has placed in me. As a result, I have fewer doubts and inferiority complexes about myself. However, some problems made me doubt my vocation. At that time, Sister Cecilia, who was responsible for the postulants, helped me to discern. After hours of silence with God and myself, I realised that I was following God, but I was looking for security in people. God's security is so much greater than we realise. I am grateful to God and grateful to those who have come through my life. Every event that happens to me is a training for me to follow God. Now there is nothing more wonderful for me than to heed his voice that tells me, "Now remain in my love" (Jn 15:9b)

**I am Maria Madalena Y Đuh and I share my sentiments:**

Being a Postulant, I feel the sweetness of God's love, the restless worry to "be perfect" becoming stronger every day. There have been many times when I have been bored, sad and wanted to give up. But when I think back and look deeply into the living God, I realise that He has been more patient in waiting for me than I have been in waiting for Him. After these reflections, I found strength to keep me going despite the many difficulties and challenges. I now trust that "because You will not abandon my soul to the netherworld, nor will You suffer Your holy one to see corruption." (Acts 2: 27)

**Anna Sen feels like saying a few words to you...**

I thank God for His patience with me through the Congregation. I would like to express my deep gratitude to the Sisters for accompanying me. Sisters are Elijahs who have come to show me what to work for and continue to work hard on the journey ahead. It was in failure and confusion that God taught me to step down to accept and be satisfied with my own reality. God's words "My grace is



sufficient for you" (2 Cor 12:9) help me live with gratitude, confidence, and hope in God's providential love in the future.

**I am Maria Loan, happy to share my feelings with you**

After a year of postulancy in the community of Hiễn Linh, thanks to the guidance and accompaniment of the Sister in charge and the Sisters of the community, my heart gradually opened to the action of the Holy Spirit: "The truth will set you free" (Jn 8:32). This is what I feel God has lovingly revealed to me so that I discover many aspects during this period: truth when it comes to allowing emotions to appear and manifest themselves; truth when it comes to being open to sharing, to listening to differences; truth when it comes to recognising and accepting one's own progress. It is truth that has helped me to grow closer to the Holy Spirit, to connect with myself and to feel more deeply the love of my parents and the Sisters. I thank God for always patiently guiding me through those I have met and through the events in my life.

Once again, we, Sen, Loan, Thuận, Như, Đuh, Ruh, Yến, would like to express our thankfulness to all our Sisters, the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary. May God keep and bless the missions He has entrusted to you through the Institute. Please continue to accompany us in your prayers, so that each day we may love God more, willingly, trustingly and thus freely offer ourselves to the Divine will.

**FMM Postulants**

## DEPARTURE – BEGINNING – CONTINUITY

*On 17 December 2020 we left for good our “Village Reille” where the FMM had been present for 134 years. Leaving behind us a property rich in history, memories and missionary commitments, we moved to a house more suited to what we are today, in a more popular district of Paris, but with the same mission of welcoming and openness to the world.*



*Avenue Reille*

This is a real turning point for the sisters, the parish, the neighbourhood, and so many friends and acquaintances. ‘Village Reille’, as we used to say, because of its many buildings and activities, has seen many changes since 1886! Over the years, a kindergarten, a vocational school, an ecumenical institute for development training (Institut œcuménique de formation au développement – Inodep), a student hostel, a self-service centre, parish and social activities have all found their place there. It was also a landmark for the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary who arrived, studied, went on mission, returned... and the Chapel, built as early as 1912, was open to all those who wanted to join us for services/Liturgy of the Hours or adoration.

During the thanksgiving Mass, celebrated for the last time in the big chapel, we read these words from Sr Françoise Massy: Contemplating the sacred history that has been written there through the lives of so many sisters, one can only be moved and impressed, marvelling and praising God... What an adventure, this crossing of the ages and of social, political and ecclesial events, calling ceaselessly

for creativity and change in order to maintain the course of praise, adoration and service to others!”

If we look closely, we have left “Village Reille” gradually. For several decades now, we have been gradually parting with the works, from the buildings, from the activities outside. The community, too, over time, diminished in number and strength, while still welcoming our sisters from around the world. The last change, as radical as it was painful, was the choice to leave this place for a smaller, more modern one, better adapted to our needs and strengths.

Leaving behind many square metres, we find ourselves in a more family-oriented space and layout, favouring meetings, sharing and the participation of all in the various services of the house.

We have lost the tranquillity of a property hidden behind the buildings, but we have gained proximity to the hustle and bustle of life around us: to the schools, to the shops of all kinds, to the goods on the pavements, to the restaurants...



“Living among people gives me joy. I feel good in this neighbourhood. I like to participate in the Eucharist in the churches near our convent and in the life of the Church with others. All this gives me energy!”, shares one of us. Another adds: “We live like the people... street noise, school noise, car horns, shouting... It is a real change for me but I welcome it in solidarity with the world. If people live with all this, why not me?”

There is joy in this new integration. “Here I can participate more actively in the life of the community, in the different services. I need to give of myself where I can,” says one of our sisters in studies. In a smaller structure the organisation is more flexible. With fewer paid staff, each one also has to take on more responsibilities in the service of the whole.

Another among the younger sisters quietly confessed, “I am grateful to those who have borne the project. I admire their courage and dedication. I was afraid that one day it might fall on me.” She is also convinced that this change is in keeping with the spirit of Mary of the Passion. “A poorer neighbourhood, less secure, where the proximity of our neighbours invites us to live in a different way with each other and with others.

This time of change, experienced as a paschal journey, asked each one to live a personal transformation: to accept the unknown, to grow in faith and trust, to leave the familiar ground...

Whatever the pain felt by one or the other, we know that in Franciscan life we are but ‘pilgrims’ on this earth. What gives deep meaning to our lives is the closeness to the Lord, lived in faith, and the fraternity between sisters in community, and with those around us.

Wanting to “live the Gospel in the midst of the world”, we are happy to find ourselves in such an international neighbourhood, a reflection of what we are as a community.

Many of the poor people we meet in the streets are constantly calling out to us... They put us in touch with the harsh reality of so many people. Little by little, we are committing ourselves with others to the service of the most disadvantaged.

So we are living a beginning, because we have to discover the neighbourhood, the parish, the neighbours, etc., but it is also a continuity. To continue our life given to Christ by the means that are ours: prayer, Eucharistic adoration, fraternal life in an intercultural community, mutual services, missionary commitments or studies...

In the north of Paris, as was the case in the south, “The Christ whom we contemplate sends us out to our brothers and sisters in whom we discover his hidden presence. And our brothers and sisters send us back to the contemplation of Christ.” CS 3

**FMM Paris**

## TOGETHER, TO SAVE LIFE ...

*When we live in conditions worthy of human beings, simple as they may be, everything seems ordinary and normal. Meeting the reality of those who live in the world of incertitude opens us to quite another dimension: that of fragility and dependence.*



*Antoine, Simplicie, Sr. Danuta FMM, on the morning after the night of Antoine's operation.*

*Antoine with his wife and children in Peke, 4 months after the operation*

The present story here took place at the end of the year 2020 in the Republic of Congo. On the hand, it reflects the difficulties faced by the members of the native people (the pygmies) and the poor people living from day to day on Providence which is manifested in the wealth of nature. But they are destined to perish in situations threatening their life if help does not arrive in time. On the other hand, it unveils the marvels of collaboration and the need to respect the human person to help more effectively.

Antoine, affectionately called Anto, was a young native, an inhabitant of Peke in the north of the Republic of Congo in the department of Sangha, a valiant hunter, father of two boys and his wife expecting a third child. He was happy to have killed a snake while gathering the harvest in the heart of the forest, but his joy did not last ... Our young boy was bitten by this snake, which had ap-

peared to be dead and whose head had already been cut off. Here begins the chase to save his life ... His companions, used all they knew of their tradition to get rid of the venom and tied a tourniquet on Anto's arm. They carried him for six hours to arrive at the nearest health centre, at Ngombe, but which did not have an antivenon. The agents of the centre contacted a forest person who had one last ampule of the vaccine but which was meant for their own employees ... The tourniquet had been loosened so that the circulation would not be blocked ... The next day, Antoine was carried towards his village where there was a school and a health care centre "for native people" run by the FMM. Received by Sr. Fleurette Kawanga, a nurse, he was sent immediately to the hospital of Ouesso some kilometres away from Peke. The sanitary situation of the country is very weak. There is no social security. The situation of the native people is still very

difficult. The people often live on the periphery of society, without even being recognised, that is to say, registered to have a birth certificate. They are almost totally left to themselves. At Ouessou, they are called and currently treated as “the poor of the sisters”. Antoine’s situation is no exception. Sr. Fleurette and community took charge of this young man. Quickly, in two days, the doctor from the hospital at the base, asked for a transfer to a better equipped hospital in the capital (800 kms), for the most adapted care. The condition of the arm got worse in spite of strong doses of antibiotics. Gangrene was setting in and it seemed indispensable to amputate the arm to save the life of this young man. What to do to organise a possible transfer? How and at what cost?

Sr. Fleurette shared her worry by benefiting from the platform WhatsApp “Carers ASLAV” (Association of Living Love), a medical, charitable, French association, which, since about fifteen years, collaborates in the domain of training and parenting with the health centres managed by religious communities in the Congo. The ASLAV expressed its wish to help. In the meantime, another FMM contacted the foundation WATOTO-Dzieci Afryki (WATOTO) - The children of Africa, a Polish foundation at the service of children) and informed it about the need and immediately received the response that the foundation was ready to finance all that was necessary to save Antoine. Sister Fleurette gave herself entirely to prepare Antoine’s departure for Brazzaville. Everything was set for the 9th October 2020. They were only waiting for the agreement of the family. On the morning of “the day” itself the situation changed. The family, after a night of discussion decided to let Antoine leave the hospital and be cared for traditionally... They had to wait for almost a month for the decision to mature...

On the 6th November the patient himself sent his wife to ask Sr Fleurette for medication to calm the pain, for the magician who had not been paid, abandoned him. The following day, after Mass in the parish, the anaesthetist of the hospital at the base in Ouessou asked Sr Fleurette for news of Antoine, and suggested going to see him. On their arrival, Antoine, with tears in his eyes, said “Sister, cut off this arm, it makes me suffer. The dead arm was already smelling so much so that his family could no longer come close to him.

Making sure that the availability for help from the WATOTO foundation Children of Africa and of the ASLAV -were still there, Sr Fleurette brought Antoine to the hospital to begin the procedure once again. On 11th November, Antoine, accompanied by his brother Simplicie and a nurse, arrived towards 11 pm in Brazzaville at the VHU,



*Sr. Fleurette FMM and Antoine in Péké, 5 months after the surgery*

after 16 hours on the road, just before the curfew linked to the health emergency state due to COVID -19. On 12th November, at midnight, he was able to be operated on. The social service of CHU granted a small discount on the hospital expenses for Antoine. The remainder, including the expenses of travelling were covered by the foundation WATOTO. The very next day after the operation a representative of the ASLAV took charge of the restoration. On 16th November, leaving the hospital, Antoine and his brother were received by Brother Italo, OFM at the Centre for children in difficult conditions. They remained there for a month. A person of goodwill contributed to pay for their stay.

As soon as the scar on his arm had healed, Antoine and Simplicie returned to Peke on 17th December 2020. A new period of life had begun for Antoine who had to learn to live with only one arm and at the same time, with much gratitude to God for so many good, generous hearts, ready to help and that this situation had shown. Thanks to solidarity and collaboration, Antoine’s life was saved.

**Danuta Padykula, f.m.m.**

## “WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO YOUR BROTHER?” ... AM I MY BROTHER’S KEEPER?” GEN 4:9 ...

*“What have you done to your brother?” ... Am I my brother’s keeper?” Gen 4:9 ... to manifest the face of the love of God being a humanising presence among those who suffer, the poor, the migrants and the marginalised.*



*Caritas Colle Oppio*

The house of Via Giusti in Rome is always engaged in social works specially in favour of the homeless and of migrants. Following the pandemic, Caritas Roma did not request us any more to welcome two or three young migrant women but a small study room dedicated to this welcoming. Some of us sought the means of continuing to collaborate with Caritas, urged by Pope Francis’ calls “... do not forget those who have stayed behind. The risk is that a more serious virus is attacking us, that of indifferent egoism. Go out to meet others. Leave your comfort zones.” He himself defines it as being “the caress of the Church for her people.”

At the beginning of 2020, Caritas Roma counted 52 centres in Rome, which consisted of canteens, homes, communities and family houses, 157 parish centres as a network for listening, 5 territorial marts. In 40 years, the town has changed its face and the diocesan body has faced ever greater challenges differing in the course of time. Because of the pandemic, all the canteens have reorganised their services, assuring adequate space on the one hand, the distribution of food according to the minis-

terial indications, and, on the other hand, a greater number of meals per day, is served because the number of people in difficulty had increased considerably compared to the ordinary influx. In particular, the canteen “John Paul II” at Colle Oppio, created supplementary space to receive the numerous people in difficulty, thanks to the collaboration of the Italian Red Cross. On 1st April 2020, a tent was installed to allow the guests to take their meal in full security. Because of the urgency of COVID-19, the canteen, which normally assured a day service, is open for breakfast and dinner, welcoming 900 people daily.

At each service for the meals, we are a dozen volunteers from different ages and backgrounds, above all students during their holidays, couples, men and women religious, as well as elderly people who have also been helped by Caritas. We see more or less the same people since we come on two fixed days a week and that permits us to create links.

The Caritas team coordinates each service and the volunteers are very attentive to all that happens in the halls, and



intervene as soon as someone agitates too much, cries ... in order to restore peace. At the outset, we were two and after a year, we are now a small group, more or less five or six, committing ourselves once or twice a week in one of the centres for distribution of meals, in the evening, either at Colle Oppio or at Casa Giacinta.

Sister Carmen began to commit herself at Colle Oppio, where I soon re-joined her with the fear of my lack of the Italian language ... we were then sent to Casa Giacinta. I was very touched by the diversity of people who are welcomed, majority being men, relatively young migrants from different countries, continents, different cultures and religions, but also aged Italians who are not able to sufficiently meet their basic (elementary) nourishment. And finally, a population of drug addicts, psychiatrically ill who break away from their family, often without a fixed dwelling place. There is this man of about forty years, homeless, with a repugnant dirt, who walks in a bent position as if he carried all the misery of the world on his shoulders, who does not speak or does so only to get angry ... I see in him Christ on his way to the cross and his face remains in my prayer.

There is that other young drug addict, a beautiful boy, always well dressed, who often arrives in need, pale as death ... which frightens us! He can sometimes become very violent as on the day when he wanted to wound another person with a knife which he drew out of his pocket ... There is this old man who has difficulty walking and often comes accompanied by his sister who brings his plate, makes him sit down, watches him eating and leaves without any noise ... this young woman from an Eastern country who comes with her old mother, always very loving. And this professor of religion, an old man, with a radiant look, who loves to talk and share his poems which are very deep, which he had composed ... then, the one who is always the last to arrive, a man of about forty years of age, affected by obsessional, compulsive



troubles, who, before sitting down for dinner takes a longtime to put his things in order on the table ... and so many others whom we pray for! To serve the meal is an opportunity to establish a fraternal welcome with all those who come. Our service most often takes place without words, but the smile and a welcoming attitude when one seems aggressive are our only arms to respect the dignity of these people dented by life, with a little human warmth and tenderness. I firmly believe that when believers try to serve God in serving one's brothers and sisters, relations born of this service are in some way "places for meeting God and being converted in heart" which invites one to respect the spiritual, cultural and communitarian itinerary of each religious tradition and of each



*Meal in Caritas Giacinta House*

person. Yes, it is the poor who evangelise us, inviting us to conversion of heart and of one's regard as Father Massimo Fusarelli, OFM Minister General, has said so well, "Yes, they are the ones who are the poor who do things for us – and not the other way around - for they often open to us a new vision of the Gospel".

**Lucienne Petit, f.m.m.**

# THE ENCOUNTERS OF THE GOOD SAMARITANS

*The Spring Revolution started in Myanmar when the people throughout the country began to resist the Military Coup that ousted the elected members of the Myanmar Parliament and government on 1st February 2021. The country is pushed into a humanitarian catastrophe and faces an abyss of disintegration through the effects of the coup d'état, Covid-19 and the increasing violence. The people are faced with constant violations of their human rights. The people of Myanmar, across the country's many states, regions and ethnicities, have resisted the coup in acts of immense bravery.*



Protest march

The military coup started to control and arrest civilians in Mindat town, Southern Chin State, in the west part of Myanmar. To protect one's home town, the Chin land Defense Force (CDF) was formed on 4th April 2021 along with many other States in the country. The CDF requested the army to release seven youth who were arrested for expressing peacefully their demand for democracy but the military ignored their request.

During the past few months, in other parts of the country, the regime often tortured innocent people to death overnight during detention; consequently, the local people were quite concerned about their own safety. So, the young people, as young as 14 or 15 years of age gathered

some home-made weapons to protect themselves and the civilians against the soldiers. The first armed battle occurred in Mindat town from 24th to 27th April 2021 and the second from 12th to 14th May 2021. The soldiers raided the houses shooting randomly so that those who were hiding inside wounded. The town dwellers thus ran for their safety to the nearby villages or into the forest taking with them just the minimum as they never had such an experience before. They had no roof, no blankets, no food, but they managed to survive in the jungle with fruits from fig trees, and drank water from streams. As a result, many of them suffered from diarrhea, malnutrition and many kinds of diseases. Because there was no access to medicine and treatment, some children died in the forest;

still others died of poisonous snake bites. Though the political and religious leaders tried to negotiate with the military junta, they did not keep their promises and the agreement was not upheld. Hence, the fighting erupted again and again. With modern automatic machines, artillery shelling, chemical weapons and air strikes, the soldiers attacked the CDF, which is armed only with traditional handmade guns. It wasn't a fair fight at all – the trained soldiers with the biggest national budget share versus a group of inexperienced young men with no resources! However, like David and Goliath, the young people defeated the soldiers by grabbing stones, mud, dried pine fruits to throw at the soldiers when there were no more bullets and gunpowder. This truly showed their determination to regain freedom and democracy at the point of sacrificing their own lives.

Since the people did not feel safe anymore in the jungles, they came in groups to our place from the month of May 2021 onwards. We, the community members, were planning to dig an underground bomb shelter to protect ourselves from bombing and artillery shelling; but after seeing the crowd pouring in group by group, we forgot about ourselves and started to come up with food, shelter, transportation, and clinic like Good Samaritans. We never had such kind of experiences before and were totally unprepared for it. Though there were many shortcomings and difficulties we welcome them with love and treat them equally regardless of age, gender, tribes and religion so as not to add any longer to their traumatic experiences. In this way we were able to witness to the love of God and our FMM charism meaningfully. Among the displaced persons there were the elderly, the newborn babies, pregnant women, handicapped and terminally and mentally ill patients.

Due to the armed conflicts, the hospital and clinics were closed in Mindat town. Our small clinic became the main site for hope and healing. People come from far away villages for medical treatment. We took this opportunity to conscientize them in the camp on hygiene and ecology; we taught them to throw plastics systematically. We tried our best to help the children who were traumatized, giving them basic lessons in English, teaching them songs and instructing them in the faith. We also had the opportunity to conduct First Aid training for 24 youth who became the main pillars of care for the sick and the wounded on the frontline. One of our FMM juniors work full time in the clinic.

The soldiers raided the villages, ransacked the houses, stealing and destroying valuable things, killing animals and feasting while the families were hungry and in

hiding. They even destroyed the churches and the Buddhist monastery. They came to our nearby villages in June... and again in August, and people had to run a second time. The soldiers blocked all the access roads to Mindat town-ship so that nothing could be brought in, neither food nor medicine. As they entered from village to village they arrested people and used them as human shields. They reinforced the troops up to 800 and 1,000 soldiers for such a small township. Our small clinic saves many lives in time. We have some medically trained personnel among the displaced persons and they came up to volunteer. They used motorbikes as mobile clinics, going from village to village when there were emergency health issues. No one complains but everyone is taking risks and looking out to help others. Many young people managed to bring in food and medicines through the jungle. Often, we could have our dinner only at around 9 or 10 pm in order to give priority to responding to the needy. In this way our FMM small clinic becomes the Inn of the Good Samaritan, the meeting place of many good Samaritans. Miracles took place whenever the Good Samaritans shared their talents, knowledge, strength and dedication. The impossible became possible. In the midst of fear, we feel the joy of unity, kindness and humanity.

From the very start, we would make nine hours of adoration, Divine Mercy Rosary and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament towards the four directions every day with the IDPs. We believe that God protected us many times from the military invasion and bombing. We, the FMM sisters, also became the peacemakers and messengers negotiating for ceasefire between the two groups and being the voice of the voiceless for the families who were unjustly arrested by the soldiers. At the same time, we are heartbroken at the sight of many people dying like fallen leaves during the shooting. We would see them in the morning but they would disappear like a wild flower that blooms in the morning and withers away in the evening. Riches, properties, education and professions do not guarantee our lives. We begin to feel deep in our hearts the shortness of human life and that only God's love is permanent. To be rooted in this Love, through Him, in Him and with Him our lives become meaningful.

Finally, we want to thank all those who prayed for us and helped us in different ways during these difficult times. May the good Lord bless us and restore freedom and peace soon.

**Maria Yawm Bulin f.m.m.**

## WE'RE HERE FOR GOD, FOR OTHERS AND FOR OURSELVES

*This year Pliszczyn, a small village located in the diocese of Lublin in the eastern part of our country, has been put on the map as a popular venue where young people can spend their summer holidays. It happened, thanks to the Priests of the Sacred Heart and the Youth Days which they organized. It's great that despite the ongoing pandemic they made the effort to create a safe space for the youth – so eager to spend time with others face-to-face.*



*The retreat for the youth- Pilszczyn*

The idea for the Youth Days dates back to 1994 and since then each year Pliszczyn “teems” with youthfulness and joy. The Priests of the Sacred Heart read the signs of the times and the spiritual testament of their founder, Fr Leo John Dehon, and arranged meetings for the youth called “Towards a civilisation of love”. This is how the tradition was established: daily Eucharist, discussion meetings and group work, going to confession and a Festival of Religious Songs. Year after year the meetings evolved and started to attract bigger and bigger groups from different parts of Poland.

Today the structure of the Youth Days has changed a little. At the beginning of each summer, hundreds of young people pitch their tents in order to meet God, share their joy and faith, have discussions and live truly, creating the civilization of LOVE. Young people are here for God, for

others and for themselves. “One thing unites them: they have five grams of madness – some have considerably more of it and they STICK WITH JESUS!”

### **Who are these Youth Days for?**

For everyone who feels young (both in body and at heart), who is a “risk-taker” and seeks to meet the real God in another person. This year the Priests of the Sacred Heart have organised the retreat for the youth into four sessions organizing them into groups that are smaller than usual – up to 50 participants. Our FMM sisters: Anna Zajęc, Marta Hewelt, Sylwia Stelmach and two novices: Sylwia Zachariasik i Ada Rój, who longed to spend time with the youth, engaged in entertaining these groups. We set off in pairs (or more) to be together, rejoice in faith and respond to the need planted in our hearts, that is, to accompany young people in their journey towards Jesus. This



year's meeting was called "God tells you that you're divine", and the message that it carried for young people was to discover that in God's eyes they are beautiful, worthwhile and priceless.

The youth meditated on St Paul's letters, took part in the daily Eucharist, prayed. Also, the Priests of the Sacred Heart included in the programme DIY (do it yourself) workshops during which young people casted moulds of their hands. What's more, during each session there was a meeting with Bp Adam Bab, Auxiliary Bishop of The Archdiocese of Lublin, and the young people could ask him about everything that interested them. I think that this meeting was particularly valuable. It showed how many problems of the Church and social issues the youth is concerned about, how many questions they ask themselves and how lost they are in today's world. Bp Bab, who has a good rapport with young people, tackled deep and difficult issues and invited his listeners to enter into dialogue - there should be more meetings like that!

The Youth Days are also a time of great fun - songs, dances and even a water fight. There was a lot of joy - joy that stems from being together. What was our role? - to be around young people, listen, spend quality time with them, look after their safety, give witness to Christ

through our simplicity, openness and joy, to learn how to serve Jesus among people.

**Anna Zając, f.m.m.**



*Pic-nik*



## A THREE-DAY ENCOUNTER WITH MARY OF THE PASSION

*One of the commitments stated in the document of our 2017 Provincial Chapter is for “each sister to make use of the studio of Mary of the Passion” for at least three days before the next Provincial Chapter. The studio is located in Bogor, Indonesia.*



*Studio of Mary of the Passion*

I started this three-day encounter with the deep desire and enthusiasm to know more about the roots, the life and the spirit of Mary of the Passion and the Institute. I took this opportunity as part of my on-going formation. The atmosphere helped me to enter into an in-depth encounter with Mary of the Passion through her books and writings. With an open heart and mind I entered into dialogue with her. The writings of Mary of the Passion helped me get closer to her person and to know her message. As the encounter progressed, I felt united with her. I felt her struggles, hardships, pain, suffering and all her values. In spite of all these, she acknowledged the presence of God as well as the support of her sisters.

I was aware that it was not by accident that I was chosen and called by God to the family of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary. By rereading again her life story and

spiritual history through her writings, there is something in my character and temperament that resonated with her and the charism. Difficulties in the mission did not make Mary of the Passion give up. Silence in the face of serious misunderstanding proved her profound reverence for truth.

Listening to the Spirit, confronting my life and attitudes with those of Mary of the Passion, urges me to give the best of myself at the service of universal mission. In her heart, Mary of the Passion valued “universal mission” in a special way. This “universal mission” is the gift of vocation given to those called to be members of the Institute. As I reflected on this aspect more deeply, I realised that “universal mission” was born from the experience of Mary of the Passion of the “unknown”. Fear of the unknown can be closely related to fear of change.



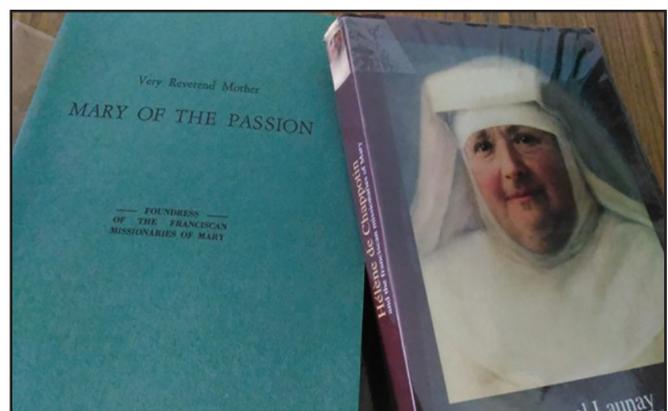
Lack of predictability and control can be contributing factors to fear. The personality of Mary of the Passion would not tolerate this fear in her heart in the face of an unknown situation. She responded to uncertainty with deep faith and strong conviction, with humility, honesty and respect.

Mary of the Passion emphasized unity in diversity among her “daughters” in communities. She encouraged them always to be united for the sake of universal mission. My respect for her grew stronger as I came face to face with her heroic approach in handling the difficult situation, that is, by keeping silence for the sake of charity to those who caused her pain. Her whole life had been a total surrender to Christ for the Church in a Franciscan way, and she experienced that true power is truth and charity. And so, she wanted all her daughters to follow the same path, to be formed and to be ready to be sent to the mission.

Discovering the person of Mary of the Passion in a one-to-one relationship led me to truly cherish my missionary life as a member of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary. I need to admit that there are still countless life stories and spiritual experiences of Mary of the Passion which I do not know yet. To continue to draw from these through her writings shall be the path of my ongoing formation.

My sincere thanks to Sr Vera Veronica Sihombing, FMM who has been so generous to be part of this three-day encounter. “If you but knew the gift of God”. These words were spoken by Mary of Passion to her daughters and continue to echo in my heart as I treasure this encounter with her.

**Nikke Lingga, f.m.m.**



## "WOMEN OF DIFFERENT NATIONS AND CULTURES, WE CHOOSE TO LIVE TOGETHER IN A FRAGMENTED WORLD" (ART1.1 INSTITUTE VISION)

*Lara Yaacoub is a young Lebanese sister in initial formation. Currently, she is in the Sacred Heart community in Beirut, Lebanon. She is studying theology, and formation in spiritual accompaniment, at the Jesuit University of Saint Joseph.*



*Young generation meeting*

In order to live the new vision of the Institute, I was sent to Kenya to improve my English and for a mission experience (ad-extra). When I received this obedience, I was surprised and thought, "What awaits me in this new country outside my province?" At the same time, a deep sense of peace came over me leading me to entrust my life to the Lord in this adventure.

I would like to share with you my positive experience of the international community life that Mary of the Passion wanted for the Institute and that the new vision highlights as a pillar for our fraternal life. We were 10 sisters from 8 different countries (Vietnam, South Korea, United States, Poland, Kenya, Uganda, Congo, and Lebanon). Some

of us were learning English and each of us spoke in our own dialect, so very often we did not understand each other easily. However, we didn't give up until things were clear. How many bursts of laughter arose because of the misuse of words or mispronunciation... With great simplicity and humour, the sisters put us on the right path.

The atmosphere was very fraternal; out of our comfort zones, we were there to support and help each other. Each sister was responsible for a service, but we always gave each other a hand. With one heart, through fidelity to the role of each member, we embarked together on this journey of transformation. We exchanged news from our countries, the ways of each culture and the experience and feelings that resulted from the adaptation to the new en-

vironment. Sometimes we prayed and sang in our native language. I cannot forget the variety of delicious food that we enjoyed eating together.

The personal support and encouragement we received from the welcoming and orientation team was particularly important to us. It was not easy to adapt to a new culture, a new language, a new community and a new cuisine. That is why we had the opportunity to talk freely with other sisters who are going through it or have already gone through it. Thus, we were able to benefit from their advice; we tried to put in place concrete actions to support and facilitate our adaptation to the new culture. Little by little, I began to appreciate my inculturation by trying to help in the parish with the sacristy and catechism.

Then the Corona virus arrived. It shattered our plans and forced changes in our way of life: the way we pray, communicate, study and live our mission. At first it was a difficult time of uncertainty, fear and anxiety. At that time, I felt I had to make a decision: either to be paralysed by this fear, or to move forward by entrusting my life to God with the confidence that whatever happens to me, I am in God's hand. I remembered Mary of the Passion asking her daughters to be women of strong faith. In sharing and expressing all that we are going through, each of us had a different reaction to face this uncomfortable situation and to overcome the anxiety, which pushed me to be patient and to respect the uniqueness and the journey of each sister, including myself.

We lived day by day during the lockdown in Nairobi. We were united by mutual support, continuous worship and prayer for the suffering world. All this along with our sharing on the Word enabled us to take concrete action to be united with the poor and suffering. We divided our time between prayer, gardening, cleaning, online study and following the news. From Kenya, I have had many zoom meetings to continue my formation with the sisters of temporary vows of the Middle East province, deepening the theme of mission in the perspective of St. Francis and in our constitution (art.38).

Personally, this international atmosphere gave me the opportunity to learn new things: agriculture (planting), painting, recycling and the possibility to get to know Kenyan customs and culture. However, it challenged me to let go of many mental patterns, prejudices, and to do things in a different way. This has not always been easy without prayer, sacrifice and detachment. It led me to the essential: how do I live my relationship with God and with my neighbour? How do I live my commitment to



*Orientation*

the Lord and my vocation? What evangelical attitudes am I invited to cultivate in the face of the different situations of life: joy, difficulties, troubles...?

A true path of humility, simplicity and openness which, every day, has pushed me to persevere in sincere prayer and to try not to judge the other but to undertake the path of appreciation of each person in their uniqueness as created in the image of God.

With Mary “I proclaim the greatness of the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God” for his presence and his Spirit who transforms us and does Wonders in each one of us.

Finally, I thank the Institute for this opportunity, as well as all the sisters that supported me in this experience. I pray that the Lord guide and give us His Grace and Spirit to discern and accomplish His Will as we continue on this path of transformation.

**Lara Yaacoub, f.m.m.**



*Bethany community*

## “TRANSFORMATION BEGINS AT THE EDGE OF OUR COMFORT ZONE”

*Great People never think what is EASY for them but they always think what is GOOD for them, because they have an open mind. An open mind is the capacity to suspend old habits of judgment to see with fresh eyes. Yes.... We were given full freedom by the Body to make use of our skills for a new response and so we received it with an open mind.*



*Young generation meeting*

As the Institute continues on the path of transformation where our voice and our perspective have a special place, we, the Young Generation Sisters of Chennai Province are extremely grateful to the Institute for inviting us and making us part of this process. The underlying process is “Think Institute” and so the Spirit’s call to: Dialogue, Discern and Decide to transform our lives. Thanks to the Institute! - For giving us this opportunity to contribute towards the journey of transformation from our level; we began this process by answering the questions asked by the Institute based on one perspective – how do we see ourselves as FMM in the future?

By projecting ourselves into this future, 10-15 years ahead, how would we describe our journey to that point in time? Something precious is handed over to us...what are we handing over to the future generation? From then

on we began analyzing, reflecting, understanding and transforming ourselves with the special notable guidance, support and accompaniment of our senior sisters. We had regional meetings, Province Assembly, and young sisters’ gathering.

The discussions among us stimulated the following:

- How do I see myself as an FMM?
- What has been my religious experience till now?
- What am I convinced of when I realize that I belong to the FMM Institute?
- How are my motivation and commitment nurtured?
- In what ways as a member of the Body can I contribute to this process?
- ‘I’ is an inseparable part of ‘We’ in the journey of transformation
- Listen to the Future in the Present



We explored this in greater depth, we realized that our call and commitment are more demanding and challenging as we move towards the future in a fast changing ecosystem. “It’s never as scary as it looks”.

The process of Transformation enkindled our young minds and hearts as:

- we are able to see new opportunities that emerge and continue our journey of transformation; the spirituality of letting go and letting come is challenging us continually to go through the experience of the death and resurrection of Christ as we embrace all with an open heart, open mind and open will.
- the new model proposed, which is NEW WINE IN NEW WINESKINS enthuses a lot of dynamism in us and challenges us to renew the capacity of the Institute to carry out its prophetic role according to our founding charism. We look forward to renewed membership and leadership.
- Our observations in the recent participation of the Young Generation Sisters (YGS) for a session during the Emmaus Inn.
- All the young generation sisters shared the same goal and vision and have similar priorities even though from different continents and regions. This revealed the fact

that our Institute is not scattered due to changes outside but affirmed that we are journeying and transforming our selves together and towards one Purpose in one direction. The sharing was more optimistic and gave hope for the future of the Institute.

The young sisters were excited to come together as FMM and listen to each other though coming from varied cultures and nationalities. So we, the young generation sisters of the India - Chennai province, express ourselves with this message: Though we are fragile in the process of learning, formation and transformation, yet our trust is in the God who chose us. Our weakness becomes our strength. Bl. Mary of the Passion’s faith in God and hope for the future mission fostered the growth of the Institute. All our sisters in the past lived the same charism and continued the FMM journey to the extent of laying down their lives. The future is in our hands. With same faith and hope we will carry on what is entrusted to us.

**Prema Mary f.m.m.**

## ASSISI, A FOUNDATION DEAR TO THE HEART OF MARY OF THE PASSION

*“I have good news to give you: the Chapter (5-12 December 1896) gives the house of Assisi as a New Year’s gift to the Institute. It will be built on a piece of land sold to us for a modest price by the family of St. Clare itself, and I consider this to be a real miracle: this piece of land, situated just opposite the cell where our Father St. Francis used to live, and which has been waiting for us for centuries; is this not a special permission from Providence? I ask you for prayers for this house which, no doubt, under the name of Saint Mary of the Roses, will be the house where the year of probation of the great vows will take place and whose construction, we hope, will remain as a model in the Institute.”*



*Saint Mary of the Angels, Our Lady of the Roses*

These words of Mary of the Passion, pronounced on December 8, 1896 during the General Chapter and collected in the Journal of the house of St. Helen in Rome, are a synthetic presentation of the beginnings of the foundation of Assisi, Saint Mary of the Angels. They give information on the acquisition, the purpose and the project. Her desire to be established in the homeland of St. Francis was finally realised, in order to nourish even more strongly the Franciscan life of the whole Institute.

At the beginning of 1896, the Minister General, Fr Louis of Parma, had strongly urged the Foundress to open a house in Assisi. The search for a plot of land was entrusted to the procurator Abramo Marchetti of Assisi,

who found an old farmhouse surrounded by a plot of land of about 5 hectares, close to the railway crossing, bounded by the road to Assisi, called Montecalvallo Street at the time, and the road to Foligno (today’s Street of the Franciscan Protomartyrs), which separated the land from the apse of the Basilica of St. Mary of the Angels. According to tradition, the Chapter of Mats, convened by St. Francis, was celebrated on this ground. The owners are the counts Fiumi-Roncalli, descendants of the family of St. Clare, who had leased the land for three years to Mr. Gabriele

Abuzzao. The deed of purchase was signed on 25 November 1896, before the notary Settimio Bruscella of Assisi. In the Acts of the General Chapter of 1896, Preliminary

Session, we read: “On the eve of the preparatory retreat for the Chapter, which began on 26 November, the purchase of the land indicated in the land register as ‘Angeli II’, located in Saint Mary of the Angels, opposite the cell of Our Father Saint Francis, and the Chapel of the Roses, was signed in Assisi”. Further on, in the decisions taken at the Chapter, we read: “Rome and Assisi will be considered the two residences of the Mother General. Furthermore, Assisi is unanimously chosen for the last trials (before perpetual profession)”. The same Acts record the rescript by which the Congregation of Propaganda Fide approved the foundation of Assisi on 19 January 1897, in response to the request of the Superior General: “The Superior General of the FMM humbly requests approval for a new foundation of the Institute at St. Mary of the Angels, near Assisi, where, with the approval of the Ordinary, a plot of land and a small house have been acquired, with the aim of establishing a house for the preparation of final vows, before leaving for the missions”. This request shows how the programme of initial formation of the religious of the Institute conceived by Mary of the Passion was to be completed, and moreover, it highlights the clearly Franciscan orientation that the foundress wanted to give to this last stage of formation.

In her letter of 18 December, written from Rome, the Superior General informs us that it has been possible to acquire a small house on the site itself for 6,000 francs, which will be vacated by the present tenants on 15 January 1897. Until then, the foundresses will live in the four rented small bedrooms. “It is a real Rivotorto this first nest that we are going to occupy. But what a grace to have found it! The day before yesterday we became owners (16 December), and, what a strange thing, the tenants will leave us the house on 15 January, and the 16th is precisely the feast of the Chapel of the Roses! [...] Truly, everything is very providential in this foundation of Assisi! I saw the bishop, (Msgr Luigi de Persis), you cannot imagine how good he was! His last words were: ‘Whether you are in Africa, Asia or America, in France, Belgium, England or Portugal, you can come to me from anywhere and I will do everything in my power for you. [...] We will never leave Assisi again, I hope; and you have no idea how happy this thought makes me. To feel the Institute under the mantle of Our Lady of the Angels and under the wings of her heavenly messengers seems to me a sign of protection for the whole Institute”. When Mary of the Passion established her house in Saint Mary of the Angels, the village was poor, made up largely of modest houses and had about 1,500 inhabitants, most of whom were peasants, a few wood and iron craftsmen, and a small number of seasonal workers who worked in the laterite kilns. Mary of the Passion was aware of this, and



*Saint Mary of the Angels, Chapel of the Roses*

as in all the other foundations, she wanted to keep the community close to the people, sharing their economic and work difficulties in order to earn their daily bread, and in a generous charity towards the poorest.

From the journal of the house we can deduce that the first superior, M.M. de Sainte-Véronique, arrived at Saint Mary of the Angels on 8 January 1897 with two companions, M.M. Teofila and S. M. Teresina, still a novice, to prepare the move to the four provisionally rented rooms. According to the wishes of Mary of the Passion, the first Mass, which marked the official foundation, was celebrated on 16 January 1897, the feast of the Franciscan Protomartyrs of Morocco and the Lady of the Roses, in a room on the first floor, which had been set up as a provisional chapel, since the room designated on the ground floor was too damp. This room would later become the foundress' bedroom. On the same day, M.M. de Sainte Véronique sent a brief telegram to Mary of the Passion, who was in Rome: “The Master is here”.

The letters of the Superior General, written during this period, all speak of this foundation as the realization of her greatest desire: “The more one thinks about it, the more one can say that heaven itself has chosen this site where our sisters in Assisi are to make their final probation. Could there be a more beautiful or a more suitable place for the formation of true Franciscan Missionaries of Mary? Franciscans in the cradle of the Seraphic Francis; Missionaries in the very place from which the first Martyrs of the Order departed; charged with missioning Mary, in the very shadow of Our Lady of the Angels. Everything is there in a marvellous way!” The first commitment entrusted by the Superior General to the foundresses was to visit the three ‘holy places’ every day, in the name of the whole Institute and for the whole Institute.



*Saint Mary of the Angels, transitus chapel*

### Construction of the new convent

The house is very poor and small: on the ground floor, the chapel, a small, poorly lit refectory and a parlour. On the first floor, the small rooms for the sisters, including the one occupied by Mary of the Passion during her visits to Assisi, which still preserves the memories of her presence. Mary of the Passion's plan for Assisi has been clear from the beginning: the small house acquired on the large plot of land serves to begin the FMM presence at St Mary of the Angels and to oversee the construction of a real convent and premises for the works. The choice of the location for the building caused some difficulties with the Franciscans of the basilica, because of problems of distance between the two constructions. Hence the many letters written by M. de Sainte-Véronique. On 23 May 1897, M. de Sainte-Véronique sent a note to the Minister General with a plan of the new construction: "Added here is the plan of the establishment for the printing and woolen mill of Assisi. The convent would not be built until next year. It should be noted:

I. That the wall on the road to Foligno will not be higher than that of the Fathers and will therefore not impede either the air or the view.

II. That there will be no door on the road to Foligno as requested by V.P.R. but some windows that we will make very high, small and with a grill, as already agreed".

The Journal of the house reports on the progress of the

work from day to day. On 26 July, the boundaries of the site are fixed on the road to Foligno (today Street of the Franciscan Protomartyrs). On 4 August we read that the workmen were starting to work, while in another account of the foundation it is said that the first stone was laid on 2 August. On October 21, it is noted that "our Mother" is making a plan of the future convent. From 15 to 29 November, the 45 gardeners from Perugia are mentioned as planting cypress trees along the road to Assisi. On 27 October 1897, a letter from M. Marie-Louise explains that the foundations are almost finished and that Giovanni immediately has 5.5 metres of wall built to make the building more solid. Giovanni is still named in the journal of the house as an intermediary between the sisters and the neighbours, to resolve certain boundary issues.

The work progresses slowly and is interrupted twice, on 27 August 1898 for lack of funds and on 14 December 1899 because of the frost that lasts until spring. Ceremonies of temporary and perpetual profession that spoke of life and continuity for the mission of the Institute were not wanting, such as that of 8 September 1897, for the perpetual vows of S.M. Teresina, presided over by a visiting bishop. The pilgrimages of the FMM, which the Foundress encouraged with great generosity, so that they could deepen the Franciscan spirit, were based on the small house of Our Lady of the Roses. Already in July 1897, the six foundresses on their way to Mozambique spent two days there. The journal of the house of 17, 18

and 19 July speaks of the joy of M. Marie-Louise in accompanying them to the various Franciscan shrines. M.M. Hermine of Jesus, future martyr and saint of Tai yuan fu, in China, was another exceptional pilgrim, on January 30, 1899.

Almost 50 years later, the *Chronique intime* recalls the fact, commenting that “M.M. Hermine acknowledged having experienced the truth of these words: ‘One prays better at the Porziuncola than in any other place’, that is to say, one feels penetrated by an inexplicable feeling that communicates an extraordinary fervour to prayer”. The welcome is not limited to the FMM, but pilgrims of all kinds come to knock on the door of the poor convent, to speak with the Superior. The main task of M.M. de Sainte Véronique in these cases is to listen to religious, bishops and foreign pilgrims. But the journal of the house underlines not only her great availability, but also her ability to concentrate in prayer and to animate the community spiritually. The passages of the Foundress are highlighted with great enthusiasm by the sisters of the community.

The first visit took place on 18 October 1897, when Mary of the Passion arrived accompanied by M.M. des Saints Anges and other sisters from Rome, with the plan of the new convent. A second visit took place only in 1899, when Mary of the Passion, having learned of Fr Louis de Parma’s stay in Assisi, left Paris with M.M. Jehanne, hoping to meet him. She stopped by from 3 to 5 November, made the pilgrimage to the Franciscan sanctuaries and gave all her time to listen to the sisters and inspire them with her conferences on the symbolic meaning that the roses without thorns in the garden of Saint Francis must have for the FMM.

“My daughters, in order to become roses without thorns for the heart of the Divine Spouse in the seraphic garden of the Institute, you must allow yourselves to be crushed by mortification, to allow Jesus and Francis to roll over your souls so that they can transform the thorns of love for yourselves into roses with a heavenly fragrance.” At that time, the construction of the new convent was somewhat advanced but not completed. Along the road to Foligno, the building stretches out in the shadow of the basilica. Along the entire length of the wall are arches that should evoke a cloister, but closed, certainly, in accordance with the request of the convent Fathers. The ground floor is occupied by the chapel and some rooms used for visiting rooms, a workshop, refectory, sacristy and kitchenette. On the upper floor there is a terrace onto which the sisters’ cells open. The roof certainly existed, but until 1922, the cells remained without ceiling, with the tiles visible, and separated from each other by simple



*Saint Mary of the Angels, the Porziuncola*

curtains, in the most authentic poverty. It was only in April 1901 that three sisters moved into the new house to guard it at night.

**History Office**  
**From the history written**  
**by Sr. Maddalena Lainati, fmm**  
**“The Franciscan Missionaries in Italy**  
**History of the Province of Italy from 1876 to 1984”.**

1. *Journal de la Maison Sainte-Hélène à Rome*, 8 décembre 1896, quoted in *Notre Histoire*, vol. I (5), Chap. XXX, 1895-96, p. 1277.
2. *Actes du Chapitre général*, (tenu à Assise du 5 au 12 décembre 1896), *décisions générales*, IV : Dernière Probation, p. 30.
3. *Ibidem*, p. 85.
4. Cf. *Positio*, vol. II, Doc. XI, Docum. 3c, p. 935.
5. *Journal of a Mother to her daughters*, 1896-97, 18 December 1897.
6. This is the actual date of the foundation. The effective date, on the other hand, would be 15 December 1896, as is attested to in the biography of Mary of the Passion, *Fondatrice des Franciscaines Missionnaires de Marie*, p. 254.
7. *Lettre intime*, 16 January 1897, quoted in *Mary of the Passion, Foundress of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary*, ed. printed by the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, Grottaferatta, 1994, p. 347.
8. *Journal de la maison*, 30 novembre 1897, quoted in *Notre Histoire*, op.cit., p. 107.
9. *Chronique Intime*, 1947, p. 13.

## “A DESIRE FULFFILLED” – PART II

*Although Mother Foundress' desire had been to open her first house in the Basque country, because of her ancestors, faced with the bishop's negative response she accepted that her first house in Spain would be in Pamplona.*



*First house rented by the FMM in Pamplona*

### The Institute in Navarro

Saturday, the 23rd of June at sunset, Mother Mary of the Passion and a group of seven Franciscan Missionaries of Mary arrived in Pamplona for the first time. They stayed at St. Julian Hotel, one of the two existing hotels in the city (Photo n° 1). The next morning, they drove around to get to know the property that was for sale, but it did not suit them. They were very pleased with Pamplona and its surroundings. By afternoon, they had all gone to Olite by train, to see if they could find something more suitable, and thus were happy to be near the Franciscan friars. But finally they preferred Pamplona, which offered more resources given that it was a more important centre. From Olite, Mary of the Passion, accompanied by M.M. Jehanne and Cécile Vidal, took the train to Madrid, enroute to Portugal.

In the meantime, M. M. de la Rédemption, M. M. Pierre de Jésus, M. M. Humilienne and M. M. Montserrat returned to Pamplona to look for an appropriate piece of land for the foundation. That was not so easy. During the days they spent at the family hotel, M. M. de la Rédemption, M. M. Pierre and M. M. Montserrat – the only one who

spoke Spanish - were busy making official visits: the Capuchins, and in the bishop's absence, the bishop's secretary Don Juan Gomez, who asked St. Augustine Parish for help and protection for the religious. The Capuchin Guardian also recommended D. Modesto Pérez of that parish, because “no one can provide safer and more influential support”.

Despite the fact that the lodging, meals and prices were modest, M. M. de la Rédemption wanted to find as soon as possible, if not a definitive piece of property, at least an apartment where they could live alone and as inexpensively as possible. And after many comings and goings they settled down at the Bathhouse, on Julián Gayarre Street on the main floor overlooking Paseo de Valencia.

Doña Simona Insausti was a devout widow, mother of the current Bilbao mayor. She was very happy to lodge the religious and agreed to rent them a spacious and comfortable apartment for the price of 18 duros, instead of 20. The 28th of June M. de la Rédemption finally wrote: “...Since yesterday afternoon, we have been settled into a rather large apartment, which we rented in the hope of



*Fonda San Julian where Mother Foundress and her companions stayed. Today the Hotel Europe*

finding a land to purchase...”. They were given keys to the house, and although everything was poor and they had nothing, they were happy to find themselves alone. Since the beginning they made friendships that would help them. The same proprietor became their benefactor. But while some, aided by these benefactors, looked for or purchased what was most essential, M. M. de la Rédemption with another sister went to visit properties for sale, once accompanied by Don Modesto, at other times by his vicar: Don Valeriano Zato.

The days passed quickly, and the festivities for St. Fermin arrived. The Capuchin Fathers advised M. M. de la Rédemption not to go out except for Mass at St. Nicholas Church, which was very near. And although this week-long prohibition --from the 6th to the 15th—impeded their negotiations, they obeyed and took advantage to get settled into the new apartment.

One detail to note: It seems that M. M. de la Rédemption, as was customary in those times, searched all over Pamplona for wheat or corn straw to fill the mattresses, but didn't find it. Nevertheless, in the crockery and dishes stores were sold “certain reed-like herbs, used to wrap porcelain.” And with this they filled the mattresses in order to sleep on the floor. In addition to Don Modesto and Don Valeriano, the Bishop of Pamplona became a true father and friend to the Sisters. And to make them

forget the problems they were experiencing, he promised them the celebration of daily Mass in their temporary little chapel as soon as it was prepared, as well as the Reservation of the Most Blessed Sacrament. For them that was already a big step and they thanked him very much.

But M. M. de la Rédemption was in a hurry, because Mother Foundress had told her that as soon as this was finished, she had to go to Paris where difficult matters awaited her, given the situation in France. On the other hand, Mary of the Passion's visit to Portugal was coming to its end, and new difficulties kept arising. There was no other choice except between an orchard-garden with a gardener's house near Fuente la Teja and a property in Villava. But Mother Foundress wrote from Portugal saying that she would prefer to see us established in Pamplona.

Finally, some days before Mother Foundress' arrival, and assisted by Don Valeriano, at midday the 12th of August, feast of St. Clare, M. de la Rédemption, Jehanne de Geslin de Bourgogne, and Dña. Dolores Alonsom and Idoy, a widow from Blasco who owned the Fuente de Teja lands, signed a contract to allow them to have all the fruits and vegetables found on this property; what was more important was that, this would consolidate the Institute in Spain.



*First FMM house in Fuente La Teja - Pamplona*

After enduring so many problems and difficulties, M. M. de la Rédemption wrote joyfully: "...Yesterday morning Mère arrived." "Finally, on this Sunday, feast of St. Clare, we signed the contract that established the Institute in Spain. The land acquired in Fuente had a small house that could serve as a temporary lodging and be of great assistance to watch over the construction work of the future convent and novitiate. This was foreseen to be a short term reality.

Despite so much going on, life continued in the apartment on Julián Gayarre Street. They began to receive postulants whom Franciscans from Zarauz sent. Two young professed French sisters arrived, and soon after one from Tyrol with another from Provence, both novices. Likewise, the new missionaries' home became a welcome centre for visitors. Among those who passed through were some missionaries in transit, the bishop and his secretary Don Modesto, the pastor of St. Nicholas Parish, and many women and friends they had already made in Pamplona. The Pamplona house was already a happy reality. M. M. of the Passion told them: "When you find the house, I myself will make the foundation when I pass through there." For that reason, on the 13th of August Mother Foundress with M. M. Jehanne and the postulant Cécile arrived again at Pamplona. Of course, this time not to go to a hotel, but to the home of her daughters on Julián Gayarre Street. She visited each room of the house and appeared to be very satisfied with the small nest of Pamplona. In

the afternoon, they went to get to know the land acquired in Fuente la Teja, and it appeared to be good. But she showed a desire for the Institute to acquire the surrounding land as far as the hill, since at the moment they had only the part located on the plain. She received two postulants and they prepared for the feast of the Assumption, as always also that of the Mother General, when she was greeted in the name of the entire Institute. On the 15th, they celebrated Mass at St. Nicholas, since our Chapel-Oratory had not yet been blessed. The international and universal dimension of the Institute was already evident by the different languages present. It was then, wishing to participate in the feast, when Mary of the Passion began in Spanish: "Virgin of the Pillar, it is said that you don't want to be French...but since I don't know either the music or the rhythm, I cannot sing. The Spanish sisters present will take charge of doing that, while Mary of the Passion smiles."

By the end of the 16th of August, the bishop of Pamplona, Don José López y Mendoza, came to bless the Oratory and celebrate the first Mass. After Mass, while they ate breakfast the bishop and his secretary had Mother Foundress with them, and they chatted and joked as if they had always known each other. Later they spoke about matters dealing with the foundation. She presented her plan to the bishop and asked him what type of works could be developed at the house. She proposed a women's Professional School. But the bishop said that that type of work would not be useful for Pamplona at that moment, so she

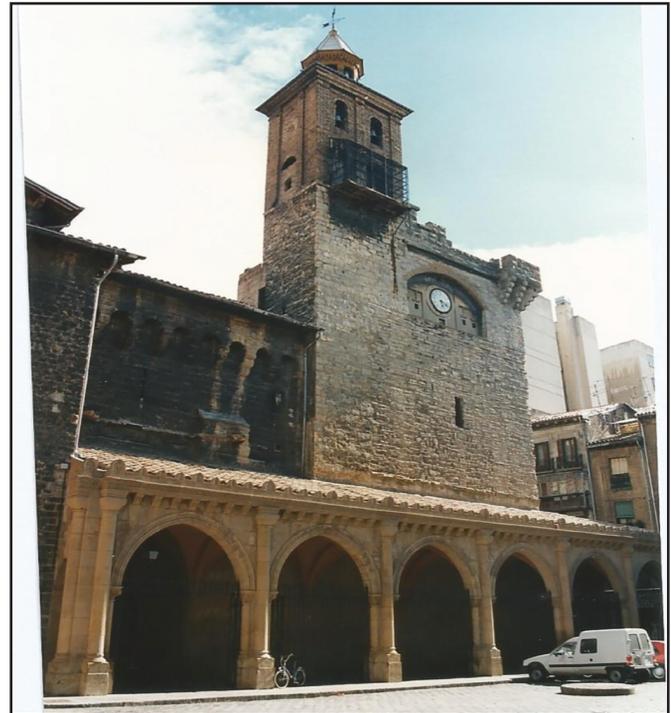
did not insist further. Mary of the Passion introduced each one of the sisters of the community to him, including the postulants, and the bishop promised that he would look after them. This he really did, since he always treated them as his benjamins.

On the 19th of August Father Raphael arrived in Pamplona. The community rejoiced to have both the Foundress and Padre present together for their beginnings. It was he who celebrated Mass that day and those that followed and made the first canonical visit, receiving all the sisters, including the two Basque postulants, since he not only understood Spanish but also spoke some. Mother General also interviewed each one of her daughters individually. That same day, Father Raphael and Mother Foundress wrote the first pages in the Golden Book of Pamplona. First, she left a long message of thanksgiving and some instructions and wishes. From it we extract this paragraph: "It is the first foundation of the Institute in Catholic Spain. May it also be a seedbed from which arises many missionary vocations, who under the auspices of Our Lady of the Pillar may be formed in the spirit of Mary Immaculate and Saint Francis. May they also come to be a spring of graces from which many Spanish souls imbibe missionary fervour and zeal that will make them worthy rivals of those named Engracia, Quitería, and Eulalia..." Pamplona, on the feast of St. Louis of Toulouse, is called in Franciscan liturgy "rose of charity, iris of virginity".

**19th of August 1900.**

**Signed: Fr. Raphaël Delarbre D'Aurillac o.f.m.**

For her part, Mother Foundress allowed her maternal heart to express, itself fully and wrote: "The foundation of Our Lady of the Pillar in Pamplona has been one of the greatest joys of my life, and may it also be a great grace: Grow and multiply, my dear Spanish daughters. Above all increase, as your Divine Spouse, in wisdom and in grace, before God and humanity. Today they have told me that the Franciscan Order, so rich in Spanish saints, still has some women saints to give. May you be a nursery of these chosen ones of the Lord" (19th August 1900, Mary of the Passion, Superior General FMM). On the 20th, Mother Foundress returned to Fuente la Teja with Father Raphaël to inform him about the farm acquired and to present her plans to him. Father Raphaël approved the purchase and supported Mother General's desires to add adjoining pieces of land as far as the hill. In this way a farm could be organized, as at Grottaferrata and other houses, which would be a help for the maintenance of the community. The House journal of, those days expressed joy for the double visit. Mother Foundress spent a week in Pamplona. And besides activities already allocated, she made some courtesy and thanks-



*Saint Nicholas Church - Pamplona.*

giving visits. But above all she received many persons who came to get to know her: the sisters' families, other benefactors. Eight days after her arrival, she left Pamplona and set out on the road to Burdeos - Châtelets. She left Spain, putting in charge of the foundation M. M. Pierre de Jésus, a young professed from Marseilles; she was its first superior and mistress of novices of Spain, from whose pen we owe much data about the foundation. And with this, the Institute entered and became affiliated to Spain definitively, accomplishing thus one of her most cherished and longed for wishes of M. M. of the Passion: the consolation of having a house in Spain before she died and to recruit from there generous vocations for the missions.

### **Summary of Part 2 of the Foundation of the Spanish Province**

**Compiled by Maricarmen Urbano, f.m.m.**

**First FMM house rented by the FMM in Pamplona**



*Mary of the Passion, foundress of the FMM*



## HOMILY AT THE FUNERAL OF SISTER PALMIDE GAMBA

**Dear brothers and sisters,**

We are here today to celebrate the birth in heaven of our beloved Sister Palmide. Above all, we are here to thank the Lord for her witness and for giving us the opportunity to know a sister with such a high human and spiritual profile. Sister Palmide is a beautiful example of how to love the Lord on the one hand, and how to love her brothers on the other.

Faith, simplicity, humility, joy... These are just some of the qualities and virtues that Sister Palmide embodied, but they were among the cornerstones of her extraordinary life. Above all, she was a woman full of love for Christ, towards whom her whole being, all that she was and all that she did were directed.

Allow me, on behalf of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples, to express my thanks and condolences to the entire community of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, and to all those who are now grieved by her departure.

Sister Palmide served our Missionary Congregation (Propaganda fide) for some years. After this service, she received the mission to take care of the formation and accompaniment of the Chinese sisters in Italy, who had come to Rome to complete their studies. Her desire was to go and bring the Good News to this martyred people of mainland China. This was not possible for her because of the political situation, but God allowed her to be the intellectual, spiritual and human support of the Chinese sisters who came to Rome. In fact, through this service, she changed the face of the Church in China, albeit from a distance.

Having known Sister Palmide personally for twenty-six years, I can affirm that she was generous, simple, humble, but above all she radiated an infectious love for the Lord. In her daily life, she revealed the extraordinary beauty of her life as the daughter of Mary and Francis, and as the spouse of the Lord. Pope Francis once told the sisters that they should not be “old maids”. Sister Palmide has engendered many sons and daughters in the faith, especially for the Church in China. She helped many people to come closer to Christ, to believe in Him, witnessing to her love for the Gospel not with words, but with her life. She fully lived this vocation to motherhood. For Sister Palmide, serving Jesus and serving a sister were the same thing. That is why, despite her advanced age, she never grew weary of serving her sisters, the Church and all those who asked for her help.



*Sister Gamba Palmide (Maria Benedetta)*

Today, Sister Palmide shares Life eternal with the just! Today she contemplates this new Heaven and this new Earth, this heavenly Jerusalem for which she has always yearned and which has been the true driving force of her entire existence. Sister Palmide has finally joined her Spouse to whom she has given her whole life since her youth. For many of us, Sister Palmide was a friend, a sister and a mother. We entrust her to the Lord, certain that He will say to her: “Whatever you did to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me. Come, you blessed of my Father”! And as we bid her farewell, entrusting her to the Divine Mercy, we ask the Lord that his Church may never lack religious vocations, women, mothers in spirit, who, by living the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, place themselves at the true and disinterested service of their brothers and sisters.

We also entrust to Sister Palmide our intentions, our life choices and we ask her maternal intercession for the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary and for the Church in China, so that they may continue the providential work of evangelisation by following the path she has shown us, the path of self-giving that takes us from death to eternal life, where she awaits us.

**Père Gianni, OFM, Capucin**

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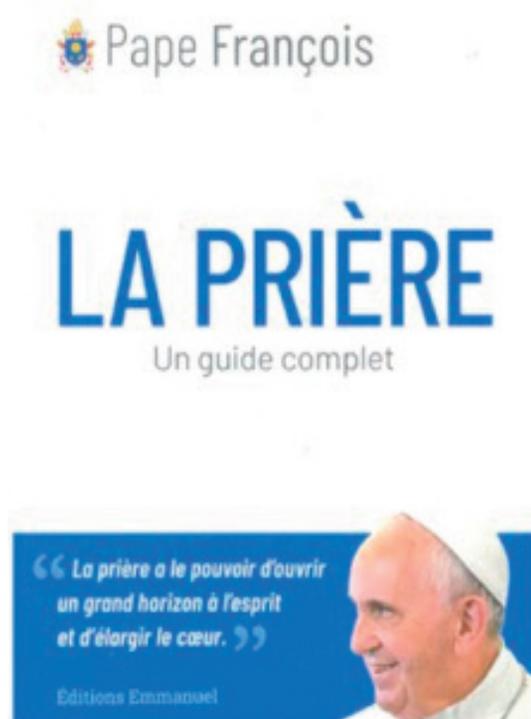
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**Merry Christmas**



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