



AUGUST 2021

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What is HOPE? How do we experience it? What makes us say we have it? How does it feel to lose it? How is it given to us? How are we able to share it with others? In this time of global uncertainty and suffering, how can there be hope? This issue of our *Generalate News Update* attempts to answer these questions, not with theological discourses or academic essays but with personal reflections, photos and stories. Simple short stories of HOPE ... hope given, hope received, hope lost, hope restored... hope celebrated!



You are invited to read the following pages reflectively. As you read, imagine the people in the stories, the situations they find themselves in, the darkness that surrounds many of them...then the burst of new life, light and the joy that Hope brings! If you feel like stopping and praying at some moments while you are reading, feel free to do so. After all, we are all brothers and sisters, each one a part of the other, interconnected with the rest of creation, in this our common home. Each story you read is also, in some sense then, your own story. As you read, may you receive the beautiful gift of hope, carry it in your heart, and share it with everyone you encounter.

The coronavirus continues to spread and with it poverty, suffering and depression. At the same time, hope is also spreading and with it healing, joy and new life! Let us help stop covid and make HOPE go viral!

From the desk of the Congregational Leader

“...the seed is sprouting and growing; how, he does not know.”

(Mark 4: 26-29)

Nowadays, when you walk around Rome, it is hard not to notice the lush green grasses sprouting between cobblestones or flowers growing through cracks.

This image of the grass growing through a pavement stone speaks powerfully to me of HOPE: it reminds me that in our universe, there is an invisible life force pulling us and our fellow creatures onward, pushing us to survive and thrive even under the most difficult and harsh circumstances.



I ask myself, “how could grass grow between cobblestones or through concrete pavements...it seems counterintuitive...this environment appears too harsh and too hostile for grass or flowers to grow.” Yet, there must be something real, underneath these seemingly hostile surroundings, invisible to my naked eye, that makes it possible for the grass to survive and grow.

In this time of ongoing pandemic, with its ensuing consequences such as loss of lives, loss of jobs, mental health issues, disruption of plans and activities, isolation and loneliness, it is easy to relate to the grass growing between the cobblestones or through the cracks. It is easy to feel so vulnerable and fearful of the hostile conditions surrounding us while at the same time holding on to life and hope of a better tomorrow.

Pope Francis, in his conversation with his biographer Austen Ivereigh, said, “I find it helps to focus on concrete situations: you see faces looking for life and love in the reality of each person, of each people. You see hope written in the story of every nation, glorious because it’s a story of sacrifice, of daily struggle, of lives broken in sacrifice. So rather than overwhelm you, it invites you to ponder, and to respond with hope.”(Pope Francis, *Let Us Dream: The Path to a Better Future*, p. 11)

Where do we find hope? Hope is found in stories of hardships, sacrifices, and struggles. Joan Chittister, when she was preparing to write a book about hope, thought it was going to be an easy task but it did not take long before

she clearly understood the stark reality of life - “hope existed as a green shoot in the midst of struggle.” (Joan Chittister, *Scarred by Struggle, Transformed by Hope*, 2003, p. ix)

In the daily news we hear about the struggles and pain of many nations: the 2021 Global Report on Food Crises warned that at least 155 million people in 55 countries faced acute hunger in 2020...the report highlights the lethal combined impact of conflict, extreme weather and economic shocks.

Most recently, I came across this CNN news: “Climate change has pushed a million people in Madagascar to the edge of starvation.” (CNN News, by Amy Cassidy, David McKenzie and Ingrid Formanek, June 23, 2021) The news anchor said to the executive director of the World Food Program who has been in many horrific places, “I’ve never seen you this impassioned.” The WFP director replied, “Families are suffering and people are already dying from severe hunger. This is not because of war or conflict, this is because of climate change. This is an area of the world that has contributed nothing to climate change, but now, they’re the ones paying the highest price.”

These are real struggles of real people, in Madagascar, and in so many other countries... people experiencing violence, poverty, migration, hate crimes, discrimination, famine and disasters due to climate change. They are not strangers; they are our “neighbours.”

These people, in their pain and struggles, invite us to be like Mary, pondering these things in her heart, standing at the foot of the cross, sharing the suffering and pain of her beloved Son, Jesus. And like Mary, we are called to respond in hope, believing in God’s promise – “...do not be afraid...the Lord is with you...the Holy Spirit will come upon you...” (Luke 1:26-38)

Our world needs communities of hope...may our communities continue to be oases of hope for the people with us, around us and beyond us.

With the words of St Francis we pray, “where there is despair let me bring hope.”

Sr Marife, fdnsc

TO HOPE

Sr Marie, fdnsc (Burkina Faso)

In a world shattered by all kinds of suffering, rampant insecurity and the corona virus disease, we are hurting, we are afraid, which generates mistrust and hinders our social cohesion; we ask ourselves many questions: Why all this killing of innocent people for no reason? Why all these waves of contamination? Why this loss of integrity? Why this violence against nature? So many questions without answers. In spite of all these, glimmers of hope shine in our eyes, in our hearts. So we can say that...

To hope is to breathe: yes, in spite of all the violence, we breathe air that is always different every day because we receive this new breath from God;

To hope is to walk: yes, our valiant soldiers equipped with this hope, feet lifted up, always go to the battlefield to fight the enemy;

To hope is to be on the road: yes, each sunrise puts us on this road of hope for a better future and incites us to be always on the road to achieve this goal;

To hope is to desire: yes, every person desires serenity; thus, each one seeks personal or community ways to make this happen;

To hope is to act: yes, when we see the vaccine against the corona virus spreading; when we see people of goodwill and many organizations coming to the aid of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) through several concrete actions (distribution of food, hygiene and dignity kits, construction of housing, creation of child-friendly spaces and accelerated schooling strategies, initiation of income-generating activities...); we can hope for a better tomorrow;

To hope is to trust in the future: Yes, this trust makes us cry out to the Father and leads us to hand ourselves over to Him, to His grace, for he who hopes hands himself over to the other.

Thus we hand over to the Lord our anxieties, our fears, our doubts. Before Him and with Him, let us say yes to the mystery of life.

Dear brothers and sisters, may hope never die out in our hearts and may each one of us be this necessary tool to maintain hope.

SOME CONCRETE ACTIONS THAT BRING HOPE

1. Celebration of the National Day for the Protection of the Environment (JNPE):
Last June 5, on the occasion of World



Donation of plants and materials to the most eco-friendly family

Environment Day under the theme "*The Restoration of Ecosystems*", the National Day for the Protection of the Environment (JNPE) was celebrated in the eastern region of Burkina Faso in order to raise awareness among all social groups for the protection of the environment and the respect of its integrity in Burkina Faso. The main activities of this day were the delivery of a position paper of OCADES Caritas Burkina on the protection of the environment to the Governor of the East region, a *cross populaire* (like a marathon), a delivery of certificates and plants to the best ecological teams and families, and protection materials to women's groups. Together, let us **Reimagine, Recreate** and **Restore** our ecosystems.

2. On the occasion of the Day of the African Child instituted on June 16, 1991 in order to reaffirm the rights of children, several organizations celebrated this day in a way that allowed thousands of children to express themselves through cultural performances, songs and recitations and skits to raise awareness on female circumcision and early marriage...



frameworks for political, traditional and religious leaders, training on conflict prevention and management, ethnic forums in certain provinces, etc.

- In order to restore peace and social cohesion, activities are carried out on a daily basis with the support of various organizations. These include educational talks, the establishment of consultation



A LAND OF HOPE (South Sudan)

Sr Rita, fdnsc

In South Sudan, life’s pattern and life style are largely determined by nature and its cycle. Nature provides a regular seasonal pattern of 6 months DRY, followed by 6 months WET. The DRY is normally harshly dry while the WET is normally abundantly wet. The DRY is sufficiently long to cause devastation to both nature and humanity. During the DRY, nature and humanity bond in one act of thirst – hardly quenchable; hunger not satisfied, tears not dried.

HOWEVER, April alerts hearts to NEW HOPE. New activities begin: sorghum stalks left on the ground since last year’s harvest proudly become fences or doors; new brooms are made and sold; old grass is cleared to make way for new fields and new crops. Groundnuts are shelled in preparation for planting; widows, old ladies, young girls and even small children are eager to shell ground nuts. It means income for school registration fees, and food on plates at the end of the day.



Hope yields to excitements as families decide how many plots of land they can afford to cultivate. Ox ploughs are repaired, oxen are selected, fattened and trained for ploughing; anticipation grows as skies are studied amidst

much wonder as to whether rains will be early or late.

Then comes May. Normally May is a rich and treasured month. The groundnuts have already been planted and growth is clearly visible. The fields are greening and with more rain growth increases. A most wonderful experience is to take a long early morning walk out amongst the groundnut fields. The crops “speak” their joy, their hopes and their gratitude for the interaction they experience with humanity. It is truly a MOST wonderful experience, a tangible experience.

HOWEVER, this article is more than a reflection on nature and growth. It is a largely a symbol of human HOPE; hope for what South Sudan is becoming. Amidst the increasing violence, killings and revenge killings there is an increasing sensitive growth THAT IS complementing the apparent decline in stability and civility and morality. There are so many really fine people at work balancing “the WET and the DRY”. Simple mothers of families, committed teachers and health workers provide HOPE for a brighter future for South Sudan. Groups of really committed Christians are at prayer, praying a better South Sudan into a process of new growth and new hope.



We formed this group of leaders, Government reps, chiefs, parents, single mothers to address the plight of especially young mothers practically deserted by husbands due to polygamy.

MAMA ANNA (in red), the leader of the Catholic Mamas group; a deeply committed Christian woman, utterly selfless. The photo shows her with her lay leaders of the BETTER PARENTING GROUP.



The image of the blind man, Abraham Machok, depicts a loving caring father. He can't see what he loves most, his children. For me, the blind parent represents a great spirit of HOPE for the Dinka culture as it moves towards Christianity...the culture doesn't yet see what is most precious to it. At this stage the culture is somewhat tactile in its approach to a fuller acceptance of Christian growth... the potential for full acceptance is there; we evangelisers are to discover new ways of presenting the gospel and it's values.

There will be a bright light after the long darkness Sr M. Virginia, fdnsc (Indonesia)

We are still struggling to cope with the current global health crisis that we have experienced for over a year now. Life is full of uncertainties. Our movement is limited due to the covid 19 pandemic. Schools and offices are closed and students are required to do online classes to prevent transmission of the virus among the students and teachers. There are people who lost their jobs due to work termination. Aside from that, natural calamities such as flooding, earthquake and volcano eruption happened in some areas of Indonesia. A ship, Nanggal 402, also sank which meant some families lost their family members. We have to accept this reality even as it makes us concerned about life and environmental issues. Since the pandemic spread throughout the world we have been practicing health protocols by wearing masks, washing hands, physical distancing, avoiding crowds, and limiting mobility and interaction. The doctors, nurses, and front liners struggled to save the lives of patients who have been infected by the virus, yet there are still patients who were not able to survive due to their severe condition.



We have been living a difficult situation and this has created fear and stress in us. We are as if in the sinking ship where there is no way to get out, but St. Paul encourages us ***"But now, even in this trouble, I urge you to remain steadfast, for none of you will perish except this ship."*** (Acts 27:22). He said, ***"None of you will lose a single hair of his head."*** (Acts 27:34b).

Then to anticipate that the ship would not run aground on one of the rocks they agreed to drop anchor, even four anchors at once (Acts 27:29). With an anchor a ship will stay strong against the waves! The question is: where will the anchor or hope come from?

At this time of pandemic and natural calamities our hearts are like ships sailing the ocean of life while the anchor is hope. Our hearts will remain strong in the midst of storms or waves of any magnitude, if we have hope. We cannot escape from the difficult situation we are in at this time but we can have strong faith. We can build our confidence that there will be solutions to our problems, difficulties, and challenges if we put ourselves in God’s hands. We have to get out from the sinking ship so that we will be able to save our lives.

What can we learn from this pandemic time and from natural calamities? What is God really wanting from us? As consecrated persons, we have to pray constantly and put our trust that the covid-19 pandemic will end soon. That we may be able to go back to our normal daily activities without fear, travel without restrictions and other concerns. Let us continue to pray for the doctors, nurses, and front liners that God may grant them good health. We unite our concerns with the people throughout the world who are suffering. **The world is in crisis, but we strongly believe that there will be a bright light after this long darkness, the world will be renewed and all creation will joyfully sing a song “Glory to God in the highest, and peace to people of good will”**

AFTER WINTER...NEW LIFE! (NETHERLANDS)

February Winter in Holland



the archway in our garden



The statues of Mother Marie Louise Hartzler and Father Jules Chevalier covered with snow



And then.... Spring came!
A woodpecker has made a nest in the archway in our garden - May 2021



Woodpeckers are born, we don't know how many. During the weekend of June 5th they flew out.

TOGETHER AGAIN IN COMMUNITY!

King's day 27-4-2021



Feast of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart 29-5-2021



We had coffee together after a beautiful Eucharistic celebration



Statue of our Lady decorated in the garden and a heart of lights on the ground.



We had dinner together at a beautifully set table in the Community of Bethanië



MSC Feast of the Sacred Heart 11-6-2021



Bishop Mgr. de Korte was invited as celebrant for the Eucharist



ALL IS NOT LOST AND ALL HAS NOT COLLAPSED

Sr Madeleine, fdnsc (Generalate)

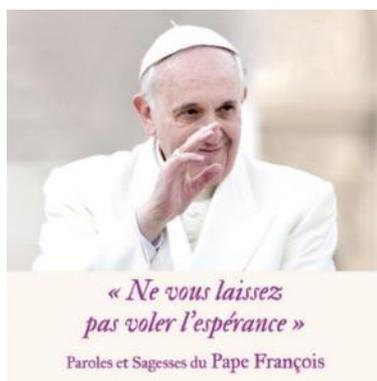
The pandemic that has been shaking up our world for the past year and a half is causing us to do a lot of thinking. It is already revealing profound changes in our environment, our way of life, our social and economic organizations, both personal and collective, as well as our mission in the world. It is a kind of catastrophe that is radically changing the organization of human life. This has given rise to a feeling of fear of an uncertain future, of illness, of death and social fear, with questions about the consequences of this crisis. This is a deeply human reaction. We feel vulnerable and small before the power of this virus.

Some of the news reports in the media give us the impression that the Covid-19 pandemic is never-ending. It makes it difficult to see the light at the end of the tunnel. Yet, there is reason for hope. I can say that trials, however terrible they may be, never consume our entire existence, there is always a remnant that gives the possibility of regeneration, of transformation into a new life. Don't we often say "the thief took everything from me but fortunately he left me alive".

Indeed, it is a truth to be welcomed in our lives: everything can collapse around us and even within us, but there will always be something left from which life can be reborn and begin anew. This certainty frees me from paralyzing fear and becomes a source of encouragement and a transforming force for my life.



What is important in this catastrophic situation is to take the time to discern, to reread in order to be able to open new paths of life, and to be convinced that "all is not lost and all has not collapsed". Faced with this health crisis, we may have felt like some of Jesus' disciples, disappointed, frightened and desperate, who were leaving Jerusalem already. But everything changed with the resurrection of Jesus on Easter morning (Jn 20:1-9); (Lk 24:18-35), the experience of the disciples of Emmaus joins us in this moment so sad and so overwhelming. The paschal mystery is always realized in our lives; I must be attentive to it in order to live it consciously, to discover what must make me bounce back, start again and hope, to regenerate my life. In his exhortations to Christians, the Holy Father, Pope Francis, invites us to be missionaries of hope for the people. He says that "**Jesus wants witnesses, people who spread hope by the way they welcome, smile, love.**" (General Audience October 4, 2017). Yes, being a missionary of hope is not just "talk" but rather a witness in action that inspires and contaminates the environment where I live and work.



But how can we increase our hope and compassion in such a crisis? I feel like reminding us of that wonderful phrase that Pope Francis said to the young people in the prison on March 29, 2013, after very humbly washing their feet, "**Do not let your Hope be stolen!**" And in another message he says "**For us Christians, wherever the Cross is, there is**

hope, always. If there is no hope, we are not Christian. That is why I like to say: do not allow yourselves to be robbed of hope. May we not be robbed of hope, because this strength is a grace, a gift from God which carries us forward with our eyes fixed on heaven." (Homily of Pope Francis, August 15, 2013). This invitation of the Holy Father to young people is also for each of us, let us not let our hope be stolen by this unprecedented health crisis. It may reach our health, as it has reached the health of many of our dear sisters, relatives and friends, but it must not reach our hope. Even if some countries continue to have high rates of contamination, the discovery of the vaccine seems a light, a hope that revives us. This reveals to us that our efforts and resilience seem to be gradually bearing fruit and later we will counter the pandemic and begin again to celebrate together our holidays and our lives given to the Lord.



The beautiful experience that we lived with our Italian Sisters in their chapel during the feasts of Our Lady and the Sacred Heart after almost a year and a half of not celebrating together, already shows us that there is light at the end of the tunnel. Let us keep hope! Let us not let our hope be stolen, for there is still beauty and goodness in us and around us. All we have to do is believe in it. Let us ask Jesus for an ever stronger hope that will allow us to look at the present situation with new eyes and to continue our mission where we are.

Returning to better times in Belgium

On January 19th, all the sisters received their first Pfizer vaccine and on February 9th, their second dose. Until now, everything is going well with the sisters, as well as with the residents of the retirement home and the residents in the apartments for assisted living.

Since February 21, 2021, we had a daily Eucharistic celebration in our little house chapel. From Easter on, we returned to our big beautiful chapel to celebrate the Eucharist together with the Fathers every weekend. On the feast of the Sacred Heart, we started to have the Eucharist in the big chapel every day. The sisters are very happy to be back. In recent weeks, the residents of the retirement home also have a celebration there every week. Hopefully soon it will be possible to celebrate together again and the parish will also be allowed to participate in the Sunday celebrations again. We are really looking forward to better times and are already very happy with everything that is possible again.



In the meantime, the construction of the garden is ready, and everything is beautifully in bloom. Many sisters enjoy the peace and creation of God with this beautiful weather. In our monastery garden, we have placed a statue of Our Lady, together with the plaque with the names of all our sisters who are not buried in Rumst.

Meanwhile, we have been back in Rumst for 3 years and remain grateful for all the beautiful things we can experience each day. The old part of the original monastery reminds us to be thankful for our entrance into religious life as FDNSC.



We are with 24 sisters in our Belgian Province, and the average age is 89 years. Our eldest fellow-sister, Zr Laura, turned 98 and is still doing pretty well.

With the sharp decline of infections and the increase of vaccinations, we live in hope. We would like to see our families and friends again as soon as possible and also to celebrate our jubilees. Being able to participate in activities and meetings with the Chevalier Family again, that's what we're really looking forward to. But the most important thing will be to be able to live without a mask and to be able to count on the responsibility of everyone.



Let us continue to take care of each other but also of ourselves!

Finding hope in the inspiring lives of our Sisters and in other ways

Sr Sally, fdnsc (South Africa)

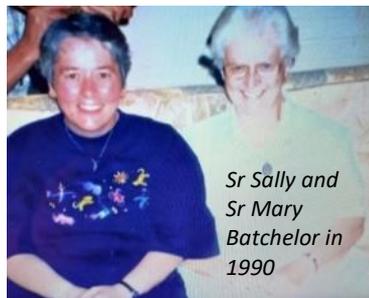
Lately I have been reading again about the beginnings of our Congregation, and all the obstacles and difficulties that Fr. Chevalier and Mother Marie Louise faced and overcame. They laid our foundation – gave us our Constitutions and our Charism. They gave us our motto:

May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be everywhere loved!
So, we know what to do during this pandemic – we have everything we need to get through this. We continue to live our Charism.

Today we received Sr. Marife's letter with the news of the Jubilee Committee set up to prepare for the 150th anniversary of our foundation. She set out the plan that includes sharing our Charism and spiritual heritage ...and to rekindle enthusiasm for religious life and our mission. This gives me hope and it gives me great joy and I am looking forward to hearing more.

When I get to know sisters who really embody our Charism and live their lives with zeal I am inspired and it gives me hope. I recognise that these sisters have really captured the vision of our Founder. Their lives and their good works though different, are exactly what Fr. Chevalier had in mind. Exactly the way MM Louise encouraged us to live.

During lockdown and thanks to technology I was able to watch the live-streamed Requiem Mass in Kensington chapel for Sr. Bernadette Koning. Our sisters' enveloped Bern with love in her final journey – they prepared a beautiful Liturgy. This is our Charism alive and active.



Sr Sally and Sr Mary Batchelor in 1990

More recently we again had the opportunity to watch the very meaningful funeral Mass in Benteleigh chapel for Sr. Mary Batchelor. The outpourings of love expressed by Mary's community and from around the world are indicators of our Charism alive and active.

Yesterday Sr Anne Gardiner celebrated her 90th birthday. Through social media we have been able to watch the huge birthday party held in her honour on Bathurst Island. Again Anne's long life and love of the people and her commitment to them gives us all renewed hope.

These sisters' lives and of our sisters everywhere living our Charism, give me hope. Our Brazilian Sisters going to the peripheries – to the people of the Amazon gives me hope.

When I first came to South Africa 32 years ago many people in countries around the world were pressing for Apartheid to be dismantled. A song by Eddie Grant "Gimme hope Jo'anna" (Jo'anna referring to Johannesburg) was very popular and I soon learnt to play it on the guitar. I wish I could sing it for you – it really rocks! I find myself singing it to myself these days!!!

**Gimme hope Jo'anna, Hope Jo'anna
Gimme hope Jo'anna 'Fore the morning come
Gimme hope Jo'anna Hope Jo'anna
Hope before the morning come!**

Five years later Apartheid was indeed dismantled! People kept hoping things would change – they didn't sit back and accept the way things were – they were pro-active – they rallied, they protested, sanctions were imposed and gradually there was change. The people's hopes were realised

During lockdown we received a baby boy at our Centre, he was not even 24 hours old. He was wrapped in a large blanket with only a nappy – no clothes. We called him Mpho, which means Gift.



Baby Mpho paying me a visit

A beautiful woman who is childless and who hoped for a child of her own has now been to visit Mpho several times and this week will take him home for some days to see how things go and then once everything is approved she will take Mpho as her child.

THE MISSION CONTINUES (KIRIBATI)

Sr Kateia, fdnsc

Greetings from the South Pacific!! COVID19 is still around our Pacific area with Fiji having the most and increasing number of cases. Being the main and central place for connecting the islands to the world, it is now under complete lock-down, meaning, no more flights leaving Fiji.

Kiribati was boasting of not getting the pandemic until in May a young man on a ship was found positive and the whole of South Tarawa was locked-down. Boats that came from nearby islands were stopped from going back and no boats were allowed to come into Tarawa. The President was constantly on the radio informing



Sr Eileen holding her vaccination card proudly after her first dose of COVID 19 vaccine.



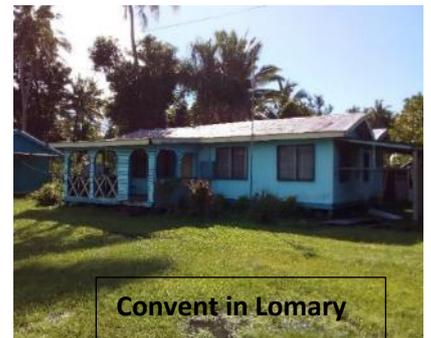
Sr Ruti Kaburoro with her home-made mask. Not bad heh!!

and telling the people to be careful and to wear masks. The Catholic Women's league got a lot of money from sewing a few thousand masks!! No shop sells masks and the sanitizer finished quickly in no time.

Most of the Sisters have had their first dose of vaccine as they are regarded as front line workers.

New Community in Lomary, Fiji

Three of our Sisters, Sr Tekiata Akamatang, Sr Maria Mikaio and Sr Atinta Kaareta opened a community in Lomary parish at the invitation of the MSC. The Sisters of Our Lady of Nazareth are not getting vocations and are closing some of their convents. They left on the 27th of December and we moved in on the 14th of January 2021, before the school year started. Besides the needs of the parish, we see Fiji as the centre of study and a cheap link to the world. We send Sisters to do their teacher training here as once qualified they would be easily accepted in other parts of the Pacific islands. The Pacific Regional Seminary and the University of the South Pacific are here as well. We have Sisters studying here as well.



Convent in Lomary

1st Profession 17 April 2021

We are blessed with vocations and we have four new sisters professed on the above date. They are now in our juniorate in the most populated village of Kiribati, helping out in the parish and learning English in the Kiribati Institute of Technology.

We are very grateful to the wife of the New Zealand High Commissioner for giving them two hours of her time a week to help with English conversation

AMETUR

Missioning		Ceremony
	Here I am Lord. I am ready to do your Will	
		

By our baptism and religious consecration, we participate in the mission of Christ. Our life is unified to the extent that prayer and apostolate form a single response to the love of the Father; for the salvation of the world.
(Const Chap 4:48:Par 2)

The Lomary Missionaries



The newly professed Sisters from left to right: Sr Arinta Katoauea, Sr Kariaiti Kaono, Sr Tianna Ilerua, Sr Rutika Tioteba.

***As Mary said: “they have no wine”* Sr Renisa, fdnsc (BRAZIL)**

The FDNSC Congregation has six schools in Brazil. Sisters in the schools are aware of their responsibility in this pandemic and the suffering of the Brazilian people. They have daily contact with almost 4000 students besides staff and families. We know that hunger is growing in our country. Sisters prepared a project in May under the theme: *As Mary said: “they have no wine.”* The main purpose of the project was to gather food to give to the people in need. It was touching to see students and families taking many packets of food and delivering it to the agencies who can distribute them. It is a sign of hope to get together and do our best for the good of others.



Sisters responsible for Vocation Promotion in the Province had an interesting initiative last year. They decided to meet young people and to introduce them to the Chevalier Charism because our Charism is a remedy for all the evils, illnesses, sufferings, pains etc. of our time. The only way to meet them last year was through internet. Sisters created invitations and published them on social media. They received registrations and around thirty young people started to participate. Sisters meet the young people fortnightly. There is a lot of work: prepare the themes, invitations to the youth in our FDNSC social media platforms, organise them in the Zoom platform and do evaluations but the Sisters receive lots of rewards. The young people are grateful for their efforts. It seems they love the meetings and always ask for more. Five young ladies from this group are asking to get to know us more. Their enthusiasm fills us with hope and energy. Our Charism is a source of enthusiasm and is still very alive in our world.



A JOURNEY OF HOPE

Sr. Catherine, fdnsc (PHILIPPINES)

“We are speaking of an attitude of the heart, one which approaches life with serene attentiveness, which is capable of being fully present to someone without thinking of what comes next, which accepts each moment as a gift from God to be lived to the full. (Laudato Si’ 226)

This message of Pope Francis speaks of the journey of hope of the Indigenous People particularly the Badjao tribe, the journey of the DOLSH Center of Hope and my own journey of hope during this COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the uncertainty of the situation because of several lockdowns and different kinds of quarantine, the program for the Badjao has become more meaningful and has given great impact and hope in the community. Before the pandemic, we already had tutorials for the children and adults, feeding for the children, seminars and other trainings for their livelihood.

The Badjao tribe in Surigao, Philippines has more or less 90 percent of its members who cannot identify, read or write the alphabet. That is why the tutorial for them is a source of hope. Every time they can identify letters of the alphabet and write their names, that moment is a glimpse of hope for the community. Even in our feeding program, the smile and joy of the Badjao children every time they see the porridge or noodles with sardines show another face of Hope. Then, the livelihood and skills they learn for sustainable development give them excitement for their future.

COVID-19 came and everything stopped. What will we do now? What will happen to the DOLSH Center of Hope and to the Badjao Community? The answer lies in what Pope Francis said, “Attitude of the Heart.” The DOLSH Center of Hope is not just a place or a

center but it bears a name with the words HEART and HOPE. Living by its name, the centre continually brings out the best HEART and HOPE of our mission as DOLSH, for the Badjao Community and during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are able to be the bridge between the generous people who share their gifts and resources (like food and facemasks, face shields, alcohol etc.) and the community in need. Then, we had the opening of the community pantry.

We see the importance of networking with various groups: non-government agencies like BALAOD Mindanao; government agencies like the National Commission on Indigenous People, TESDA (Technical Education and Skills Development Authority) and the Local Government Unit; and our partners in mission in Australia. We are able to expand our mission through media particularly Radio and other social media platforms. This is the effect or result of “*approaching life with serene attentiveness*” and “*being fully present.*”

The DOLSH Center of Hope has become the haven for the Badjao community, a place where they form new hopes and dreams with respect to their tradition and culture. Even exploring other possibilities of helping the community outside their culture like introducing gardening and waste management is in their consciousness now. Being inspired to do little works for Mother Earth is the fruit of their attendance in seminars and ongoing education about Laudato Si’.

All the blessings that are happening in the community and seeing the hope from the eyes and heart of our Badjao sisters and brothers give me a new way of looking at Hope. That is, “*accept each moment as a gift from God to be lived to the full*” and let the future be full of Hope in the Hands and Heart of God.



Sharing the Love of the Heart of God (FRANCE)

In the French Province, Sr Merle's invitation to share "stories of hope" came at a time when the whole population of the country is weary and worried about the future.

Our sisters at the Ehpad have just come out of a new confinement, which has made their daily life more difficult, but we wanted to do our part in this sharing, because there are, in spite of everything, seeds of life in the different places where we live.

I give the floor to **Sr Colette**, from the community of Clamart:

This is the email received by Sr. Colette who was invited to an aperitif-dinner that gathered about twenty volunteers. David and Audrey are brother and sister and both suffer from autism spectrum disorders. The courageous parents, on the advice of a psychologist experienced in the "**three I's method**", embarked on the adventure. This is an American method based on **I**ntensive, **I**ndividual and **I**nteractive play. From morning to bedtime, **7 days a week, respecting the child's rhythm** (nap, recreation): parents adopt a playful attitude in their daily life and are relieved from 9 am to 6 pm by enthusiastic caregivers (volunteers or not) in the playroom. They have 6 hours of sessions in the playroom per day (4 hours for children under 3 years old) in phase 1 of the method with time for outdoor recreation. In phases 2 and 3 of the method, playroom time gradually decreases in favor of outdoor sessions

*It's incredible but true! We are coming to the end of the 3 years of zé !!!!!
Thanks to each of you, each of our children has been able to get out of their own bubble and blossom, gain in autonomy and in relationships with others...And both are in school and in college, and it's going well....*

and school workshops, and school by stages. The goal is to bring the children to normal schooling.

At the beginning of the school year 2021, David, 12 years old, will enter middle school and Audrey, 6 years old, will enter elementary school.

It was an evening of immense joy and wonder: Among the caregivers were men and women who have family lives and work. There were about 20 of us, but over the three years, there have been many more volunteers. Covid has forced some to stay home,



others have offered to help...Beautiful people, a beautiful garden, a beautiful sunset, the beginning of the end of confinement, a victory for life....and the wonderful eyes of David and Audrey, so luminous, so confident, that on their own they say "thank you".

And above all, the Love of the Heart of our God!

My operation during Covid-19 and then back to my ministry

Sr Rotee, fdnsc (South Africa)

A story of hope for me was when I received the message that I was to be admitted to the Tzaneen MediClinic on 8th February which was the Feast of Saint Bakhita, and to be operated on the next day. Before Christmas I had an accident and twisted my ankle and my knee. The Specialist said I urgently needed a full knee replacement. I arrived at the hospital for admission with Sr. Sally. She helped me with all the papers to fill and to sign. She was not allowed to accompany me to the ward. A security with his full PPE

came and took me to my room where I was alone and I had to wait for my Covid-19 test result.

Next morning the nurses came and prepared me for the theatre. A feeling of loneliness and sadness came over me. My tears ran down my cheeks and I thought: wow Covid-19 look at what is happening. And my heart said, it is okay, relax,



you are in good care. The doctor saw the tears come down and whispered to me saying: "don't be afraid, you will be fine". I looked at him with a smile.

I spent five days in hospital without any visitors, but I could receive phone calls. One day I felt I needed to eat apples and drink lemons – but they were not on the menu. I called Sally who was my nurse, and she came with them to give to security. After five days I was discharged and returned to Tzaneen convent. The next day there was a complication and Sally took me back to the MediClinic and the doctor treated the wound and thank God everything was okay.



Sr Rotee with the four children

I had follow up treatment with my Physio for exercises and returned a few times to visit my Doctor. After six weeks my Doctor was so impressed at my recovery and I was also happy and surprised that my knee recovered so well. I am grateful to all my sisters for their love and support, and especially for their prayers during this challenging experience.

I am now back to my normal schedule at St Brendan's, walking as if nothing had happened. **"My soul glorifies the Lord..."** Next month I will see my Doctor for another check up. Deep inside me I feel I am okay.

Apart from my ministry at St Brendan's I am also overseeing the outreach program at our mission in Nzhelele, taking care of HIV positive orphans and vulnerable children. I work with the local team and caregivers and visit the children.

These four children here have one mother and different



Sr Rotee conducting St Brendan's Assembly

fathers. Their mother left them with their granny. I do hope that God has good plans for these beautiful children where someone can fill in the gap that is missing in their lives. Their granny is a lovely woman. With these children I thank God, and I am happy to continue the ministry he has entrusted to me.

Take care everyone and stay safe. Covid-19 is still in our midst. South Africa has just returned to lockdown 3.

Islamic-Christian Dialogue (SENEGAL)

Sr Jacqueline, fdnsc



In Senegal, the Islamic-Christian dialogue is a reality that we live every day. In each family we can find this reality, one part Christian, the other Muslim, and this does not hinder the relations, on the contrary, it consolidates the family ties. This beautiful cohabitation between Christians and Muslims is often concretized during the holidays, when each one tries to please the other by offering food or invitations, or simply by courtesy visits.

It is also important to note the respect, tolerance and the sense of freedom of expression which are values that we develop between us.

In view of all that is happening in our world today, especially the problems related to religion, we can always hope that we can live together if each one respects the other in what he is. Hope never disappoints. Let us work by the testimony of our life to promote a world of peace and justice.

The image illustrates an event that Senegal experienced this year on the day we celebrated the ASCENSION of our Lord Jesus on May 13, on the same day our Muslim brothers and sisters marked the end of their Ramadan feast named for them EID MUBARAK OR KORITE. These images have circulated in social networks in Senegal with many comments as a sign of blessings and invitation to social cohesion.

Experiences of COVID-19 in the Australian Province

On 11th March 2020, just weeks before cities and towns in Australia went into lockdown and our national border was closed, I wrote to our Sisters:

A growing number of countries are in lockdown, many churches are empty, people are panic buying, and we are to practise 'social distancing.' We are changing our way of doing things: greeting with an 'elbow bump', avoiding large gatherings, using hand sanitiser regularly. Our normal way of being has been interrupted, and we are living with uncertainty.

For over a year now we have been confronted with the tragedy and suffering of so many of our brothers and sisters around the world. Across our country we have become acutely aware of those who are on the periphery of our society: those struggling to care for loved ones or living with domestic violence, and refugees with no source of income. I have marvelled at the many ways our Sisters have responded to the needs of those at the margins. The Sisters in Australia responded with compassionate hearts, suggesting many ways that we could 'spend' the government's COVID-19 assistance stimulus we received,



in response to the needs of ordinary men and women whom we are privileged to call neighbour. As I reflect on the past year, a year like no other, I am deeply grateful to our Sisters who care for our elderly in Australia and the Philippines and who have kept them safe, to those Sisters who work on the frontline caring for the physically and emotionally sick, for the pastoral support they have given to families, and for the many ways they have shown compassion and care to those around them.

In late 2020 I asked the Sisters of our Province to contribute to an archival record intended to capture their lived experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic; they responded creatively and poignantly, and their contributions (in the form of prose, poetry, images - even music) are a testament to their faith, their lived Charism and their unflinching commitment to the mission of making the Heart of



Jesus everywhere loved. Several themes emerged from the responses collected, with GRATITUDE and HOPE chief among them. These sentiments are captured below, in the words of some of the Sisters themselves:

In COVID-19 I see the Paschal Mystery: an experience of Christ's agony and death on the Cross, and the joy of his Resurrection. The pandemic provides time for people to reflect on life, time to be, to have more time to pray, to go out of ourselves to help those who are most in need. It challenges us to be patient, to be kind and understanding, to be compassionate, to serve others with joy and love. (Sr Sally Amodia, Philippines)

The frequent short stops during the day for proper cleansing of the hands, as recommended by the Health Department, provide wonderful opportunities for remembering, re-connecting, thanking, praying...One writer advises us to wash our hands "like you are washing the hair of a beloved who is dying; like you are washing the feet of Jesus. (Sr Ancilla White, Sydney)

The virus has been a common sharing of death, loss, pain and uncertainty about the future, and has prompted us to live a new way of life...For me it has been a time to BE, to appreciate the world around me...I have learned some lessons about relationships, the importance of life, and the privilege it is to maintain its beauty and richness. (Sr Caterina Merlino, Sydney)

God is inviting me to STOP, LOOK and LISTEN with the eyes and ears of the heart. Where is He leading me in all these experiences of the 'new normal?' (Sr Cathie Mwangioidi, Philippines)

Our residents at St Joseph's Aged Care Facility were able to join in the celebration of daily Mass via the YouTube links...These have been enriching experiences, opening the world and its needs to our residents, offering them many opportunities to take various intentions to prayer and giving them a broader picture of the struggles that were facing our world. (Sr Elizabeth Little, Sydney)

On many occasions I was able to be creative and get Communion to people; after all, if people can come to your

door to deliver food, why not the very Bread of Life? Our second lockdown in Melbourne was very severe, and lasted 112 days...I was struck by the obedience of people in Victoria: they did not break the rules on the whole; the roads were empty, they lined up outside the supermarket until allowed in, they did not break the 8pm curfew, everybody wore masks. In the community we found great sustenance in our online Masses and in our shared prayer. (Sr Elizabeth Taylor, Melbourne)

COVID-19 appeared – life was changed forever! Movements curtailed, illness prevailed. The virus hit both young and old; we saw the death toll rise and fall as we struggled to bear it all. Families torn apart for sure, all prayed it ease before more hearts were broken to the core. Then we, with grace and mercy, appeal to the God whose love is real for all who suffer still today, that this curse should go away. May we then, with deepened faith, give glory for His healing grace. (Sr Helen Armstrong, Adelaide)

Supporting families during this time was important as patients (babies and children) were only allowed one parent in the hospital throughout the entire lockdown. During this time I was asked to be on the treating team for a family with a two-year-old who was dying of cancer. Sadly the child died and I was asked to speak at her funeral in country Victoria. To my delight and amazement I was allowed to travel there with my hospital ID, and I was reminded how fortunate we are living in our usually open and free country. (Sr Helen Little, Melbourne)

It has been an extraordinary nine months. Halfway through our long lockdown in Melbourne there appeared a large billboard on the OLSH College fence. Situated at a busy intersection, it showed a picture of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart and the text, boldly printed and demanding attention, from 1 Corinthians: "Now more than ever: Faith, Hope and Love." At a time of bad news here and overseas, it shone like a beacon. I hope that the hundreds who over time stopped at the traffic lights, or the pedestrians passing by, shared my experience: unexpected optimism, a lifting of spirits, a surge of joy. Truly 'good news.' (Sr Jeanette Balding, Melbourne)

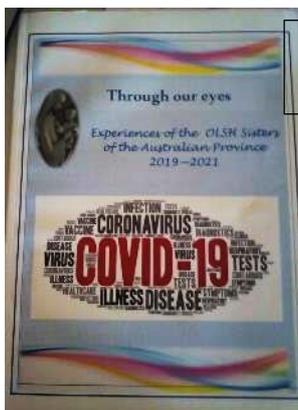
Let us take the opportunity to bring the Resurrection joy into our current worldwide crisis...to be a support to each other and to assist each other to 'carry the cross' like Simon of Cyrene and to 'wipe the face' of the other, as Veronica did for Jesus. Let us thank God for the many 'Simons' and 'Veronicas' in our life thus far, and not take them for granted. (Sr Jenny Seal, Adelaide)

"We're all in this together" has become a popular refrain among the government leadership team during the pandemic. Could it presage a new era when we focus on 'we' rather than 'me'? An entire nation focussed on a single, sustained crisis involving life and death, replete with heroes and villains, sacrifice and hardship, will surely result in social shifts as powerful as those in the 1920s and '50s after the two World Wars...I think we have been re-evaluating the entire contribution/reward equation since our summer bushfires and floods and now, with the pandemic, we can't help but appreciate the selflessness of volunteer firefighters, of healthcare workers, of supermarket staff, of parents home-schooling their children, teachers conducting remote learning, the St Vincent de Paul Society, Salvation Army, Red Cross Society, OLSH and other Religious orders, and all those groups who reach out with help for others. (Sr Mary Stevens, Darwin)

Thanks be to God for the gift of technology! (Sr Narie, Japan)

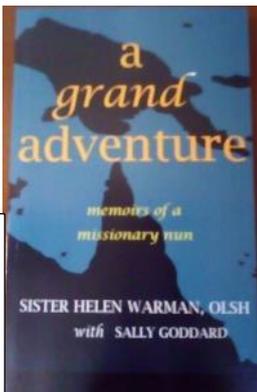
Dear 2020: how do I meet you this very day? I feel invited, if not to embrace, to acknowledge you, to meet you. You have brought me to my knees, you have challenged new shapes of caring for others – you are part of our life and part of my story. Jesus says, "Love your enemies." The way we meet you, the way I meet you, can bring transformation. (Sr Robyn Reynolds, Melbourne)

This pandemic shall not stop kindness and compassion in our dealings, especially when natural and man-made calamities beset our poor in their dwellings. The call for each of us is to pray more, care more and share more, for this new world emerging; missionaries of hope we need to the core! (Sr Ruth S. Yburan, Philippines)



Cover of our book – our archival record

More stories of hope and mission in **A Grand Adventure** by Sr Helen Warman, OLSH.



SOWING IN TEARS... REAPING WITH SONGS OF JOY

Sr. Marjorie, fdnsc (PHILIPPINES)

Never in my life has Psalm 126:5 struck me so much. It says, **“Those who sow in tears will reap with songs and shouts of joy.”**

It was the feast of Santo. Nino (Holy Child) last January 17, 2021 when I decided to attend the 7:30 AM mass. To avoid the long queue of church goers during this pandemic time, I had to call and request the high school guard to open the side gate of the campus for an easy access to the church. The guard was halfway through with his breakfast and he said, *“Kaon ta Sister”* (Sister, let us eat). I eagerly asked him what his viand was. He pointed to the container as he poured water on the rice. Humbly he said, *“Kini Sister”* (this, Sister). *“No coffee whatsoever?”* I queried. He stated that he didn’t have any and that he was almost late in reporting to his duty because he just walked from Pajac to the school. More so, he had a quarrel with his wife having no money even for his fare. I felt sorry for him as I listened, but I had to leave for the mass was about to start.

During the mass, pathetic scenes of the guard’s life kept flashing in my mind. I couldn’t stop my tears. Walking from Pajac, which is approximately 8 km from the school, not to mention the busy traffic and narrow roads, is an ordeal. How I appreciated the guard’s openness, humility, sincerity, and determination to earn a decent living. I prayed that God will grant him the strength and courage to face the difficulties in life. I had already in mind what to do.

After the mass, I dropped by the office to get some canned goods and sachets of coffee from our Community Involvement Program (CIP) provisions. I gave them to the guard together with a 100 peso bill. The guard repeatedly said: *“Thank you, Sister,”* while bursting into tears. He added that he did not expect to be cared for being only a guard. To see the guard crying out of gratitude was too much for me to bear, and so I hurriedly went back to the convent.

The sisters in the community were having their breakfast when I arrived. I narrated the incident blinking back my tears and trying to swallow a lump in my throat. We were all misty-eyed seeing plenty of food on the table and thinking of the guard and others who have nothing to eat. The community also thought of the guard’s sacrifice of walking from his place to the

school. So, we decided to buy him a bicycle from the Extension Services of the school.

Then and there I realized the impact of **Psalm 126: 5**. The guard accepted his sacrifices for the love of his family. He almost lost his self-worth, but because of the empathy and blessings he received, his self-worth was restored; he felt valued and cared for. I believe that such experience will give him hope and faith in God and may transform his heart to hold on to God, for in his dire need God sent His instruments. The guard sowed in tears and wept in confusion, hopelessness, and depression, but he saw the rays of hope through the acts of love and compassion extended to him through our SACS school community when we gave him a bike. He repeatedly expressed his thanks and his face shone with joy. Such an unexpected gift is a striking proof of God’s love manifested through our Spirituality of the Heart as DOLSH Sisters who are trying to be God’s heart on earth. Sparked by the gift of caring rooted in love, his hope and trust in God rekindled, and so the pains and sacrifices will surely turn to joy and thankfulness. Our hearts were filled with gratitude, joy, and peace having



made a difference in someone’s life; all done in God’s name.

I felt a bit guilty that there are many people out there aside from the guard who are suffering far more for Christ’s sake, making me more critically aware of the specific path God has directed me to follow as a DOLSH Sister. I recalled the times when life’s twists and turns left me hopeless and depressed, but

seeking God’s will in my life, I have realized that my tears were like seeds planted in a field that in time, through much toil and constant prayers, have yielded bountiful harvests of joy and gratefulness.

Together with the other DOLSH Sisters, we have to continually enliven our spirituality of Love and Compassion not only to our guards and other members of the Alphonsian family but more especially to the recipients of our Community Involvement Program (CIP). All we need are our collaborative

efforts and sacrifices as one solid community sowing in tears amid the challenges of the times. We will hold on to God for strength and courage to bravely move forward transforming obstacles into opportunities for growth so as to continually offer the young Alphonsians quality Christian education for social transformation. We fervently hope and pray that in every school journey that ends, we will reap with songs and shouts of joy proclaiming, **“May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be everywhere loved!”**

I am with you always.... (South Africa)

Hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us” (Roman 5:5).

Hope opens life to possible realities beyond our present experience in a world of crisis. It gives us hope to know that some people around us care and support us during this time of pandemic. And so, the people in our care are strengthened and rejoice in the hope we give them in many ways, knowing that we care, support, encourage them and give them hope to face the future.

“...For the sake of the ten, I will not destroy it” (Gen 18:32). So God gives us hope through some people that give us hope.

As women of Hope, we live in hope, and give others hope to live during this challenging time. Hope strengthens our faith and faith gives life to hope.



Knowing that there will be food to eat, people who support and encourage them gives them hope to live.



Hunger that has HOPE never kills

Sr. Amaka, fdnsc



Look at the smile on the faces in the photos below. They show the expression of hope because of the generous acts done for them. Knowing that someone cares and provides for them gives them the hope to live. And so, the generosity of people towards our ministry gives us hope to reach out to the people. Each single act of charity brings hope.

As we receive so we give



Whatever awaits us in the future, we can count on the fact that God will be with us, for our God is a God of hope who desires to fill us with hope that enables us to live in this present World with hope, joy and great expectation. **“I am with you always, until the end of the World” (Matthew 28:20)**

In the middle of the pandemic, we learned that the awe of Easter is here and always will be. **“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8)**

Nuggets of Hope from Vietnam

Sr Cherry, fdnsc

I want to share with you some nuggets of hope in this time of pandemic here in Vietnam. Miracles happen in unexpected situations. The nuggets of hope may be hidden....but they are there!

As I write to you, I remember the conversation of Jesus and Mary during the Wedding feast at Cana. Jesus, there is no wine. Maybe this time, Mary is telling Jesus, there is no rice.

In some parts of Vietnam, People distribute rice through the ATM rice program (using a machine that dispenses rice like an ATM would dispense cash). This ATM rice machine needs only one person to operate it. It is a water tank customized to dispense rice. Let me share the story behind the man who invented the ATM Rice machine. He is a businessman who sold his Mercedes car to carry out his idea. With his 10 years work experience and the help of his friends, he was able to invent the ATM Rice machine in a short period of



Nugget 1: The Generosity of People



time. For him, the joy overflows when he sees thousands

of people receiving rice through his machine. He didn't have regrets in selling the car saying "helping thousands of people is more valuable than honor". People have been coordinating with him if they want to donate rice. According to our handicapped friends in Go Vấp, they could get at least 3 kilos of rice everyday from the program. Our handicapped friends survived the last covid lockdown through the generosity of people. The goodness in the heart of people is innate and it is germinating in the midst of crisis.

In Lang Son Chủch, the residents organized a feeding program for the handicapped but there were some streets that were blocked. So they put the food in front of the fences of their houses, making the food available to everybody including the police. **In the least expected circumstances, generosity overflows.**

I noticed that now our neighbours have more time to nurture relationships with each other, particularly one of our students. Before the lockdown she had to stay longer in our house than other students after the class because her mom would pick her up later. Now because of the lockdown, the mom can spend quality time with her. She now helps her mom to cook. This student usually brings us food several times a week. Other parents of our students, when they pass the market, also bring us something. Our relationships are growing.

When we heard about the lockdown, we planned to give some rice and food to some of our friends. One of them was the cleaning lady. One day, she came to give us four mangoes before we could actually give her the rice.

Also to help her financially, we asked her to come and clean our convent. Last Sunday, Yên spent time to talk with her and Yên learned that she wasn't able to attend mass online because her mobile is simple. Yên set up the laptop and joined her in the prayer room for the online mass. She was really grateful. Even when we are in lockdown, we can still reach out to each other in different ways.

I remember what Pope Paul II said "Nobody is so poor he has nothing to give and nobody is so rich that he has nothing to receive."

One day, we were having breakfast, I noticed a round mark in the ceiling. It seemed there was a leak. Above the ceiling was the bathroom. I immediately sighed....oh another repair needed so I asked help from our neighbour. Anh Bảo came to check what happened. He and his brother brought tools and fixed everything. We had to replace some parts in the bathroom. He asked another neighbour to replace the electrical wiring and the bulbs. When he turned on the light in one of the rooms, it smelled like a burning wire and the bulb was really hot. It could have caused a short circuit or fire. They said we were lucky. Anh Bảo usually helps his wife in selling vegetables in the market. After receiving what we gave him for the repairs, he gave back 500,000 VND for our project for the poor.

Nugget 2: Blessings in disguise

To me, the mark in the ceiling became a blessing. We were able to see and do some repairs and replace the electrical wirings. Our house now is in a better and safer condition. I realized this lockdown can be like that mark in the ceiling. Like in any lockdown, it can create discomfort to me and as well as in community. But like that leak, It can be an opportunity to repair, restore my relationships with self, others and God. So that we can be in a better condition and disposition.

ANGELICA “JOPAY” CALISURA AND SCAVENGING

Sr Ruth, fdnsc (PHILIPPINES)

Waste segregation has always been a part of Sr. Rosalia’s chores as she personally takes responsibility in the elderly section of Hartzler House. I am amazed at how this 86-year-old sister seriously sorts out the different types of waste....at least the dry and the wet ones.

Living in Hartzler for almost a year now, I feel privileged to take care of the dry waste that is comprised of things like paper, plastic and cardboard, when it is about time to dispose of these. Around the area we always have less fortunate families scavenging using pushcarts. They are the recipients of our dry reusable waste



Every time I stopped to give these materials to these people, I am startled at the smile they give back when

they received bags of our reusable waste ready for them to sell. Even if these moments take only a few minutes, the JOY and the GRATITUDE of these poor scavengers linger in me and bring me HOPE each time I pray.

The last time I disposed of our recyclable materials, Sr. Precy came along with me. It was there that we met Angelica “Jopay” Calisura, 21 year old from Sandigan Bayan, a 30-45 minute drive (including

traffic) from New Manila. Since it was early morning, we stopped for a while to talk with her. Her family used to live around the area (7th Street) but got relocated a few years ago. They are 11 siblings and her father earned a living through scavenging even before she was born. Angelica’s determination to study is amazing so that her younger siblings are taking her as a model and they are also studying online. Being the 8th child in the family, she helps her father and works hard through collecting recyclable materials and brings these to the Barangay who in turn will weigh everything and pay for them. She is now in her first year in College taking up criminology and it is indeed inspiring to know her. She takes a bus at 3:00 in the morning to be in the area early enough when peoples’ waste is brought outside their fences. She goes home and does her online studies after collecting the reusable waste. I got her cellular phone number so we can extend whatever help we can to ignite her HOPE so as to inspire others. She is definitely determined to alleviate her family from destitution. Thus, no matter how challenging online or distance learning can become she tries really hard so she can finish her course and find a job. This is Angelica, one of the many thousands of youth in our country giving HOPE behind piles of reusable waste we see around.



REYMARK AND HIS HORSE RABANOS (PHILIPPINES)

Sr Ruth, fdnsc

Every night I make it a point to watch the news or some other documentary film to keep abreast with what’s going on in our world. Lo and behold, I came



across the story of this 10 year old boy named Reymark and his horse named Rabanos. He and his sister may be lacking in love and care from their parents but they are definitely

being cared for and looked after by their grandparents, this is why Reymark is trying hard to do everything to help them. I tried to hold back my tears listening to him being interviewed by Jessica Soho, a famous newscaster/anchor of channel 7 in Manila. At age 7 he already started working in the field helping his grandfather. His is a real tearjerker story. Unfortunate circumstance made him embrace child labor without even realizing why it is happening. He is aware that he should have been still playing with other kids at his age but he cannot because he had to help his grandfather plow the

field using his 24 year old horse named Rabanos. This interview was aired and televised and this really awakened compassion in the hearts of many. The good news is...HOPE got rekindled in Reymark's desire to study, to become a military man one day to help our nation. Many kindhearted people from here and there extended financial and material support to Reymark's family, that even his college years are already assured. His dream of seeing his parents once again also came true. Thanks to



Kapuso Mo Jessica Soho and the generous donors. Reymark's tough and dark days are really a path to a bright future. I hope and pray for him. He is only 10 years old but he certainly sounded like an adult when he was expressing himself. This boy is following his dreams, a HOPE for tomorrow's generation!

This is what Pope Francis conveys to us in his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* when he says: *"Hope speaks to us of a thirst, an inspiration, a longing for a life of fulfillment, a desire to achieve great things that fill our heart and lift up our spirit to lofty realities like truth, goodness and beauty, justice and love... Hope is bold; it can look beyond personal convenience, petty securities and compensations which limit our horizon, and it can open us up to grand ideals that make life more beautiful and worthwhile."* (FT # 55) With Jopay and Reymark and many other young people who dream dreams, let us continue, then to advance along the path of HOPE.



When God speaks through the Human Heart! (PHILIPPINES) Sr. Carmen, fdnsc

First, allow me to start by thanking God for the gift of my vocation, the 18 years of God's faithfulness in my life. Throughout the years, there are lots of ups and downs. What keeps me going is entrusting everything to the loving mercy of God.

In the midst of the covid pandemic, I was able to spend time with my family in April and May. While at home, I never thought that my faith would be tested so much. Different instances happened to the members of my family, I felt hopeless in our situation...yet miracles happened.

My first week at home was very busy in preparing for the promotion of my brother Felix. He was promoted from Master Teacher 2 to School Head in one of the schools in our Province. I witnessed my brother's tension as he complied with all the requirements for this promotion. Thanks be to God who provided all my brother's needs before his installation. My brother is also blessed to have a supervisor and principals who are kind and generous. Felix exerted effort to achieve his dream. He knew that it would be hard for him to take this big responsibility but because he loves his



work and my family, he is willing to endure the consequences of his decision.

Trials continued at home as I worried for my aging parents. My mother turned seventy-eight last April 27th and my father turned seventy-six last May 2nd I was home for both their birthdays. One morning, my mother said to me that she felt weak and dizzy. Aside from doing household chores, my mother spends her day reading the bible and listening to the radio for the daily masses. In the evenings, she wakes up in the middle of the night feeling dizzy and hungry. I discovered that the level of her blood sugar and blood pressure were the causes of her dizziness. So we now

give her early snacks and meals. Her dizziness has lessened but most of the time she still feels tired.

One day, my youngest brother rang asking for prayers for his wife, she tested positive for COVID. She undergoes regular dialysis but this time no hospital could accept her since all the hospitals were full. Twice, my sister-in-law was near to death but because God sent people who showed mercy, she was able to find hospitals and she recovered little by little. My brother and sister in law are grateful to God, to the sisters for their prayers, to their employers who helped them find a hospital and to the hospital administrators who allowed them to go home despite their unpaid balance. For this reason, my brother needed to go back to his work for six months and leave his wife. They trust in the loving mercy of God and never lose hope. For them, life continues despite the threat of Covid-19. At this moment, my sister-in-law is still fighting for her life and dependent on portable oxygen. She entrusts her life to the mercy of God.

The challenges continued when one day one of my sisters complained. She was having a problem and she needed to go to the doctor for a check-up but she did not have enough money for laboratories and hospitalization. It became a big problem for us. One night, unaware, my parents heard me talking to someone asking to borrow the money we needed. The next morning, my father arrived from his farm and told us that he is planning to “pawn” his land to one of my aunts for five years so that we can raise money. We all felt helpless. Seeing my father’s teary eyes moved me. I told him that one of my brothers would strongly disagree with his decision. If we allowed him to do as he planned, where will they get the resources to pay back my Aunt, the farm will be tilled by someone else. So I convinced him to wait first. We were advised to go to our doctor friend and humbly tell her that we need help because she usually gives free service to the needy. Then God intervened! He answered our

prayers. We received financial help from concerned people and from the Region, which we used for my sister’s check-up, laboratories, medicines, food and hospitalization. Then the bigger good news was that the four doctors who treated my sister did not ask for professional fees. They said that we can pay them through prayers. My family, especially my sister, is so

grateful to God and to the people who supported us. It was a humbling experience to set aside one’s ego and pride and accept the reality that we need the help of other people and the loving mercy of God. Recently, the result of my sister’s biopsy came and it is benign. I continue praying that she will be totally healed.



The doctors who treated my sister

With the challenges I’ve encountered while with my family, I can relate to the teaching of Jesus in the “Beatitudes”

when He said *“Fortunate are those with pure hearts, for they shall see God.”* Truly, we placed our hope in Him and he fulfilled His promise saying *“do not be afraid, I am with you always”*. As I cling on God’s promise I cannot stop thanking Him.

Let me end by reflecting on my learnings from our Life Transition webinars and my recent experiences. My understanding of the true meaning of our Spirituality deepened. I was able to grasp the thought of our founder when he said *“It is at the foot of the Cross, from the pierced Heart of Christ, that the Church draws all graces. It is from there that all graces come.”* It seems Fr. Jules explained to me that the difficulties we experience can be turned into blessings because it is in the Heart of Jesus that we truly feel and experience his overflowing mercy. My family received His compassion through the people who shared their heart in order to support us, people who were willing to sacrifice for the sake of others and give hope. For these I am really grateful to God and to those persons who inspired and challenged me to extend my heart especially to the needy. Truly, God speaks through the human heart!



A big THANK YOU from my whole family – Sr Carmen.

God is our Protector at Holy Family Care Centre (SOUTH AFRICA)

Sr Jeanne, fdnsc

I am at Holy Family Care Centre where we have been in lockdown since March 2020, together with our staff and 80 children. Because the children cannot attend their village schools we took the decision to home-school the children believing it would not be for too long. We called our school “The Academy”. We have an assembly every Monday morning, sing the National Anthem and pray with the children. Now we are still running our Academy. The Third Wave of Covid-19 has reached South Africa. Fortunately, because Sr. Sally and I are over 60, we already received our first Pfizer Vaccination. Next month we will receive the second one.

The classes are small but many of the children have special needs and we have employed several Tutors and Caregivers to ensure the children get the best care. We protect the children by getting them to wear masks, sanitise, wash their hands and we do try to keep them socially distancing but this is difficult with small children. We also check everyone’s temperature every day. Every day the



Sr Jeanne with her Grade 2 class

children have a hot drink of lemon and ginger. Sometimes we have a week to do environmental projects and work with the children doing gardening and planting trees and flowers. We also have spelling bee and maths bee competitions and concerts.

What gives me hope is that all through these difficult months God has been our greatest Protector – until now none of the children have been sick. They are healthy because God is with them.



Sr Jeanne's gift of flowers from her garden for Sr Sally's 70th birthday



Working on the environment

When normal rules no longer apply (SENEGAL)

Sr Géraldine, fdnsc

We are facing a global health crisis. A crisis that is spreading suffering throughout humanity, jeopardizing the global economy and disrupting the lives of everyone. This crisis is above all a human crisis that calls for our solidarity. The human family is in anguish and the social fabric is being torn apart. People are suffering, are sick, are afraid...



We must recognize that the poorest countries and most vulnerable people, especially women, will be the most affected.

The message we wish to convey is this: in this unprecedented situation the normal rules no longer apply; there is no point in resorting to ordinary tools in such extraordinary times.

In the face of this unique crisis we must be creative and the effort to fight must be proportional to the gravity of the situation. The world is facing a common enemy, we are at war with a virus. Solidarity is not only a moral imperative, it is in the interest of all. More than ever we need solidarity, hope and the will to overcome this terrible crisis together.

How we can hope in a world where all seems lost

Sr Gabrielle, fdnsc (SOUTH AFRICA)

Ametur! God is love, He created the world and He created us in His image. Although we are fragile human beings, we remain the beloved of God. Thus, knowing that God loves us, we continue to hope in His goodness, even though we are sinners and under the oppression of CoronaVirus and its multiple mutations. The turmoil of our world today has raised many questions in me, and made me see the greatness of God and the fragility of humankind. It has taught me never to lose hope as long as God the creator and master of this world is in our midst, as he was in the boat with his disciples when the sea was stormy.

But how can we hope in a world where all seems lost? Jobs, human lives, freedom to travel, freedom to gather, freedom to participate in the Eucharist etc.

In this tribulation, God opens my eyes to see and my mind to understand. And in fact, I really understood that sometimes the darkest moments in history can lead us to the brightest places. I am full of hope because even though many people have died and continue to die, even if people have lost and continue to lose their jobs, the generosity of people will never end. Some countries are heavily affected by Covid-19 but still care about the countries that are in need.

I could illustrate this with an example: Saint Brendan's, our Catholic secondary school, has a problem with its boarding school buildings. They are in need of urgent maintenance. I compiled an Application to obtain funds for this project after I completed my on-line studies in Project management organised by Sr. Jenny Christie from Rome. I submitted and, behold it is funded although times are dark at the moment. The generosity of the people who donate to the Australian Overseas Aid Fund gives me yet another reason for hope in a shattered world.

In order for us to move forward, not to be swallowed up by the influences of the CoronaVirus, humans should not remain static; they need to continue to investigate, to deepen their knowledge, to create and to innovate in the different fields, especially in



Sr Gabrielle and her learners

technology. Studies, trainings, meetings that were once difficult to participate in because of distance, are becoming accessible through the use of Zoom. This innovation addresses our current situation. By this I am referring to my English classes. It was difficult for me to access classes because of containment and other measures that were taken by the government to limit contamination. After a year, a glimmer of hope appeared, I was able to access the British English course through Zoom.

As far as training courses are concerned, it had become difficult to take part in them, especially if they were organised in a foreign country, but now it has become easy to take part in them through the Zoom meetings. For example: we followed the training on Interculturality organised from Rome, another on Integrity, organised by COR VITAE from the Philippines. We are so grateful to COR VITAE for the upcoming Zoom webinars.



*Sr Gabrielle
attending Zoom session*

And now in the field of medicine: they have found a vaccine that they are testing for effectiveness. All this makes me live in hope and I am sure that even after these years of darkness the day will eventually appear. **This is my great hope.**



A Grateful Heart

Sr Paula, fdnsc (PAPUA NEW GUINEA)

During the time of isolation, I was reminded of: *“To everything there is a season under heaven”*. Ecclesiastes, Chapter 3, verses 1-11. Also, a song *“To Everything turn, turn, turn”* by the Byrds.

Well! Did I have a “ball of a time” in my room for the two weeks of isolation. I had plenty of sleeps, reading, listening to music on the radio, did cross word puzzle, ‘push ups’ in the bathroom where there was space and truly had delicious meals each day. I enjoyed the meals so much; I had forgotten the feast day of my friend. On that particular day, Saturday 24th April, breakfast, lunch and tea were specially prepared. I asked at breakfast time; what is special about today? After the isolation period, I learnt about the feast day. I had lost track of time.

Prior to that, those of us who had attended the funeral Mass for Grand Chief Sir Michael Thomas Somare, were on ‘lockdown’ for two weeks after being tested for the first time at Rita Flynn testing site. (17th – 30th March).

The second test for COVID-19, was done in Boroko Convent, 13th April where the fourteen of us tested positive.

I had gone out to do some job and, on my return, was told, I had tested positive. It was Thursday, 15th of April at 5pm. Amazingly I was very calm about the news and I got what I needed from the Chapel and disappeared into my room.

The two weeks in isolation made me appreciate and reflect on how precious life is. It was a time too of reflection on the goodness, kindness and protection of God. The beauty of be still and silent. Each day I would wake up with the birds singing and lovely sun rising. I saw the isolation as a blessing for me especially; to slow down and have a break. I learned to appreciate life, people and for God’s love and care for me each day.

Did I lack anything? No. I had a roof over my head, lovely food three times a day, water, lights, fan, a comfortable bed, hand sanitizers and distancing were carefully observed with wearing of a mask. What more could I have asked for? I

had everything at my disposal, plenty and overflowing.

While I had *plenty and overflowing*, many of the poor people who had been affected here in the country didn’t have what I had.

They need money for basic needs and for everything: water, food, sanitizers or soap, good shelter and the list goes on.... especially here in Port Moresby city. Overcrowded homes and certainly social distancing aren’t been kept. But they manage with the little they have each day. Their trust in God is great, knowing that God will provide and look after them. *“The poor are very great people; they can teach us many beautiful things”*. (Mother Teresa of Calcutta)

As I look back now on my two weeks of isolation, I have found some things helpful for me.

- Make time to reflect and be thankful for the lessons learned.
- Look forward to living a New Normal; to recognize and accept what has happened.
- Remember to pause for reflection and refresh; make time to care for myself and others.
- Be grateful always for what I have, for those around me with whom I share these changes of living in the New Normal.
- Remain optimistic and hopeful for what is yet to come.
- To remember that God is with me through all the events of my life.
- To love and respect the past, as I live in the community with anticipation, optimism, enthusiasm and to care for others as we all live to create our New Normal; for it isn’t what it was and it isn’t what it will be, nor are we.

My HOPE is that our government will provide and improve the lives of the poor and the marginalized to live better lives wherever they are.

WOMEN OF HOPE IN THESE TROUBLED TIMES (CAMEROUN)

Sr Quindoline, fdnsc

Here in Cameroon, the pandemic continues to wreak havoc especially with the relaxation of precautionary measures and some citizens have begun to take the anti-covid vaccine. The postulancy community is



made up of four sisters and one postulant. It is also a welcoming community for external aspirants and sisters passing through. With the pandemic becoming a companion for us, each one gives herself to her community and apostolic activities.

In addition to the income from the apostolates, we also work in the sale of wine and homemade cakes for self-financing. Before the health crisis, we used to display these cakes and wines on Sundays in the parish, but now we produce them and keep them in community for sale on order.



We remained present to the vulnerable through our visits to the visually impaired and disabled. In January, to wish them a happy new year 2021, we were in a home of more than 40 visually impaired and handicapped children and in April (at Easter) we were to transmit to them the joy of the Risen One by bringing them the fruit of our Lenten effort. During this visit, we prayed, made presentations, and finished by sharing bread with the children through the meal



offered. We were very happy to see that they had kept a good memory of the first visit, as well as mother Edwige, their companion, who is more than 85 years old, and who is alone in this task. We learn a lot from them through their life of poverty and abandonment to providence while waiting for the help of those who want to help them. What hope in life for these blind people who count on a better future, by learning to read Braille, by preparing themselves for the sacraments. They also have the grace of having Mass in their home once a month and some are very involved in the parish like Stéphane, vice-president of the readers. Prayer, in short, the spiritual life occupies a very important place in this home...

In spite of the health crisis that continues, we try to make our community life more jovial and pleasant by celebrating birthdays, the patronal feasts of the congregation and the feasts of the different members of the community. We do not forget the recreational evenings to give witness to the life that is in us and that we receive unceasingly from God, in spite of the pains and sufferings of this world, of our life.

All through this pastoral year, we have had Masses in the parish every day and in community on Saturdays, but with the wearing of masks, use of hand gel, and respect for the obligatory protective measures, while trying to adapt the liturgy to the crisis situation (no procession with the Blessed Sacrament on the feast of the Blessed Sacrament).



With the Chevalier family (Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, fraternity of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart) and the Marian groups of the parish of Charles Lwuanga of Nkol-ndongo, we celebrated the feast of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in this parish entrusted to the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. We had a conference presented by Brother Jean Calvin on the

importance of taking Our Lady as Mother, then a solemn Mass presided by Father Theodore, the first MSC of Cameroon, and then we finished with a fraternal snack with the contribution of all.

By embracing this crisis and learning to live with it on a daily basis, we have learned that everything is in God's hands and we find our happiness in surrendering to his will by working as if everything depended on us and praying as if everything depended on God .

Trying to be FNDSCs less unworthy of the name, we strive to be women of hope in these troubled times of the pandemic that has been so deadly and traumatic. We call with all our hearts for the end of the pandemic and the return to life through the intercession of the Virgin Mary whom we like to call OLSH. We are united with the Holy Father in his marathon prayer launched in May for the same intention. We believe that through Mary, mediatrix of graces, God makes everything new. May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be everywhere loved! Forever!

SAGA OF THE MASK

Lyrics: Sr Delia Donahoe, FDNSC

Music: Sr Duchesne Lavin. FDNSC

G D7 G C G

The Premier said. It's law now you all must wear a

D7 G A7 D

mask!" "O. K.", we said, "We guess that's real-ly not too much to ask." And o -

C D G D7 G D7 G

bed-ient-ly we set a-bout com-ply-ing with the task. So,

G C D7 Em D G

this is the com-mer-cial one, blue - pleats and el-as - tic. This home-made

D7 A7 D C D

one ties a-round the head - trick-y, but not dras-tic and a nif - ty one with a accel.

G D7 G a tempo D7

tis-sue pouch - cre - a - tive quite fan-tas - tic.

G C G C D7 G

So let's see now - one ear first, and then a-cross the nose. Oh! help, my glass-es

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2

38 D7 G A7 D Am D7 G
 just fell off - not sure how all this goes. My hear-ing aid has just popped out this

43 D7 G D7 G G
 pro-cess has its woes! Fin - al-ly masked, I

48 Am G D D7 G Am D7 G
 vent-ure out and go face less down the street, but myspecs-they are fogg-ing up. I can't see

53 A7 D G D G
 those I meet. Pull it up, tug it down, this mask I can de - feat.

58 G D7 G G
 So, Mis-ter Prem-ier

63 D7 C D7 C D G C G
 if you please, we've real - ly done our best. Co - op-er-at-ing for the state, and

68 Am D7 Am7D7 G D G Am7
 do - ing your be - hest. Please God, one day soon we'll throw a - way these

73 D D7 G G D7 G D7 G
 masks. **THEY ARE A PEST!**
ff

*Let's keep
hope alive...with a love
burning bright!*

