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Novitiate Under Pandemic

Submitted by: Sr Gabrielle Jin

The song 'God Will Make a Way' came to my mind when I was reflecting on my novitiate experience. It summarizes fittingly my novitiate journey under the global pandemic. The lyric goes;

By a roadway in the wilderness he'll lead me,
and rivers in the desert will I see;
heaven and earth will fade but
his word will still remain...



Though the Pandemic caused so much pain for us all, it has also brought me many blessings. To say the least, if it were not for the Pandemic restrictions which gained me extension after extension of my residence permit, I probably wouldn't be able to remain in Ireland to see my novitiate through to its completion. God used the Pandemic as a way for me to fulfil my vocation.

It's been two years now, I still remember 1 February 2020 like yesterday when the warm sun rays showered upon me during my reception ceremony. It was like the sky opened for me and I knew God's faithful love will never leave me! During those days, news headlines were dominated by a new-found virus in China which took numerous lives mercilessly in Wuhan city and caused distress

over the whole world.

I moved to Portlaoise, my Novitiate Community, on the very same day of my reception and was welcomed so warmly and lovingly. I was just a month into the novitiate program when Ireland started to impose a



strict measure of lock-down because the virus was so threatening and claimed so many lives of the most vulnerable. All of a sudden people had to start cocooning, isolating, distancing, masking and sanitizing, together with no physical meeting up, no entertaining, no worshipping and no singing. The world literally became a desert, stripping me of normal community life, of meeting friends, of hugs and other contacts. It must be true that God sees through me who is too stubborn to let go, too deaf to hear and too slow to understand, "like a senseless mule needs a bit and bridle" (Psalm 32:9), so He even caused the whole world to halt in order to take me into the depth of life and speak tenderly to me, in the hope that I would listen. I am not saying that the Lord is inflicting people with a pandemic in order to help me out, but there is a feeling of awe and wonder that the Lord uses the situation to bring out the best outcome for my good. In a moment I seem to understand what the Lord says through the Prophet Isaiah "Because you are precious in my sight, and honoured, and I love you, I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life" (43:4).



So, an amazing grace came along with the Pandemic for me. I could have the time and space in solitude. Most of the time I was left on my own, no companions, no friends, no family around, nothing to hold onto, but to contemplate the Word of God, to listen to the Spirit who whispers constantly in my heart and teaches me the way of life. In this desert space, I was able to keep watching through daily incidences what was from God, where sin got in my way and where my desire and God's united. Gradually prayer became the breath of my soul and I knew "it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me" (Gal 2:20). My deepest contentment is this, that to live in love, in union with my God. I also realised that my heart became softer and my earthly attachments faded away. I still have my dreams but not so many ambitions. I still have to face my weaknesses and limitations but not so many fears.

In the apostolic year, I was assigned to various communities for ministry experience. Again, activities were limited under Pandemic, at times I felt challenged by 'non-doing'. It was like another kind of desert experience for me. And it was in this gently pace I was given the opportunity to discover how the quality of our presence matters and to realise that human encounter is at the core of all our ministries.



Without much contact outside of the Congregation, I certainly had many opportunities to meet our Sisters; to share community life, to listen to their stories, to observe how they pray, live in community and minister to others. All the love, support and encouragement that have been given to me, have shaped my understanding of how to be a Presentation Sister. One thing is certain that Nano is alive among us and I feel so proud of being part of this Congregation. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all who have journeyed with me, thought of me and who have been witness to the Presentation Way of Life, near and far, known and unknown to me. By the grace of God and also because of you, I have become who I am.

Words are insufficient to express the significance of this two-year-novitiate journey for me. The Lord has shown me the pathway in the wilderness and the gushing of living water in the desert! I know something deeply changed in me, I know I come out of the program refreshed, transformed and empowered. How and when it exactly happened I don't know, but I know "it is the Lord" (John 21:7).

*And He can do exceedingly, abundantly above all
that we could ever ask or think.*

(Ephesians 3:20)

Canada: National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

Submitted by: Sr Sheila Leonard and Associate Deirdre Greene-Lono



Indigenous Map of Canada designed by Firas Chakroun

The 30th September 2021 has been designated as Canada's National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, a statutory holiday for federally regulated sectors. Respecting our indigenous people, we, too, honoured this event.

The day acknowledges the colonial legacy of residential schools, honours survivors and is essential to the ongoing reconciliation process. We are aware that working towards truth and reconciliation challenges us to look at our own complicity in systematic injustice and to engage in an ongoing process towards

acceptance of our wrongs and a slow movement towards reconciliation.

Ry Moran, the Director of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, outlines some smaller actions that we can take. In his words: *One of the most fundamental responsibilities that individuals have to take is that inner journey, that self-reflective journey and really ask themselves:*

What really am I carrying around?

What prejudices?

What biases?

Perhaps, what racism am I carrying around?

By starting out with these questions, Moran says it will expose people to how little they know about indigenous people.

A few questions Moran thinks Canadians should ask themselves are:

- Do I know any indigenous people? If not, why?
- Am I able to name the traditional territory I stand on? If not, why?
- Have I meaningfully engaged in deep conversation with indigenous people? If not, why?
- Have I read an indigenous author? If not, why?

These are really important questions people need to be asking themselves and then actively trying to work to address.

We are also asked to wear orange to honour Orange Shirt Day. We include the attachment from our local First Light, originally named the St John's Native Friendship Centre, who *serve the indigenous and non-indigenous community to provide programs and services rooted in the revitalisation, strengthening and celebration of indigenous cultures and languages in the spirit of trust, respect and friendship.*



The following Reflection on *Indigeneity, Truth and Reconciliation* by our Associate, Deirdre Greene-Lono, speaks to the significance of this day:



September 30 is a life-changing day for me. On that day in 1983, my first child was born. From her earliest days she looked like a perfect blend of my elegant English mother and my famously energetic foremother, Anne Maria (Smith) Greene, my father's great grandmother. Her descendants were known in the community as the 'Injun Smiths', as Anne Maria was Indigenous. From her, our family inherited jet-black hair, dark brown eyes, high cheek bones and wonderfully tannable skin. We also inherited her connection to the land and her comfort in living off it. We, all of us, look to the woods and rivers for quiet contemplation and to the barrens and bogs for the berries that arrive in promised plenty each Fall. Even my lovely September 30 daughter and her own young sons keep connected to the land through hiking, camping and berry picking. In the presence of nature we feel the slight stirrings of our indigeneity, our connection to this place we lived in – and off.

I have learned with grief and shame that many Indigenous people suffered great personal, family and social trauma at the hands of lawmakers, police, teachers and members of the wider community who thought their 'civilized' ways and 'Christian' beliefs were superior and that they should be imposed on the first peoples of this country 'for their own good'. I have learned that many Indigenous Canadians live with generational trauma as a result.

But the truth is, my family's sliver of indigeneity brought us little grief or loss, other than occasional rude references like 'Injun Smiths' or 'Black Greenes' – the latter evoking both our 'native' colouring and the fact that my family's early immigrants to Newfoundland in the early 1600s were Quakers (who soon converted to Catholicism in French- held Plaisance/Placentia).

So, today, Canada's National Truth and Reconciliation Day, I wear orange to reconnect with my indigenous forebears, to celebrate, as they did, the plentiful dogberries and the joyful Fall turning of the leaves on our land. I also remember with sorrow and respect the victims and survivors of residential schools that robbed indigenous children of their families, their communities, their seasonal celebrations of nature's beauty and bounty and their traditional foods and garments. Reconciliation, for me, means acknowledging the truth of generational trauma and reconnecting with the precious indigeneity of my forebears in order to bring their philosophy of collaboration with nature to my commitment to Walk Lightly on the Earth.



News from India North

Submitted by: Sr Jaya Pushpam, Arockia Vinitha and Mary Jarsi

Virtual Vocation Animation in North India Province

A Virtual Vocation Animation meeting was organised by North India Province on 22 January 2022 by the Province Vocation Coordinator, Sr Jeya Pushpam along with community Vocation Animators. The community Vocation Animators were given various responsibilities to make this event happen. An open invitation was sent to young girls who are in contact (Tamil-speaking) from class 10 and above. There were twenty-seven



participants including the Sisters. The community Vocation Animators took initiative to talk on career options, choice of life, who the PBVMs are and their presence in the world, sharing of personal vocation story, creative interactive session and Bible quiz. It was the first experience for the students and Sisters. The participants expressed the desire to have a continuation of the webinar in the month of May 2022.

A Guide for my Future

Without dreams and goals there is no living, only merely existing and that is not why we are here

- Mark Twain



I am Arockia Vinitha, pursuing 2nd Year Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) from Ignatious College of Education. I write this note with a grateful heart for this wonderful opportunity to attend this Webinar. It was a great Spiritual, moral and ethical experience. After attending this program I am motivated to set a goal in life, to focus on it and to move towards it with full personal freedom and with the blessings of others. It was a pleasant experience to be present on a Virtual meeting. I wish to be with the Sisters and others on a physical environment too. Though the main goal of the program was related to future guidance but it invited us towards personality development too. I am indebted to all the Presentation Sisters for enlightening us with their knowledge. Looking forward to attending a similar program organised by you all.

For A Synodal Church

Synodality is an expression of the style of the Church. The word 'synod' says it all: it means 'journeying together'. And the movement is the fruit of docility to the Holy Spirit, who directs this history, in which all have a part to play.

- Pope Francis

A webinar was conducted on 20 January 2022. The speaker for the webinar was Sr Shalini Mulackal. She highlighted the essential points of the synod. A very comprehensive view of the Synod was given to us and this was communicated in the limited time at her disposal and presented simply and was easy to understand.

Sr Shalini spoke about how this synod has been known for the theme *walking together or journeying together*. This very logo brings out this aspect very beautifully. The logo shows people from all walks of life walking together. There have been many synods in the past on youth, family etc. However, this is the first time a Synod is being held on Synodality. The process of the Synod is most important. His Holiness Pope Francis says that the result or outcome of the Synod is not more documents but to be able to listen to the voices in the church. The Pope highlighted three important aspects: encountering, listening and discerning. The listening must include the voices at the grass root level and it follows a bottom-up approach rather than a top-down approach. The Synod will have three phases – diocesan, continental and universal. We have already begun with the diocesan phase.

The webinar was very informative, enlightening and motivating. It made us realize that we too play an important role in helping the church discerning the path that it must move ahead in the future. We felt motivated to do our bit in order to contribute to the Synodal process that has begun at the level of our diocese.



We then had a question-and-answer session. We were all very grateful to Sr Shalini for her time, availability and efforts in sharing her valuable knowledge of the Synod.

52 Ways to Care for Creation

By Pedro Jiménez

As good Christians and citizens of the world, we want to take care of creation, the gift we have been given by God. We want to manage well the inheritance that will be left to our descendants and truly care for creation.

Following Pope Francis' leadership and the 1.3 billion Catholics who care for creation, Laudato Si' Movement has come up with 52 ways for you, your family and community to pray and take action for God's creation this year.

Of course, you're welcome to swap out your own ideas and mix and match. The Holy Spirit gives us the creativity for the common good!

1. Start reading or re-reading Pope Francis' encyclical Laudato Si'

If you have not read it yet, start with a page a day for a week. If you've already read it, re-read it and pay attention to which parts stand out that maybe didn't the last time you read it. Think about inviting your friends and family to read it with you as well.

2. Participate in or start a Laudato S' Circle

If you have already found sisters and brothers who share your call for an ecological conversation, come together with them and start a Circle. You could also consider inviting other friends and family in your journey.

3. Become a Laudato Si' Animator

If you are already participating in Laudato Si' Movement and you want to lead your community, join the *free* six-week class that equips you with the tools you need to help your community bring Laudato Si' to life!

4. Shop at your local market for fresh food

Start your conversion every day, in every food purchase, in every meal you make. If you buy fresh, seasonal food, you can eat healthier and avoid additives and storage in large refrigerators. If you buy local food, you can avoid costly and polluting transportation and packaging and you will also help support your local community.

5. Save paper

Take care of the forests by recycling as much paper as possible and print only what is necessary.

6. Organise a campaign to clean and take care of public green spaces

For a more welcoming community, you can do activities with the rest of the neighbourhood in your streets, parks, abandoned lots or riverbanks. You can work to create more car-free parks and pedestrian zones in your community or city. You can even try to care for a Laudato Si' community garden.

7. Attend a Laudato Si' Movement prayer gathering

This movement's activism must include the sharing of faith and interior life. Participate with people from all over the world and pray together for God's creation by joining Laudato Si' Movement prayer gatherings throughout the year.

8. Clean the house, school or parish with ecological and biodegradable products

We care for the atmosphere and our health by avoiding chemical compounds that degrade ozone, pollute the air and cause damage to our respiratory system.

9. Conserve the rainforests

Know, listen to and support those who live in forests across the world, especially Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities. Support efforts that work against deforestation by not consuming the products that cause it, connect with like-minded groups and collaborate with other organisations that advocate for such sustainable living.

10. Buy only the clothes you need

Think creatively and be a conscious consumer. Try to know your clothes' origin and how they're created. Repair your own clothes and reject the throwaway culture by sewing and mending your clothes. Shop at second-hand stores.

To continue reading the 52 Ways to Care for Creation, please click [here](#)

Four New Novices Received into Pakistan Unit

On 15 February 2022, four new Novices were received into the Pakistan Unit. We wish them warm congratulations and prayerful best wishes as they begin their journey to becoming Presentation Sisters. May the spirit of Nano guide Reena Mansha, Komal Jamil, Krishna Boota and Asma Arif.



Significant International Dates in March

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

1 March – Zero Discrimination Day



On Zero Discrimination Day on 1 March, we celebrate the right of everyone to live a full and productive life – and live it with dignity. Zero Discrimination Day highlights how people can become informed about and promote inclusion, compassion, peace and, above all, a movement for change. Zero Discrimination Day is helping to create a global movement of solidarity to end all forms of discrimination. On Zero Discrimination Day this year, UNAIDS is highlighting the urgent need to take action to end the inequalities surrounding income, sex, age, health status, occupation, disability, sexual orientation, drug use, gender identity, race, class, ethnicity and religion that continue to persist around the world.

<https://www.unaids.org/en/zero-discrimination-day>

8 March – International Women’s Day



Advancing gender equality in the context of the climate crisis and disaster risk reduction is one of the greatest global challenges of the 21st century. Women are increasingly being recognised as more vulnerable to climate change impacts than men, as they constitute the majority of the world’s poor and are more dependent on the natural resources which climate change threatens the most. At the same time, women and girls are effective and powerful leaders and change-makers for climate adaption and mitigation. They are involved in sustainability initiatives around the world and their participation and leadership results in more effective climate action. Continuing to examine the

opportunities, as well as the constraints, to empower women and girls to have a voice and be equal players in decision-making related to climate change and sustainability is essential for sustainable development and greater gender equality. Without gender equality today, a sustainable future and an equal future remains beyond our reach. This International Women’s Day, let’s claim *Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow.*

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

21 March – International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

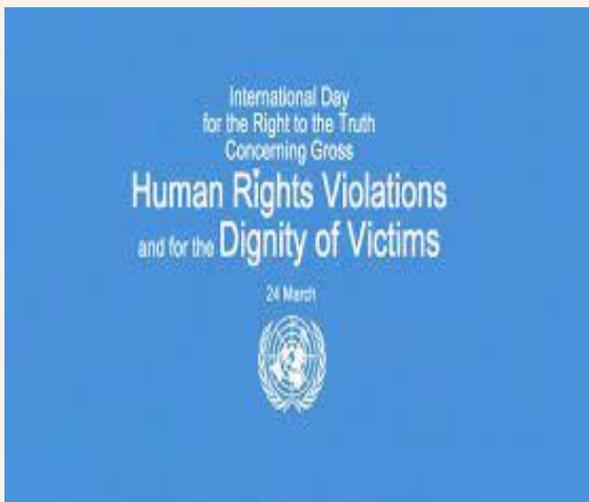


The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is observed annually on the day the police in Sharpeville, South Africa, opened fire and killed 69 people at a peaceful demonstration against apartheid 'pass laws' in 1960. In 1979, the General Assembly adopted a programme of activities to be undertaken during the second half of the Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination. On that occasion, the General Assembly decided that a week of solidarity with the peoples struggling against racism and racial discrimination, beginning

on 21 March, would be organised annually in all States. Since then, the apartheid system in South Africa has been dismantled. Racist laws and practices have been abolished in many countries and we have built an international framework for fighting racism, guided by the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The Convention is now nearing universal ratification, yet, still, in all religions, too many individuals, communities and societies suffer from the injustice and stigma that racism brings.

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

24 March – International Day for the Right to the Truth Concerning Gross Human Rights Violations and for the Dignity of Victims



The right to the truth is often invoked in the context of gross violations of human rights and grave breaches of humanitarian law. The relatives of victims of summary executions, enforced disappearance, missing persons, abducted children, torture, require to know what happened to them. The right to the truth implies knowing the full and complete truth as to the events that transpired, their specific circumstances and who participated in them, including knowing the circumstances in which the violations took place, as well as the reasons for them. On 21 December 2010, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 24 March as the International Day for the Right to Truth Concerning Gross Human Rights Violations and for the

Dignity of Victims. The date was chosen because on 24 March 1980, Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero of El Salvador was assassinated, after denouncing violations of human rights. In a study conducted in 2006 the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights concluded that the right to truth about gross human rights violations and serious violations of human rights law is an inalienable and autonomous right, linked to the duty and obligation of the State to protect and guarantee human rights, to conduct effective investigations and to guarantee effective remedy and reparations.

<https://www.un.org/en/observances/right-to-truth-day>

25 March – International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade



For over 400 years, more than 15 million men, women and children were the victims of the tragic transatlantic slave trade, one of the darkest chapters in human history. Every year on 25 March, the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade offers the opportunity to honour and remember those who suffered and died at the hands of the brutal slavery system. The International Day also aims to raise awareness about the dangers of racism

and prejudice today. In order to more permanently honour the victims, a memorial has been erected at United Nations Headquarters in New York. The unveiling took place on 25 March 2015.

<https://www.un.org/en/events/slaveryremembranceday/>

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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