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News from the Philippines

Submitted by: Fang Community, Srs Joy Puerta and Julia Tabafa

Children's Voices in the Time of Covid-19

We, the Presentation Sisters, are in mission with the Tribal groups of Akha, Lahu and Thaiyai in Northern Thailand in collaboration with the Sacred Heart of Betharram priests through the Chiang Mai Diocese. The activities at the Mission Centre and the outreach programs in the villages enable the children and people to have access to basic education, faith formation and holistic wellbeing. The outbreaks of Covid-19 presented the children, parents and people in the villages to a number of challenges.

In the midst of this pandemic, our children from Thailand responded to the invitation to amplify their voices from local to global levels. For example, children contributed to our request to respond to the International Presentation Association in celebrating the International Day of Girls with the theme:

Girls Speak Out 2021 – Closing the Digital Divide to Accelerate Change

*Education is our passport to the future, for
tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare
for it today.*

— Malcolm X

As the world continues to become more digitalised, girls are too often left further behind. Girls lack access to the digital space because of their age, gender and geographic location. This exclusion of girls in the digital space impacts their access to education particularly during the Covid-19 Pandemic. It has created the largest disruption of education systems in history.

Here are some voices from our girls...

My name is Pacharin Mayae, I am 12 years old and I am doing 6th grade. The girls and I need electricity and internet to learn online lessons. Without these things, neither I nor the girls can study online. While the school I attended has been closed indefinitely, it makes myself and my friends not able to go to school and forces us to study online from our own homes, but we lack the basic things. This makes me and many girls unable to study online lessons.

My name is Supaporn Yebia, I am 12 years of age and I am doing 6th grade. Without access to digital technology, I am unable to live a normal life, especially in my studies. Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic situation I am unable to go to school. Therefore it is necessary to study online. While we need internet signal for online learning, having no electricity itself is a big challenge. In the families we have not enough number of mobile phones, computers or notebooks for every online learning child. Parents do not have money to buy the tools and do not have the knowledge to teach their children.

My name is Sweepa Yebia, I am 14 years old and I am doing my 8th grade. I want access to technology because in my village I cannot study online lessons as there is no internet signal. The children in the village are not getting the knowledge as they should and thus education is not developed. If there is an internet signal, I think it will give the children more opportunity for education and it will improve the quality of life. The children will also have the opportunity to gain new knowledge from teachers which will help them to find what they want to be and be happy in the future.

Being aware of the challenges in the rural villages, the Mission Centre meets the requirement of the children to get their basic education by providing board and lodging, educational equipment and other facilities to do their studies and build a better future for the children. We hope that they will be empowered to speak for their fundamental rights and freedom.

As Nano often said, *If I could be of service in saving souls in any part of the world, I would willingly do all in my power.* Being true to Nano's dream, we serve the tribal people of Thailand in various ways. May Nano's spirit continue to be alive in our hearts as well as in the hearts of people whom we are serving.



Pacharin Mayae



Supaporn Yebia



Sweepa Yebia

Ministering at the Margins: Serving the Children in Pediaakway, Negros Occidental

Pediaakway is a community located in the mountain area of Don Salvador Benedicto, Negros Occidental and is not easily accessible by motor vehicles. In reaching the area from the highway, we would partly ride a motorcycle and walk the rest of the way. Our ministry in Pediaakway was originally among the communities ministered by the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines (RMP),

a mission partner of the Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines. Being an active member of the RMP, Sr Aquila Sy started the Unit's involvement with the people in Pediaakway. Being an inter-congregational group, the RMP is only transient in the rural places and communities they work with and when they eventually pulled out of the province, the Unit continued to implement the program and services especially for the health of the children. The Charles and Helen Hanson DayCare Center, a center established from a generous donation from the Hansen family has been serving the children in Pediaakway. This year, classes started on 13 September 2021 with ten pupils enrolled in the Daycare Program.



Sr Aquila Sy (2nd from right) started working in Pediaakway in 1997 and Loreto Lina (3rd from right) one of the pioneers in the indigenous community

Aside from the pupils, there are also thirty-five elementary and high school students who go to the government school in the area and who were assessed to be slow or non-readers. The PBVM Sisters, assisted by two local volunteer assistants, offer them tutorial classes in the Center as a support

to their learning. After their classes, a feeding program has also been organised for all the pupils/students after it was observed that the children are not able to learn properly because they are hungry. We have been grateful for the donations we have recently received that enable us to provide these necessary services especially to the children.

Golden Jubilee of Sr Teresita Garbato



Fifty years ago, on 3 September 1971, Sr Teresita Garabato made her first profession as a Presentation Sister in Takapau, New Zealand. She was among the first three Filipina Sisters who did their novitiate formation there. On 4 September 2021, Sr Teresita joyfully celebrated fifty years of being a Presentation Sister. Despite the pandemic and mindful of the safety protocols, the Unit was able to organise a simple celebration in Scala Retreat House, Bacolod City. The celebration started with a Thanksgiving Mass presided over by Bishop Louie Galbines, the Bishop of the Diocese of Kabankalan with Fr Frank Tobin, CSsR as the homilist. Since the Mass was live-streamed, Sisters from Cebu, Thailand and Ireland, Sr Teresita's family in the US along with her friends were able to virtually join the celebration. The theme of her jubilee was:

Celebrating with a Grateful Heart

It was indeed with a heart full of gratitude that Sr Teresita expressed in her word of thanks at the end of the Eucharistic celebration, that despite the many challenges in this time of the pandemic, God was so good to enable her to celebrate her Golden Jubilee. As a Unit, our hearts were likewise filled with joy and gratitude as we joined Sr Teresita as she celebrated her gift of vocation, her call to the Presentation way of life, her life of service and most especially, the grace and faithfulness of God that enables her to faithfully live her call. We wish her every blessing as she continues to give witness to being a consecrated person through her life as a Presentation Sister.



Virtual Handover Ritual of ULT on the Feast of the Sacred Heart

On 11 June 2021, we celebrated the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, a significant feast in our Congregation. As part of the liturgy in celebration of the feast, the Philippine Unit had the Handover Ritual of the Unit Leadership Teams (ULT) with the theme:

For all that has been, "thanks" ... For all that will be "yes"



This was done through virtual means, where Sisters from Cebu and Negros were joined by some of our co-workers from our two schools - Binalbagan Catholic College and Nuestra Senora de las Nieves. Sr VicVic Embate, on behalf of Sisters Joy Puerta and Aquila Sy of the previous team, passed on the lantern to Sr Joy Puerta, who together with Sisters Jancy Selvaraj and Anna Lee Vista comprise the new ULT. Despite being separated by distance, the ritual was

very meaningful with the prayers and blessings expressed by each Sister. In her words of gratitude on behalf of the new ULT, Sr Jancy expressed:

Rocks are God's thoughts in stone, dew drops are God's thoughts in pearls and every blessing is God's wonderful thoughts of creation. It is true with our Sisters from Talaban, Binalbagan, Nivel and Fang communities for joining us for this meaningful ritual and extending your prayers and blessings to mark this significant event in our province (together with our co-workers). We are grateful and we appreciate your presence.

It was truly a joyful celebration and we were all one in our prayer for God to continue to bless our journey together as a Unit.



Novitiate Reception in Africa

Submitted by: Limpo Situmbeko and Tatenda Kubeta



Waking up early in the morning with beautiful smiles on our faces and the beauty of the sunshine, we were happy that the long-awaited day had finally come - to be received into the Novitiate. Mass began at 11am. The ceremony was lovely and the homily was so inspiring. Fr Darling who celebrated Mass emphasised the fact that the commitments which we made to follow Christ in the footsteps of Nano Nagle and being inspired by Mary our Mother should be put into practice.



From the Homily we have been encouraged always to reflect on the words, as a reminder of who we are. It was a great experience and we were delighted at how everything was organised. After the celebration of the Eucharist, we had a beautiful dinner and a nice celebration with all the Sisters who were present.

*If I could be of service in any part of the globe, I
would willingly do all in my power.*

We thank God for all that has been.

Experience of Transformative Servant Leadership Program – India South

- Submitted by Sr Bindhu Sebastian

As I review and reflect on the journey of this TSLP (Transformative Servant Leadership Program), I am grateful to God and all those who made it happen. It was an empowering, enriching and enthusing journey. A journey of head level to heart level...a journey of inward and outward. Every module had something to offer to the growth of myself and in the role of leadership. I feel that I was able to connect it with my life and mission. Especially in this time of Covid-19, as a front-line Health Care Provider and the team leader, it taught me what life is about – simplicity, spirituality and uncertainty.

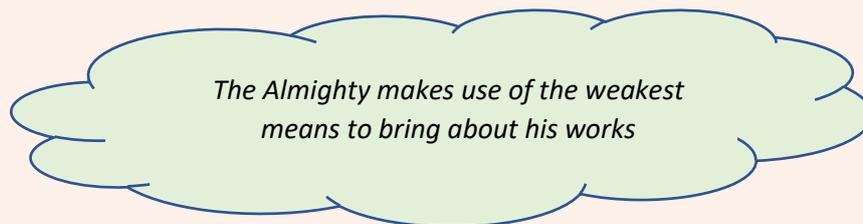
My attitude and understanding of
leadership are transformed...

...Service

A service to encourage and enable others to bring out the best in them. It does not matter what I do or how I do it, but my presence and availability matter. As I am becoming aware of my strengths and limitations I am open to the new.

For most of history, Leadership was defined by a title, intelligence and wealth. Vivek Bapat gives the best symbol/metaphor of a successful servant - *the lowly dandelion* - gives a clear picture of Servant Leadership. Like dandelions help their surrounding plants by pulling the nutrients and improve the quality of the soil and increase pollination, a Servant Leader spends time serving others to empower them, regardless of their status or position. People gravitate towards positivity. Servant Leaders practice actions of listening, developing trust and building relationships while still possessing and showing the skills of persuasion, foresight and guiding a team to achieve a goal. A dandelion's life span is short, but it accomplishes something great. It can also survive with minimal resources. This encourages me to evaluate my life (quality of my presence) and practices. This metaphor of the Banyan tree and a dandelion is ever memorable and made an impact on me. As a dandelion, my presence should allow others to grow and bear fruit. It is my responsibility as a leader.

I always had an unhealthy fear and self-doubt - "will I be able to?" There is a lot of self-reluctance to undergo pain and struggle. I feel there is an expansion of self-worth and believe there is a purpose for my existence, especially at this present time. I was also reminded of a saying of Nano -



The key action I need to take is being called to practice the MSC - Mindfulness, Self-care and Compassion. This will enable me to have a pleasant presence of myself and deepen my relationship with God, others and creation. The more I know about myself the better I can understand and handle the situation.

On the whole I feel that this program enables me to:

- ❖ Let go of my old, known/practiced ways to a flexible and more meaningful style of practicing leadership
- ❖ Let go of my ego and viewpoints in order to accommodate and accept others and their perspectives
- ❖ Know the real story of the other before I can make a remark or judgement
- ❖ I want to let come all that enables me to learn and grow as a better human being
- ❖ Approach life with a positive attitude, be open to the life and situations as they come
- ❖ It also enables me to say "Yes" to the needs of the Congregation, realizing that I am responsible for the mission of the Congregation.

I would like to use the symbol of a pencil. When a pencil becomes blunt, it needs to be sharpened, often on order to make its markings clear. In the same way, I also need to sharpen myself with all these inputs and learnings in order to become a better human being. As a follower of Jesus and Nano, I wish to share with others the best version of myself.

What is the Language of God

Submitted by: Sr Deepika

Have you observed the plants, the flowers and the trees?

In times they bloom

In times they produce fruit

In times they shed their leaves

And again, in times they start anew

Because they know the language of the Universe;



Have you observed the birds and the animals?

As soon as they find their food

They call each other to feast

Because they have their language to communicate;

That is the language of God.

Have you observed the firmament and the earth?

In times they generate heat;

In times they shower rains;

According to the nature and human's needs;

Because they have a language to communicate;

That is the language of God.





Everything that exists in the universe
Has got a language to communicate
Each language is sole and impeccable
Because it's a gift given by the creator.
That is why it is known as the language of God.

Have we the humans,
So called the crown of creation
Who have the unique ability to talk and express precisely.
What we would like to communicate to the other;
Do we ever speak this language of God?
Why don't we start speaking this language?
By giving love and receiving love...



News from the USA

Submitted by: Loretta Bowen & Sr Sharon Altendorf

Friends of Nano Children's Group at St Joseph's School, Upland, California

September 2021 - A new school year and a new opportunity to bring Nano Nagle's spirit into the lives of the young!

We are excited to introduce our Friends of Nano Children's Group. At the first of each month, two students from grades K-8th are chosen to participate in this group which meets twice a month; once for prayer and the other for service.

We begin our prayer meetings by using *lectio divina*. Through scriptural reading, meditation and prayer we share in God's Word with a desire to grow deeper in communion with our Creator. We then have intercessory prayer where we pray for those who are in need, knowing we are partnering with the Spirit of God to accomplish the will of God. We move on to pray a decade of the Rosary lifting up our loved ones to our Blessed Mother with the understanding that the rosary is an enormous source of grace and spiritual protection. We end the meeting learning about Nano Nagle's

life and discuss ways our lives can become more like hers: bold and courageous and willing to be Christ to others.



Our service is focused on a very special group of seniors, the residents at Villa Mesa which is an assisted living facility located across the street from our school. While we look forward to interacting with these seniors in various activities, for now with Covid restrictions, we reach out to them by making cheerful cards with messages of love and concern while we pray for each resident individually.

Our hope for the Friends of Nano Children's Group is for the students to grow closer to our Lord while experiencing the joy of service to others. We have seen, especially in the hearts of these children that Nano Nagle's spirit is alive. Her inspiration is evident in their enthusiasm to follow in her footsteps and answer their Christian call. We strive to live by Nano's words *With the assistance of God, we may do a great deal.*

Sister Sharon Altendorf Receives Special Mission Recognition Award

Never a dull moment at the bus station for the Interfaith Welcome Coalition ministry volunteers. These women and men welcome asylum seekers who pass through San Antonio, Texas.

Minerva Briones, on behalf of the United Methodist Women National Office, presented Sister Sharon Altendorf with a *Special Mission Recognition* pin and certificate. It was given in recognition of her "gift for ministries with women, children and youth."

In her remarks, Sister Sharon noted that she had observed "a young couple dressed for church one Sunday who dropped off an elderly blind man they had found walking along the highway headed to the bus station. They stopped, picked him up and brought him to the bus station paying for his ticket and buying food for him. They left him in our care as on they went to church -

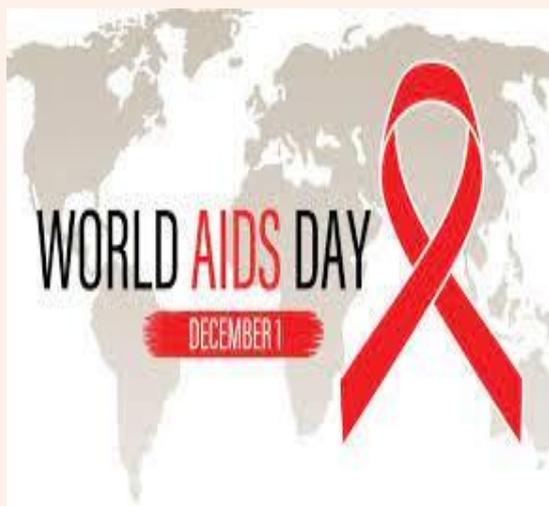


Good Samaritans in action! Requests we receive could be anything. On one occasion as asylum-seeking woman asked if she could use the tip of my earring to open her iPhone!!”

Significant International Dates in December

There are many dates throughout the month of December that hold both humanitarian and ecumenical importance. Read about them here

1 December – World Aids Day



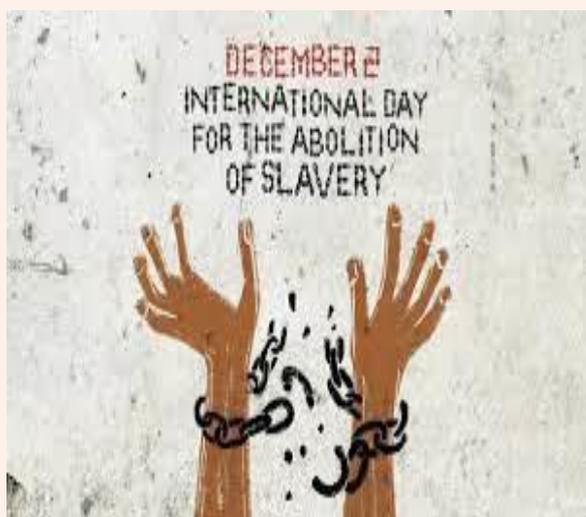
Health is a human right. Health must be a top investment priority to achieve universal health coverage. On this World AIDS Day let us recognize that, to overcome Covid-19 and end AIDS, the world must stand in solidarity and share responsibility.

–UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres

Every year on 1 December, the world commemorates World AIDS Day. People around the world unite to show support for people living with and affected by HIV and to remember those who lost their lives to AIDS. In 2020, the world’s attention had been focused by the Covid-19 Pandemic on health and how pandemics affect lives and livelihoods. Covid-19 is showing once again how health is interlinked with other critical issues, such as reducing inequality, human rights, gender equality, social protection and economic growth. With this in mind, this year the theme of World AIDS Day is *Global solidarity, shared responsibility*.

<https://www.un.org/en/observances/world-aids-day>

2 December – International Day for the Abolition of Slavery



According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) more than 40 million people worldwide are victims of modern slavery. Although modern slavery is not defined in law, it is used as an umbrella term covering practices such as forced labour, debt bondage, forced marriage and human trafficking. Essentially, it refers to situations of exploitation that a person cannot refuse or leave because of threats, violence, coercion, deception, and/or abuse of power. In addition, more than 150 million children are subject to child labour, accounting for almost one in ten children around the world. ILO has adopted a new legally binding Protocol designed to strengthen global efforts to eliminate forced labour, which entered into force in November 2016.

<https://www.un.org/en/observances/slavery-abolition-day>

9 December – International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime



9 December 2021 marks the International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime, as well as the 73rd anniversary of the 1948 Convention of the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (the 'Genocide Convention'), the first human rights treaty adopted by the General Assembly. The Convention signifies the international legal definition of 'genocide', widely adopted at national and international levels. It also establishes a duty for State Parties to prevent and punish the crime of genocide.

<https://www.un.org/en/observances/genocide-prevention-day>

10 December – Human Rights Day



Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home – so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world... Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world. – Eleanor Roosevelt

Human Rights Day is observed every year on 10 December – the day the United Nations General Assembly adopted, in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The UDHR is a milestone document, which proclaims the inalienable rights that everyone is entitled to as a human being – regardless of race, colour, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Available in more than 500 languages, it is the most translated document in the world. The theme for 2021 is *Equality – Reducing inequalities, advancing human rights*.

<https://www.un.org/en/observances/human-rights-day>

18 December – International Migrants Day



On this International Migrants Day, let us seize the opportunity of the recovery from the pandemic to implement the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, reimagine human mobility, enable migrants to reignite economies at home and abroad and build more inclusive and resilient societies. – UN Secretary-General António Guterres.

Throughout human history, migration has been a courageous expression of the individual's will to overcome adversity and to live a better life. Today, globalization, together with advances in communications and transportation, has greatly increased the number of people, who have the desire and the capacity to move to other places. This new era has created challenges and opportunities throughout the world. It also has served to underscore the clear linkage between migration and development, as well as the opportunities it provides for co-development, that is, the concerted improvement of economic and social conditions at both origin and destination. Migration draws increasing attention in the world nowadays. Mixed with elements of unforeseeability, emergency and complexity, the challenges and difficulties of migration require

enhanced cooperation and collective action among countries and regions. The United Nations is actively playing a catalyst role in this area, with the aim of creating more dialogues and interactions within countries and regions, as well as propelling experience exchange and collaboration opportunities.

<https://www.un.org/en/observances/migrants-day>

20 December - International Human Solidarity Day



The Sustainable Development Agenda is centred on people and planet, underpinned by human rights and supported by a global partnership determined to lift people out of poverty, hunger and disease. It will, thus, be built on a foundation of global cooperation and solidarity. International Human Solidarity Day is a day to celebrate our unity in diversity; a day to remind governments to respect their commitments to international agreements; a day to raise public awareness of the importance of solidarity; a day to encourage debate on the ways to promote solidarity for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals including poverty eradication; a day of action to encourage new initiatives for poverty eradication. Solidarity is identified in the Millennium Declaration as one of the fundamental values of international relations in the 21st Century, wherein

those, who either suffer or benefit least deserve help from those who benefit most. Consequently, in the context of globalization and the challenge of growing inequality, strengthening of international solidarity is indispensable. Therefore, the UN General Assembly, convinced that the promotion of the culture of solidarity and the spirit of sharing is important for combating poverty, proclaimed 20 December as International Human Solidarity Day.

<https://www.un.org/en/observances/human-solidarity-day>

Keep up to date with our Presentation Sisters, Friends of Nano and Associates around the world. If you have a story or article you would like to share, please email it to

communications@pbvm.org

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