

Presentation Sisters eNews

April 2024



Welcome to the April issue of eNews. In this issue:

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Our First Profession

Submitted by: Sisters Krishna Boota and Komal Jamil (Pakistan Unit)

12 February 2024 was a great day for us when we offered our lives completely to the Lord. Indeed, it was a joyous occasion filled with blessings and a deep sense of gratitude as we made our First Profession in the chapel of the Motherhouse in Rawalpindi, Pakistan in the presence of our families and community. We are very happy to share our experiences with you through this eNews.



The liturgy for our First Profession was truly meaningful and the beautifully decorated chapel enhanced the whole experience for us. The choir made up of our companions in the novitiate and accompanied by people from the parish was uplifting, especially the Magnificat sung at the end of the ceremony. It was a sacred and solemn moment as we pronounced our vows to the Lord, committing ourselves to a life of service,

witness and devotion. Our hearts were filled with love, reverence and a profound sense of purpose as we took this significant step in our journey as Presentation Sisters. This was symbolised in our receiving a copy of *Our Way of Life* and the Presentation emblem to wear from now on.

In his homily, Fr David Anoosh emphasised the three religious vows:

Ψ To live simply and be poor in spirit.

Ψ To share our love with everyone without any discrimination.

Ψ To walk humbly, to listen to God and act upon God's will.

The presence of our parents and many of the Sisters enhanced how special this day was for us. We value the love, support and guidance of our formators throughout our formation journey and the support of our families throughout that time. They have all been a source of strength and encouragement as we discern our call.

The day was further enhanced with a lovely lunch served in the dining room. It was a time of celebration and appreciation of the happiest moments when we expressed our profound gratitude to all those who accompanied us and those who played a role in making this day memorable and beautiful for both of us.

Through the guidance and teachings of our teachers and the support of our Sisters, we have been helped to shape ourselves and nourish our faith. We extend our heartfelt appreciation and gratitude to all those who have walked alongside us especially our companions, the Motherhouse community and our formators, all of whom offered their love,

support, prayers and encouragement while we were in the novitiate. These special moments will always remind us of the profound grace and joy of our First Profession Day.

Once again, we thank each and all for your good wishes and in a special way for this opportunity to share this experience. Our First Profession has strengthened our commitment to God and has deepened our sense of purpose in serving others in the



footsteps of Nano Nagle. We humbly ask for your continued prayers as we begin the lifelong journey of faith, hope and love. May we be always the source of saving souls in any part of the world. Thank you all very much Sisters for your prayers, best wishes and support on the occasion of our First Profession.

'Marvelous Mission of GSR' Spreads Good News of Sisters' Work

Written by Sr Joyce Meyer for Global Sisters Report



Presentation Sr. Joyce Meyer (second from left), international liaison for Global Sisters Report, meets with, from left, Sr. Francisca Ngozi Uti, Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus in Nigeria; Sr. Hedwig Muse, Little Sisters of Mary Immaculate in Kenya; and Sr. Rosemary Nyirumbe, Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Uganda, during the Women Deliver 2023 Conference held July 17-20 in Rwanda. (GSR photo)

I am not a trained journalist, but as a former English teacher, I have learned so much from being involved with Global Sisters Report about journalism, editing and writing from my colleagues.

It has been a great joy for me to work with Sister-writers these past ten years since Global Sisters Report was launched. Through their columns and stories, new voices of Sisters from around the world are heard every day. The silence that has often shrouded them is broken through and they become visible in new ways.

Sisters can be found in the most remote regions of the globe, serving God and people who would be forgotten without these women. I discovered many of them when I was with the Conrad N. Hilton Fund for Sisters. The United Nations Millennium Goals focused on the *least developed* countries of the world and those became the focus as a funding organisation.

I discovered so many extraordinary situations during those years and all I could do was record them in my reports to the Hilton Fund's Board. Today, Global Sisters Report is a worldwide

news organisation that collects similar extraordinary stories and shares them with our global readers. They are stories of education, health care, social service and pastoral work, from both safe and conflict areas of the world. They are also stories of faith and resiliency, individual and community creativity and resourcefulness and of utter dependence on God.

My particular part of the marvellous mission of GSR is to seek out Sisters from as many countries as I can to write columns about their ministry, their spirituality and religious life. It is challenging for many of the Sisters whose first language is not English, but instead, may speak other languages in Africa, Latin America and Asia. It is daunting and takes courage to translate one's natural thoughts into another language.

So it is not surprising that Sisters hesitate to write. This is often true even for those whose everyday speaking language may be English. I remember when I lived in Zambia where I was teaching, the English required of the students was British. As an American, I had to learn all the usage and meaning differences between American and British words and phrases in order to teach. I also had to assist the students in translating their Zambian language thoughts into English. It was a constant learning experience for me, and this continues as I write and edit.

It isn't only Sisters from other countries or languages who sometimes hesitate to write for Global Sisters Report. US Sisters also at times decline invitations to write, finding it daunting to risk putting thoughts into the written word. I have great admiration for each of the Sisters who have taken the risk to write.

From our beginning years at GSR, all columns needed to be written in English, which left out Sisters from Latin America, Asia and many countries in Africa. We recently overcame the language hurdle for the Spanish-speaking world and now have a special section for them on our website. Our Spanish-speaking journalists, working with international editor, Soli Salgado along with experienced translators who work under the guidance of Sr Helga Leija, also translate stories and columns submitted in Spanish into English, so they are accessible to English readers as well.

Our next goal is to bring more French-speaking Sisters, with their gifts and reflections on religious life and ministries to Global Sisters Report with a French edition. Timing is uncertain, and funding of course, is one challenge we face incorporating other languages into our work.

So, how have I navigated this adventure of recruiting writers and overcoming language issues? The first challenge I usually find is convincing Sisters that they have something to write about. Sisters are extremely modest and frequently do not see what they do every day can become a valuable story to share with others. My job is to convince them that the majority of people in the world have little, if any, idea where some of the countries are where Sisters serve. Their stories enrich others' perspectives of the world. Many people would even be amazed that Sisters are serving families in places of war or conflict. Old images of Sisters often prevail over the reality of today's diverse experiences.

Learning about the world is an important value these stories offer. I remember when I first began working at the Hilton Fund for Sisters, I had moved from Aberdeen, South Dakota to Los Angeles and did not have a travel agent. I found a travel agent in LA who helped me navigate

the new world I had entered. My new life gave her glimpses into countries she had never even heard of. I recall her telling me she went to a site called Exotic Vacations to find a way to get me to a place in the Democratic Republic of Congo where I planned to travel.

Once I have convinced a Sister she has something valuable to share, I ask her to write about it or tell me informally about her ministry that she enjoys and its impact on her life. Once I have an idea about how her story might develop, my next step is to send her a list of questions to which she can respond. From there, she may take the risk to write her own story, or I may assist her in writing her story. Whatever is the way forward, there is an ongoing conversation between us until the story is formed. It is a dialogic process.

If I am the one to write her story from the answers she has sent, I return it to her to make sure I have understood what she wanted me to understand. She makes corrections or additions and returns it to me. I finish it up and send it on to the next level of editing.

As Sisters read others' stories, many gain the courage to write themselves and send stories to me for a first edit. It is exciting, satisfying and a great joy for the Sister who wrote it, and for me, to have her story published worldwide.

In addition to assisting Sisters in their writing, I also write my own reflections. As we prepared for this anniversary, I reviewed the blogs I had written since 2014 and was surprised at the diversity of stories and reflections. I noticed how many of my stories were about different aspects of agriculture. This interest is motivated by the hunger that so many people are suffering in the world today because of the consequences of climate change and farming methods that have degraded our soils. So many Sisters, especially in the Global South, are farmers and are all learning regenerative agriculture methods. They give me hope.

I never dreamed I would be doing this work when Tom Fox, the then-publisher of the National Catholic Reporter, came to ask for a grant so many years ago. I have gained much insight and skill working with first-class journalists. My joy abounds. They work hard writing and editing each others' work and best of all, find great joy in searching out and writing stories about Sisters' lives and ministries, giving them voice and bringing them into the light.

*Ministry to Irish Travellers, Gypsy and Roma Groups
Strengthens My Faith*

Written by Sr Bernadette Healy for Global Sisters Report

I am a Sister of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, working in Nottingham, England, primarily with the Irish Travellers, Gypsy and Roma community. I have a wonderful team of volunteers and co-workers from the diocese who assist me in pastoral work with families, preparing children and youth for baptism, first Communion and Confirmation and adults for marriage. It is a wonderful ministry and very varied, including conducting classes to helping those who cannot read to reply to letters, fill out forms, apply for passports and whatever else might come up.

According to the Traveller Movement organisation in Britain, Irish Travellers are a nomadic group of people from Ireland who have a separate identity, heritage and culture from the community in general. Irish Travellers' presence can be traced to 12th century Ireland, with migrations to Great Britain in the early 19th century. The movement estimates



about 300,000 Gypsy, Sr Bernadette Healy (far left) pictured with a group of Travellers at Westminster Roma and Traveller Cathedral, London people currently live in Britain.

The organisation estimates that Romani gypsies have been in Britain at least since 1515, migrating through Europe from northern India. The name 'gypsy' was given by settled folk who mistook them as Egyptians because of their dark complexion. It is also known that there were Indigenous nomads in Britain when the new arrivals came.

According to the organisation's website, the people live a variety of different lifestyles, some 'on the road' and some living in mobile homes or caravans on council or private sites. Others settle in one place during school periods and travel during Summer; while others live in permanent housing, but retain their culture and traditions.

Most of this community I work with grew up on a particular site, living in mobile homes or caravans. Living conditions are often cold and damp, and outdoor toilets are most common. Outdoor play areas for children are usually non-existent or unhealthy, at times infested with rats.

Living conditions are extremely crowded, so when a young couple marries, they cannot stay with their parents. They move into their own trailer, if lucky, or into a small flat, what we call a bedsit. At least they have a roof over their heads, but it separates them from the community, which is against their culture. Some live in emergency housing for the homeless, waiting for local authorities to help them find housing. Needless to say, it is very stressful for them. A submission in October 2018 to the Development of the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019-2024 states that *travellers are 11 times more likely to become homeless and 22 times more likely to be discriminated [against] by landlords.*

Education is another challenge. Most children I encounter attend primary school to age 11 (75–85%), but at the point of transfer to secondary school, dropout rates are magnified, with only about 20% registering. There is still a cultural pattern of boys staying with their parents to

learn a trade and girls staying home to learn skills for child care and housekeeping, with a belief that it is time to focus on Traveller life and identity. Another reason for not advancing in school is fear of bullying, drugs or promiscuity at the 'big school'.

Living such an alternative lifestyle brings with it the suffering of intense discrimination. When I was on a visit to one family with little income, they shared, *We are treated badly everywhere we go. We are living in awful conditions, and no one wants to help us really.* Another shared, *It's not what people say; at times, they are careful. It's a feeling you get, that look that only travellers would know. The conversation stops. The side looks at each other...it happens everywhere I go.*

I have found The Traveller Movement very helpful in my ministry.

This national charity is committed to the fulfilment of human rights for ethnic minority Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities to achieve equality through self-determination and proactive participation in influencing and shaping policy.

It provides direct support and advocacy across a range of issues, including education, hate crimes and discrimination, and



One of the Traveller families in Leicester, England (photo courtesy of Bernadette Healy for GSR)

provides access to justice through early legal remedies. It also carries on research and policy advocacy and works in partnership with community and volunteer organisations to bring about social change.

The group assisted a family I know who were struggling with their electricity meter. Each week they put aside money for electricity but the local council refused to give them receipts, so they had no idea how much electricity they were using. They also had no running water and the site had not been upgraded since 1985. They described for me the conditions they lived in: *I can't afford to keep the place warm. The second the heater goes off, it is freezing. The children go to bed early with extra blankets. I sit up with a candle rather than turn on the lights because I don't know if I can afford to.* The Traveller Movement stepped in and is working with the council to bring the site up to current living standards.

Mental health is definitely impacted by these harsh conditions. Suicide rates are six times higher than they are in the general population and life expectancy remains much lower. Since Covid, suicide among youth and even children as young as 11 has increased. These young

deaths have a devastating effect on family life, which is overcome by grief. Often, I wonder how in the world these families survive and keep faith.

Gypsies and Travellers are more likely to be self-employed than the general population. The men do driveway paving, home improvement and other industrial-type businesses, including scrap and home trading. Some sell cars, do metal work, paint, or do roofing or plumbing. Management and maintenance of local caravan sites are often well-managed by members of the community. Women often make and sell keychains, bracelets and earrings; resell clothing; and read palms as a form of income to support the family.

My own faith in God has been strengthened and enriched by living and working among these people because of their amazing deep faith and commitment to prayer and companionship. I also feel a strong kinship with our foundress, Nano Nagle, whose commitment sent her out each day to be with those kept poor by unjust systems. I often feel she walks beside me each day as I journey among these people.

Reflections from Thailand

Submitted by: Sr Bindhu Sebastian (Thailand Mission Area)

World Day for Consecrated Life: A Reflection on Our Vocation is...

The image of God that we hear often in the Bible is *God who hears the cry of the people* (Ex. 3:7, Ps. 10:17, Ps. 34:17, Is. 64:24...etc). Moses was called by God because God heard the cry of the Israelites from the slavery of Egypt. *You and I* are called to hear the cry of the people

today...God called us because of someone's cry...Our vocation is not because of our merits, family merits, intelligence or calibre.



God called us to wipe the tears of his people, not bring tears to them. Our call is to be Mystics and Prophets. Only a Mystic can be a missionary, visionary and a prophet.

Our God experience should lead us to the people experience, mountain experiences (retreat, renewal programs) to multitude experiences, Chapel to the streets, fasting to sharing...

God says, *Liberate my people from the slavery*. He cannot tolerate slavery. How do we treat our staff, co-workers, employees...

Jacob says to Esau (Gen. 33:10), *for truly to see your face is like seeing the face of God*. Acts 6:15, *...all who sat in the Sanhedrin saw that Stephen's face is shining like an Angel*.

Can others look at me and you say that seeing the face of you is like seeing the face of God? Or shining like an angel? We are called to follow and proclaim the simple message, love, of a simple man...Jesus of Nazareth.

Pope Francis challenges the mediocre of life by saying, *I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting,*

dirty because it is going to the streets...to the peripheries...to lift up the downtrodden, misfortunate...he invites us to become FIELDSTAFF not to be supervisors.

Gratefully realising the purpose of our call/life, let us strive to...

- Ψ **Walk like Enoch** (Gen. 5:22-24 Noah's Great Grandfather. He walked faithfully with God.)
- Ψ **Believe like Abraham** (The promise of God.)
- Ψ **Fight like Jacob** (Gen 32:28 A man wrestled with him until the break of dawn.)
- Ψ **Dress like Joseph** (Gen. 37:3-4 His tunic represented his favoured position.)
- Ψ **Stretch like Moses** (His staff over the sea, allowing his followers safe passage.)
- Ψ **Conquer like Joshua** (The Lord achieved victory for Joshua & Israel by his authority and supernatural power.)
- Ψ **Lead like Deborah** (Leading the Israelites in a mighty victory to take the land of Canan.)
- Ψ **Influence like Esther** (Esther saves her people, brings about the downfall of their enemy...)
- Ψ **Dance like David** (danced before the Lord with all his might.)
- Ψ **Pray like Elijah** (1 Kings 18:42 bowed himself down to the Earth and put his face between his knees.)
- Ψ **Follow like Elisha** (2 Kings 2:9 Elisha had the faith to ask big things of God.)
- Ψ **Speak like Isaiah** (prediction of the coming of Messiah. Terrifying warnings of judgement and destruction.)
- Ψ **Rebuild like Nehemia** (He gathered the people and equipped and helped them to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem city.)
- Ψ **Loyal like Ruth** (Ruth 16 & 17 – her loyalty was both spiritual and relational.)
- Ψ **Patient like Job** (Job reflects on his despair but consistently remains devout.)
- Ψ **Ponder like Mary** (Lk. 1:29.)
- Ψ **Righteous like Joseph** (Mt. 1:19.)
- Ψ **Preach like Peter** (Acts. 2:14 Empowerment that comes from the Holy Spirit, Peter preached with confidence, conviction, compassion and inspired the crowd.)

- Ψ **Defend our faith like Stephen**
- Ψ **Overcome like Paul** (2 Cor. 4:8-12, 6:3-10, 11:23-28, He was willing to bear the strain and dangers of traveling and proclaiming the Gospel.)
- Ψ **Read the Signs of the time and respond like Nano Nagle** (May the realities disturb and melt our hearts.)
- Ψ **Practice the Talisman of M.K Gandhi** (When we use our resources and make decisions.)

Above all, live, lead and love like Jesus of Nazareth!

Vulnerable...Yet Desire to Become

In God's economy, loss is a gain. The human viewpoint and the Divine are so different. The tension between two perspectives – perspective of hope and hopelessness.

The past month has been a time of loss for us...a vulnerable time. Someone I knew, someone you knew, someone that lived once, has left this earthly home and journeyed to her roots. I was shocked to learn that the person with whom I laughed and spoke is no more. As I was participating in the funeral rites through livestream, so many questions and thoughts surfaced in me and I would like to share them with you.

Death is a natural aspect of life and inevitable to all living things and yet we live as though it is distant, something that happens to others. I cry, you cry and soon we forget it and carry on with our ordinary lives – no shift or awakening happens. It teaches us that life is transient but it is worth living positively. It reminds us that we are interdependent. It is easy to take those who are with us for granted. We fail to invest in relationships. In time of farewell we realise that how deeply we are connected. We are so busy chasing our routine goals. We never stop to appreciate or encourage relationships.

Taken from the poem by Rabindranath Tagore

When I am dead

Your tears will flow, but I won't know,

cry with me now instead.

You'll send flowers, but I won't see,

Send them now instead.

You will say words of praise, but I won't hear,

Praise me now instead.

You'll forgive my faults, but I won't know,

So forget them now instead.

*You'll miss me then, but I won't feel,
Meet me now instead.
You'll wish you could have spent more time with me,
Spend it now instead.
When you hear I am gone, you'll find your way to me
To pay condolence but we haven't spoken in years,
Look, listen and reply to me now.*

Let the death of our dear ones serve as an awakening call for us to examine our lives...

Life is short and we only live once. Let's determine to enjoy the presence of those whom God gave us and invest in relationships that last for a lifetime. Hearing a random compliment can brighten a person's day. We must appreciate every achievement and efforts others make in life as they strive for better results.

Our past is important from which we learn. The future is important to work towards and always we fail to live, or the present is out of our minds. There is no 'baggage registration or services' for our last journey. We will be screened thoroughly during the 'check-in' process. So, let us forget and forgive the silly comments and day to day issues. Learning to live to the fullest is the important step we have to make. Let us give our energy to what matters most and do and say everything more consciously, that is the best opportunity to show kindness and express love.

Alone I can say, but together we can talk.

Alone I can enjoy, but together we can celebrate.

Alone I can smile, but together we can laugh.

We are nothing without each other. I am vulnerable and so are you. Let us embrace vulnerability as possibility.

Significant International Dates in May

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



15 May – International Day of Families

In late 2022, the world's population reached eight billion people. Characterised by the United Nations Secretary-General as a 'milestone in human development', this landmark event illustrates major advancements in health extending human lifespans. Population growth is to continue albeit at a decreasing rate. It is projected to reach 9.8 billion in 2050 and 11.2 in 2100, rising concerns about the prospects of sustainable urbanisation and management of climate change. Demographic change is one of the most important megatrends impacting our world and the life and well-being of families worldwide.

Demographic trends are mostly shaped by fertility and mortality patterns. Declining fertility rates result in benefits for families as they are more able to invest in their children's health and education which in turn helps with poverty reduction and better socio-economic development.

<https://www.un.org/en/observances/international-day-of-families>

20 May – World Bee Day



We all depend on the survival of bees. Bees and other pollinators, such as butterflies, bats and hummingbirds are increasingly under threat from human activities. Pollination is, however, a fundamental process for the survival of our ecosystems. Nearly 90% of the world's wild flowering plant species depend entirely, or at least in part, on animal pollination, along with more than 75% of the world's food crops and 35% of global agricultural land. Not only do pollinators contribute directly to food security, but they are key to conserving biodiversity. To raise awareness of the importance of pollinators,

the threats they face and their contribution to sustainable development, the UN designated 20 May as World Bee Day.

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

Biological Diversity Day

22nd May 2024



22 May – International Day for Biological Diversity

As the global community is called to re-examine our relationship to the natural world, one thing is certain: despite all our technological advances we are completely dependent on healthy and vibrant ecosystems for our water, food, medicines, clothes, fuel,

shelter and energy, just to name a few. This involves respecting, protecting and repairing our biological wealth. Undoubtedly, this year is special in terms of biodiversity conservation. We now have a renewed sense of hope with the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, a historic agreement signed in December 2022 that sets goals and concrete measures to stop and reverse the loss of nature by 2050.

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



29 May – International Day of UN Peacekeepers

For over 75 years, United Nations peacekeepers have worked to save and change lives in the world's most fragile political and security situations. Since 1948, more than two million uniformed and civilian personnel have helped countries to transition from war to peace. Working alongside local communities, peacekeepers help advance political solutions, prevent

conflict, protect civilians, strengthen human rights and the rule of law and build sustainable peace. The challenges faced by peacemakers are greater than ever, with rising global tensions, more complex conflict and a proliferation of misinformation and disinformation, which impeded their work and threatens their safety. Despite these obstacles, peacekeepers persevere, alongside many partners, in the collective pursuit of peace.

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

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