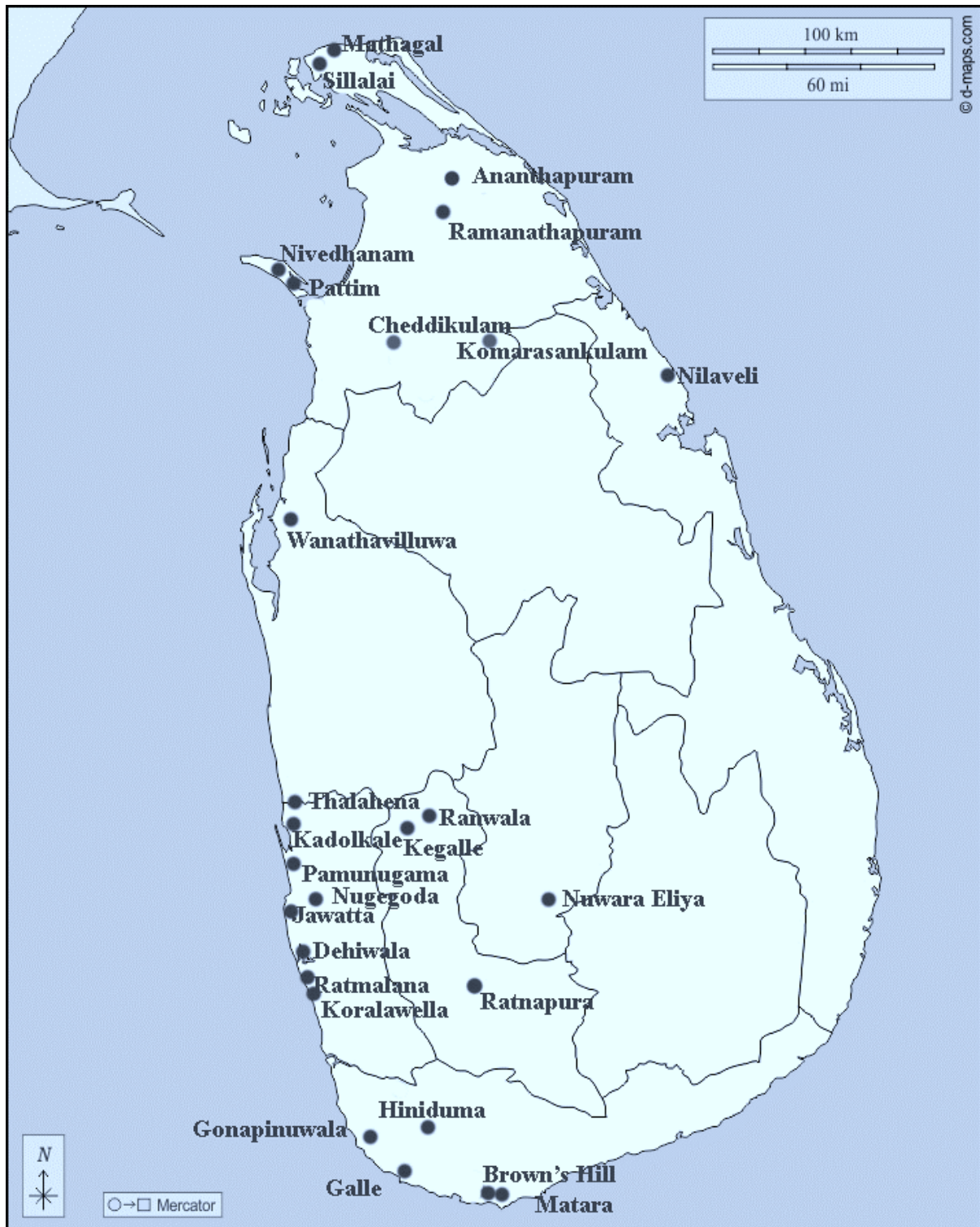


125th Anniversary
Rejoice with Grateful Hearts

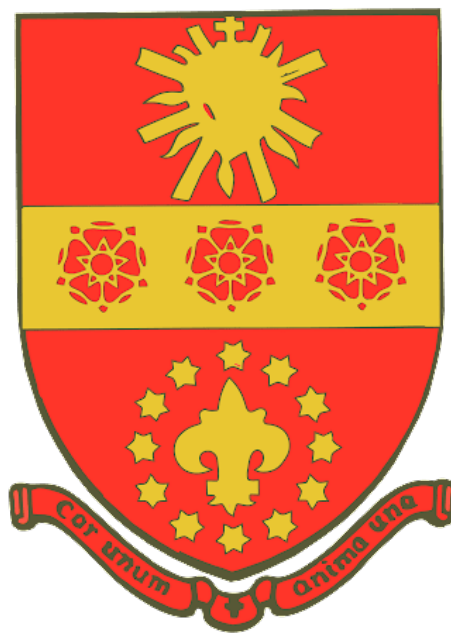




The presence of SCJMs in Sri Lanka

The Congregation of the
Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary
Sri Lanka

1896 - 2021



2021

Colombo Catholic Press



Canon Peter Joseph Triest
(1760-1836)



Dedication

At the 125th Jubilee Celebration of
The Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary in Sri Lanka

Publication of the Jubilee Souvenir

“REJOICE WITH GRATEFUL HEARTS”

is dedicated to our Founder

Cannon Peter Joseph Triest

(St. Vincent of Belgium)

and

to all the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary

In appreciation of their dedicated service

“Rejoice with Grateful Hearts”

We the members of the Editorial Committee comprising

Sr. Ajitha Fernando

Sr. Tharsille Savarimuthu

Sr. Borgia Mudalige

Sr. Pradeepika Perera

Sr. Chandrika Liyanarachchi

Extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the Sisters for their valuable contribution and our indebtedness to all the contributors who put effort in the publication of this Souvenir.

Let us rejoice with Grateful Hearts as we mark the

125th Anniversary of our Religious Congregation

The Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary

May God Bless you all!

2021.11.24

Preface

Ring out O bells of Lanka... Ring out and wide proclaim the message of our heritage shall glorify our aim.

It is with great pride and pleasure that we present to you “Rejoice with Grateful Hearts” the Souvenir of the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary.

Let us thank and praise the Lord our God with grateful hearts for the abundant blessings, guidance and protection given to our Sisters throughout our journey since our humble beginning on this rich soil of the Pearl of the Indian Ocean. With the Grace of God, we have been rendering enormous services to the poor and needy in our beautiful country for the 125 years.

This jubilee is truly another important milestone during our lifetime which will be recorded in golden letters in the History of the Sisters of Charity. As we ring out bells glorifying and praising the Lord our God for all the wonders done to the poor in and through us throughout our journey, especially during the challenging times of Civil War and Tsunami. Let us continue to pray that with the Grace of God, we will be faithful to our mission, even by risking our very life following the wonderful life examples of our great Pioneers.

We also take this opportunity to extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the Bishops and the Clergy for all the blessings and support given to us in our effort to reveal people of our country the way to God Who is Love. Finally, we would gratefully thank Anthony Paris and Avishka Mario Senewiratne for all their efforts in bringing this souvenir to fruition.

“Deus Caritas Est”

God Bless you!

Sr. Ajitha Fernando

Sr. Tharsille Savarimuthu

Sr Borgia Mudalige

Sr Pradeepika Perera

Sr Chandrika Liyanarachchi

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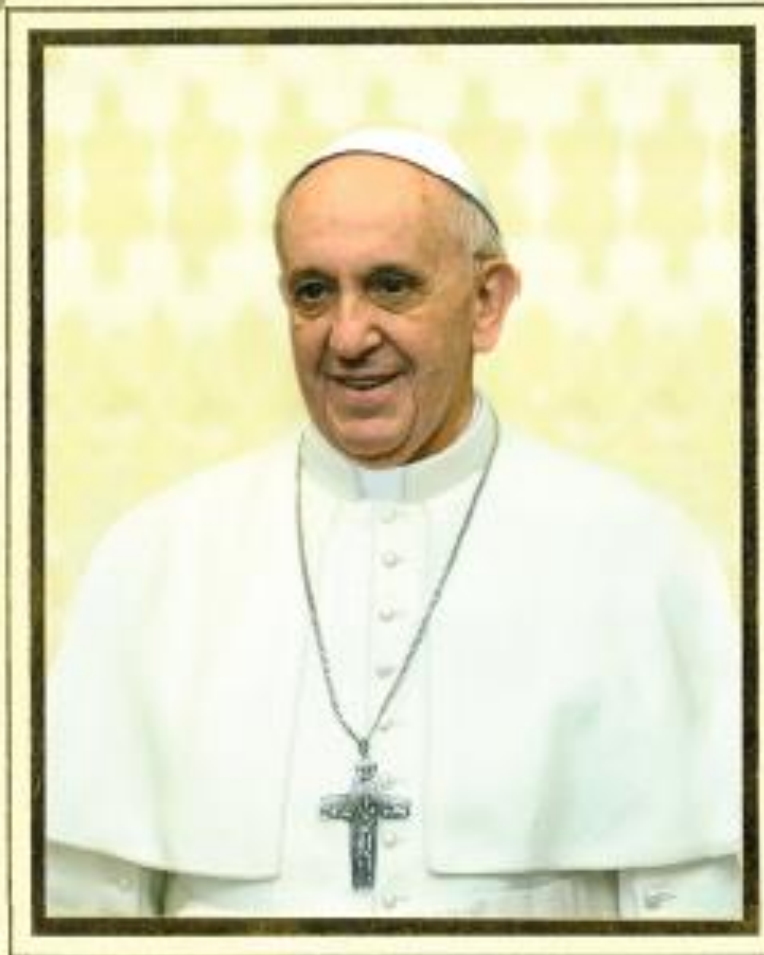
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The Holy Father Francis

cordially imparts the requested
Apostolic Blessing to the

Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary

on the occasion of the 125th Jubilee Anniversary
invoking through the intercession of the Virgin Mary
an abundance of Divine graces

May 15, 1896/2021

In the Holy See, Vatican, on 15.5.2021

*Card. Leonardo Scola
Secretary of State*





APOSTOLIC NUNCIATURE
IN SRI LANKA

220, Baudhaloka Mawatha
Colombo 7 - SRI LANKA

I am happy to write this message for the Jubilee Souvenir to commemorate 125 years of the presence of the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary in Sri Lanka. It is heartening to note that they have well established themselves and serving in seven dioceses of Sri Lanka at present. All glory and honour belongs to God Almighty for He has made their mission to flourish over the years.

Bearing the motto "*Deus Caritas Est*", the dedicated sisters have borne witness that "God is love" through their apostolate. Their acts of charity are very well expressed in their work among the elderly, children in special needs and orphans. The contribution of the sisters in the field of education and their active participation in parish work too cannot be ignored. Thus the long and fruitful services of the sisters have been a boon to the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka.

Dear Sisters, as Pope Paul VI recalled in the Apostolic Exhortation on Renewal of Religious Life, *Evangelica Testificatio*, "The joy of always belonging to God is an incomparable fruit of the Holy Spirit, and one which you have already tasted. Filled with the joy which Christ will preserve in you even in the midst of trials, learn to face the future with confidence. ... Seeing you and the life you lead, the young will be able to understand well the appeal that Jesus never ceases to make among them" (*Evangelica Testificatio*, 29th June 1971, no. 55). I am sure that you fit well into this category.

On this great occasion, I am glad to congratulate the Sisters on their wonderful work for the Lord in Sri Lanka, including also many years of unalloyed services at this Apostolic Nunciature.

I extend my prayerful wishes that the apostolate carried out by them be continued, bearing much fruit in Sri Lanka.

Colombo, 29th April 2021.

+Archbishop Brian Udaigwe,
Apostolic Nuncio.





Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith

MESSAGE OF FELICITATION

On this momentous occasion of the 125th Jubilee celebration of the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary of the Province of Sri Lanka, I wish to address this message of greetings and best wishes to all the Sisters along with the Provincial Superior, Rev. Sr. Ajitha Fernando.

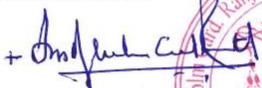
It is in the year 1896 that the first five Sisters of the Congregation reached our shores in Galle and initiated their mission especially reaching out to the children and their education. Gradually they, by the Grace of God, expanded in numbers with the growth of indigenous vocations and by now have expanded to reach out to many other dioceses in Sri Lanka.

We congratulate the Sisters who have continued to serve the people of Sri Lanka with great dedication and selfless commitment in witnessing to the love of God in the midst of many sacrifices and challenges. We remember specially the Sisters who are no more with us but have been the pioneers of the ideals they represented being animated by the spirit of their founder Rev. Fr. Peter Joseph Triest.

I wish the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary God's abundant blessings in their future mission. Our beautiful Island home Sri Lanka is facing many challenges in its journey to true peace, progress and prosperity. It is a time of trial and pain affecting most of our people and they need to feel even more convincingly that God's love is with them. You, dear Sisters, need to reflect that love and make it become incarnate among the people so that their lives may be transformed and empowered.

I wish you all such a strong spirit of commitment and witness giving hope and joy to all who meet you. May the Lord Jesus who showed us how to make our lives become a tangible expression of God's love, be your guide always.

Ad Multos Annos!


✉ **Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith**
Archbishop of Colombo
21st June 2021



Archbishop's House, Borella, Colombo 08, Sri Lanka.

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Most Rev. Dr. Raymond Wickramasinghe
Bishop of Galle

"TOTALLY FOR CHRIST"



Bishop's House,
Kaluwella,
Galle,
Sri Lanka.

Greetings from the Diocese of Galle

I wish to send greetings and prayerful wishes to you, Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary, for the 125th Anniversary (1896-2021) of your Congregational Missionary presence in Sri Lanka. Your humble beginning in Sri Lanka was from the diocese of Galle. Our First Bishop late Joseph Van Reeth, SJ, having recognized the great need of a Women Religious presence in his diocese invited your sisters to be in Sri Lanka and hence your first community was planted in the City of Galle. Not only that, Bishop Van Reeth also requested your community to train an Indigenous group of Sisters of a new congregation which he was going to found. Yes, the first fruits of that labour is the Sisters of the Holy Angels, now spread also in some countries.

Now, after 125 years of your presence, the Sri Lankan Church join you in thanking God for the growth and the expansion of your religious family in number of dioceses in Sri Lanka and abroad. Your dedicated services primarily in education, then in the parish pastoral ministry, caring of elders, special children/adults and also a unique service in the Prisons.

The Holy Mother the Church over a century has looked up to you and encouraged you for your contribution in building up the Kingdom of God. You are a strong part of the Church, where you share in the same salvific mission of Christ. Through your consecrated life, you have challenged the life of the present day world, which has been falling into the pray of materialism and consumerism. After 125 years, I trust, that you have great days ahead, to do a thorough soul searching with the guidance and whispering of the Holy Spirit to understand and see where you are as a missionary religious family at this present historic moment. Your deliberations on Contemplation, Apostolate and Leadership should keep your focus and bring the young generations – Sisters, alive, active and authentic.

The presence of your Sisters has been a great blessing to our diocese and to Sri Lanka. My humble prayer for you is that you may be blessed with the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to read, understand and interpret the signs of the time as you continue to serve the Kingdom of God. May our Lady of Matara accompany you with her maternal care.

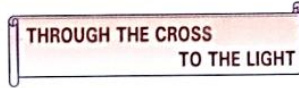
"The Lord is good; his love is eternal and his faithfulness lasts forever". (Ps. 100)

+ 
+ Raymond Wickramasinghe
Bishop of Galle





Bishop Cletus Chandrasiri Perera O.S.B
Bishop of Ratnapura



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SISTERS OF CHARITY OF JESUS AND MARY, A GIFT TO THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

It is with great joy that I write this message to the Jubilee Souvenir, marking the 125th Anniversary of the Presence and Mission of the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary, in Sri Lanka.

I have been closely associated with the Sisters of Charity, as they are commonly known, over the past fourteen years of my Episcopate as Bishop of Ratnapura. I have been greatly impressed by their spirit of dedication to their mission. Their presence is a valuable asset to the Diocese of Ratnapura in many ways. Their commitment to the Apostolate to the elders, poor, abandoned children, and differently able adults, youth and children. to mention just a few, has been unquestionably an essential need of the hour in Society today. They take care of the ones who have no one to take care of.

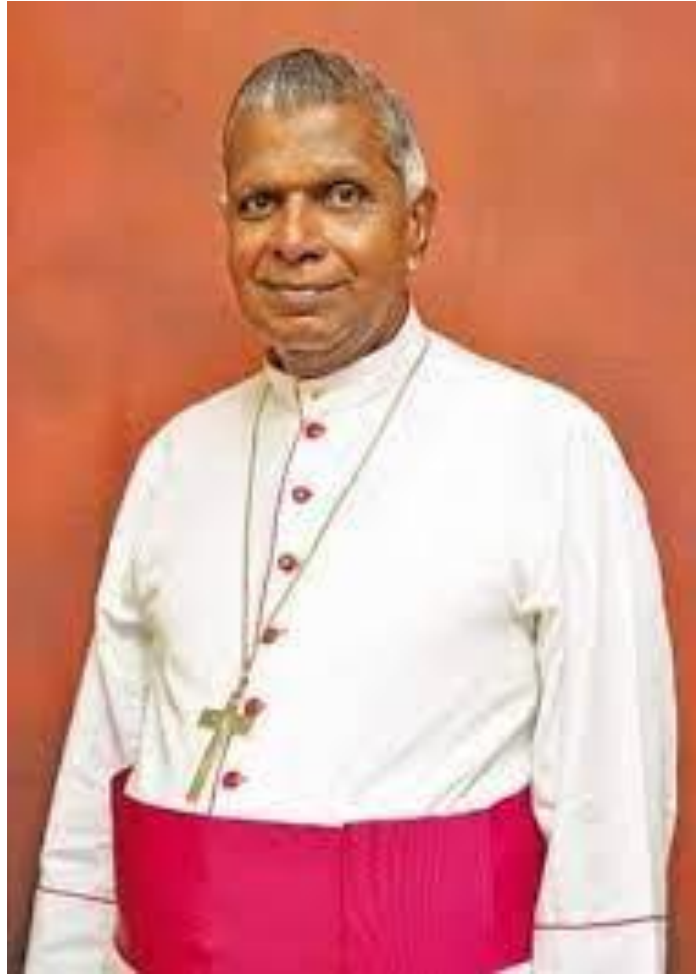
On this historic occasion of the 125th Anniversary of their Presence and Mission in Sri Lanka I am overwhelmed with joy to join the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary in gratefully thanking and praising the Almighty God for the wonders He has accomplished and continues to accomplish in the Church and our Motherland, Sri Lanka

While wishing them a joyous Jubilee and assure them of my prayers that the Lord of the Harvest may send them more laborers to continue their Presence and Mission in Sri Lanka and the rest of the world.

Bishop Cletus Chandrasiri Perera OSB

Bishop of Ratnapura





Bishop Vianney Fernando
Bishop of Kandy



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I am pleased to learn that the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary is due to mark an important milestone of their presence in Sri Lanka namely the 125th Jubilee Anniversary.

Over the past 125 years their presence in our country has drawn many blessings upon the Church and the community through the indefatigable missionary Labours of a galaxy of Sisters of Charity.

In particular, mention must be made about the beautiful work they have done and are doing for the differently abled children specially the mentally handicapped.

On this happy occasion all of us join them in thanking God for numerous blessings that they received by way of vocations and the privilege given to them to love and serve the Lord among the poorest of the poor.

It is our fervent prayer and wish that the jubilee anniversary will be a "Kairos moment", for the Sisters of Charity towards strive for greater heights of sanctity and zeal in the service of the Lord in accordance with the Charism of their Founder.

Bishop Vianney Fernando,
Bishop of Kandy





Most Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Fernando
Bishop of Mannar
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MESSAGE OF FELICITATION FROM THE BISHOP OF MANNAR

It is my joy to pen these few words of felicitation for the souvenir to mark the 125 years' celebrations of the Foundation of the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary in Sri Lanka. A hundred and twenty five years of committed service rendered by the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary to the people of our country in the field of education and integral formation is indeed beyond expression in human words.

Teaching is one of the triple functions that Jesus our Lord exercised on this earth. The Sisters had been with extra-ordinary commitment performing this noble task of teaching in the foot steps of their Master and Lord. We remember them all with deep sentiments of respect and gratitude.

When we look at the history it was Bishop Joseph Van Reeth S. J., the first Bishop of Galle, who invited the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary to begin their mission here in Sri Lanka. Accordingly, Mother Bernadette Van Reeth, own sister of the Bishop and the Mother General of the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary sent five Sisters to begin their mission in our country in the year 1896 November 24th at Galle. Then they started the Sacred Heart Convent in the same year and began their services to the people in the country. Rev. Sr. William was the Head Mistress of the School and did a yeoman service in the field of education. In 1908 the Sisters began St. Mary's Convent, Matara and St. Joseph's Convent at Kegalle in 1909. Then in the year 1924 they started St. Therese of the Child Jesus Convent at Ratnapura. At present the Sisters have spread their wings to 28 locations all over Sri Lanka and 1 in the Philippines.

The Sisters first came to the North in the year 1975 at the request of the late Bishop, Most Rev. Dr. Deogupillai, the Bishop of Jaffna and established a community at Cheddikulam. In 1987 the Sisters began a community at Pattim, Mannar and in 1992 they started a Home for the Elders at Pattim. In 2005 the Sisters began a Formation House "Nivedanam" at Pattim. We in the Diocese of Mannar are particularly grateful to the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary for the yeoman Service they have rendered in our Diocese. The care given to the war victims, education of the children, the care for the orphans, the elderly, the poor, the mentally ill and the various Community Development Programmes in the Mannar and Vavuniya Areas have been very precious and priceless. The Sisters carried out their apostolates amidst very difficult circumstances.

All those who had passed through the formation of the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary and their Colleges have adorned our communities in mother Lanka and abroad. The Congregation surely is proud of them all. All these glories of the past are a challenge to the present Community to continue to tread this noble path to their perfection. I wish the Provincial and all the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary, God's continued protection and guidance.

Most Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Fernando
Bishop of Mannar – Sri Lanka.



"Rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith"



Rt. Revd. Dr. Justin B Gnanapragasam
Bishop of Jaffna



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20.05.2021

Message from the Bishop of Jaffna

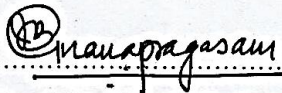
I am indeed very happy to give my warm prayers and blessings on the occasion of the 125th Jubilee Anniversary of the Congregation of Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary of their presence in Sri Lanka. The Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary came to our Diocese in the year 1995 at the invitation of Rt. Revd. Dr. Thomas Savundranayagam, the then Bishop of Jaffna, and started their apostolate in Ramanathapuram. Initially, there were three Revd. Sisters who started the mission of teaching, pastoral care and medical assistance to the people.

It was a time when the civil war between Army and LTTE was mounting very high, and the Revd. Sisters faced many displacements due to this but continued their teaching and pastoral care in very unsuitable conditions. Their sense of dedications and service to the people were very commendable.

The Charity Sisters were also invited to serve in Mathagal Parish in 2004 and in Iranaipalai in 2019. A few Sisters volunteered to serve at an Elderly Home in Sillalai and assist in the pastoral work of that Parish.

May God continue to bless the Congregation for many more years to continue their service to God and His people.

Yours devotedly in the Lord & M I,

+ 

Rt. Revd. Dr. Justin B. Gnanapragasam
Bishop of Jaffna



I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. Jn. 10:10





DIOCESE OF TRINCOMALEE

Rt. Rev. Dr. Christian Noel Emmanuel
Bishop of Trincomalee

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2021.05.18

Message of Felicitation

I am extremely happy to write a message of Felicitation on the occasion of 125th Jubilee Year of the services of the Congregation of Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary in Sri Lanka.

Sisters of Charity have been rendering yeomen service in different parts of Sri Lanka. "Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News to all creation" (Mk 16:15) is the command given by Jesus to his disciples before he ascended to the Heavenly Father. The mandate given by Jesus is carried out throughout history in different forms. "A new commandment I give you, love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also must love one another" (Jn13:34). Jesus showed the love of the Heavenly Father throughout his life through acts of love and mercy. He showed his love by hanging on the cross. He invites us to show his love through our attitude, words and life. Sisters of charity have been sharing God's love through their service to the poor, needy and marginalized. I appreciate their service at Nilaveli in Trincomalee to the parentless children – taking care of their needs specially education and giving them hope for a better future.

Having

"Deus Caritas est" – God is love – as their slogan they have been involved in nursing, caring for special and parentless children and pastoral ministry bringing hope and prosperity to those whom they serve.

I thank and appreciate the Provincial and all the Sister of Charity for their services to the community. I wish them God's numerous blessings to continue their mission with vigour and enthusiasm.

+ Ch. Emmanuel

Rt. Rev. Dr. Christian Noel Emmanuel,
Bishop of Trincomalee.



"All things to all people"





Rt. Rev. Dr. Valence Mendis
Bishop of Chilaw.

Bishop's House,
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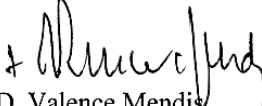
Message of the Bishop of Chilaw

It is with immense joy that I write this message as the Sisters of Charity celebrate the 125th Anniversary of Presence in Sri Lanka. It is indeed an occasion to thank and praise God for the wonderful blessings that God has showered upon you during these long years.

The involvement and commitment of the Sisters of Charity in different apostolates have always been very much appreciated in the Diocese of Chilaw particularly in the Parish of Wanathavilluwa. The Sisters have shown a great concern for the poor and the downtrodden and they have opted to a radically simple way of life in the diocese of Chilaw. In this way they have been able to be a vibrant witness of God's love and tender care for His people.

Their generous contribution and support towards the Sri Lankan Church is praiseworthy. Various initiatives that have been taken to bring the faithful closer to the Word of God has helped a great deal to promote the Small Christian Communities in many parishes where the Gospel is proclaimed and believers are formed and sent to renew the earth as Jesus commissioned. They have molded thousands of children to become useful citizens in our country by way of their involvement in the field of education including primary education.

As you celebrate the 125th Jubilee of your Presence in Sri Lanka I wish God's abundant Blessings upon all the Charity Sisters. I pray that our Heavenly Father may continue to bless you in accomplishing your charism 'To love God and Neighbour'.


+ D. Valence Mendis,
Bishop of Chilaw.
16th April 2021



Message of the Superior General - Brussels

It is with a feeling of immense joy and gratitude to God that I recall to mind the 125th year of the SCJM presence and service in Sri Lanka, a land of infinite beauty and goodness.

The 125 years of this journey began with that one heroic step taken by the first five valiant missionaries from Europe who arrived in Galle on 24 November 1896. It was an act of daring faith, a launch into the unknown, a spirit of indomitable courage and determination. Their presence initiated a process of transformation that continues to have its illuminating impact on the life and history of the country!

From the outset you, the SCJMs of Sri Lanka, were unstoppable! The pioneers and others who joined them later as well as their Sri Lankan counterparts lived out their call to be a good “neighbour”, touching the hearts of countless women, men and children in almost every part of the country. Starting from educating the girl children, a dire need of the time, the power of the SCJM Charism and the spirit of our Founder came alive in the country in and through the presence and services of every one of you.

In the course of time, the country sailed through up-lifting and challenging waves of growth and prosperity, war and peace, success and failure. However, as a plant matures into a full-grown tree through its diverse exposures to the elements of nature, the province has matured through the ups and downs of its life over the past 125 years. Every one of you and every leadership team has contributed, each in a unique manner to this growth. This story of your birth and ongoing becoming is worth celebrating and the whole family of the SCJM the world over is with you in joy and gratitude.

The glorious history of your province calls you today to a greater responsibility. The present context of our world and country- theCovid-19 pandemic, climate change, moral deterioration, weakening of spiritual values, growing poverty, to mention a few –leaves so many of our sisters and brothers “by the roadside”. Just as your pioneers were called upon to read and respond to the signs of their times, today you are called upon to do the same in your own context. This is where the story of the Good Samaritan comes alive for us. In the words of our Holy Father Pope Francis, “The parable eloquently presents the basic decision we need to make in order to rebuild our wounded world. In the face of so much pain and suffering, our only course is to imitate the Good Samaritan” (FT/67).

The jubilee of the SCJM presence in the country is a good time to reflect on our call to be a Good Samaritan and to make bold and daring decisions for the future, just as our pioneers did 125 years ago. “SCJM, do you love me? Feed my sheep!” is the call of our GC/17, inviting us to take an active part in renewing and restoring our troubled world and abused planet.

On this occasion of the jubilee of the SCJM presence and service in the country, I congratulate every SCJM in Sri Lanka, past and present, for your participation in the mission of our Congregation in the country and in the Church. Mahatma Gandhi once said: “A small body of determined spirits fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of history.” You have done just that! Keep going!

May God continue to bless you lavishly and walk with you every step of your way into newer horizons of your presence and service!

United in the spirit of *Cor Unum Anima Una*,

Sr. Lucy Jacob Palliam Pallithura
Superior General
Sisters of Charity of J M



Povincial Superior

Quasquicentennial Jubilee Message

With humble and grateful heart, I admit that it is an honour and privilege bestowed on me to present a message on the Occasion of the Quasquicentennial Jubilee of our Presence in Sri Lanka.

A jubilee year is explained in the Bible as; “In the year of jubilee each of you shall return to his property”. (Lev: 25/13(RSV)”. It is a year we take time off to look back on the journey and return home; to our beginnings. God Almighty is extending the invitation for us the SCJMs in Sri Lanka to return to our beginnings; the Charism of our Congregation; to recall and reflect the path that our Pioneers have journeyed.

Our Founder Canon P. J. Triest says; “... we can look up gratefully and lovingly to the ONE who is the foundation of our lives just as children will show gratitude and love to their parents”. Therefore, with a grateful heart we look up to God Almighty for His faithful journey with the Sisters of Charity from the 24th November 1896 up to today. In all peaks and valleys of life, HE was the guiding hand and our inspiration.

We are grateful to the then Bishop of Galle; Most Revd. Dr. Van Reeth who invited the Congregation through his sister and our Mother General Sr. Bernadette of that era, to serve in his Diocese.

We proudly remember the first five Sisters of charity who were very bold and courageous to step into the unknown and planted the seed of our Charism in the soil of the Pearl of the Indian Ocean.

May the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary be blessed abundantly to serve the People of God through which we reveal God’s love to all. We may be strong in faith to go up the mountains; fearless to be prophetic and to proclaim the Good News and to say “Here is your God”. (Isaiah 40:9)

May our Blessed Mother Mary cover us with Her mantle of love and protect us for another hundred years and more.

May the blessings and love of our dear Founder be with all of us.

“AD MULTOS ANNOS!”

Sr. Ajitha Fernando S.C.J.M.

Provincial Superior

CREST



COAT OF ARMS OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF JESUS AND MARY

Description:

The shield, in gothic style, is divided into three parts from the top down. The first and the most important part (the CHIEF as it is called) represents, on a red background, a wounded heart, surmounted by a cross and flames and radiating light. The whole is in gold (the wound of the heart is red).

The central part (the PESSE) represents three red roses on a gold band. The third and lower part (the NOMBRIL) bears a golden lily in full bloom surrounded by 12 golden stars with six points, the field or background of the shield is red. Below, there is a

The structure

We give a detailed outline to indicate how one must construct exactly the shield. It is important to respect the shape of the shield and of the different symbols used in its construction, as well as the proportions of the 3 parts and the symbols.

To simplify the work, we reproduce the contours of the coat of arms in 3 different sizes so that eventually one will need only to transfer or trace.

Colours:

One should try to find a red which resembles fig. 6. As near as possible. On the other hand, if it is reproduced only

Gothic scroll with the motto: *COR UNUM ANIMA UNA*. In terms of heraldry, we describe the coat of arms as follows:

The central position – the PESSE – is filled by golden band charged with three wild roses in red, accompanied in the CHIEF by the symbol of the Sacred Heart, a wounded heart, inflamed, radiant, and surmounted by a cross. The lower position – the NORMAL – bears a golden fleur – de – lys encircled by 12, six pointed golden stars. The field of the shield is red.

in black, the colours must be designated in the conventional heraldic symbols: for gold: black dots; for red: vertical lines (fig.5)

Significance

The colours used are gold and red. From the heraldic point of view, they symbolize perfection: Mental: gold: Enamel: red. From the point of view of significance, these colours are rich in symbolism: Gold signifies faith, strength, justice, generosity, goodness, tenacity, power, wisdom, intelligence, judgment, maturity of the Spirit etc.

Red signifies: Courage, valour, intrepidity, martyrdom, heroism, etc.

The design:

1st part: At the Centre of the upper part (the CHIEF) we see the wounded Heart of Jesus, surmounted by a cross with flames radiating from it. This symbolizes Christ and more particularly his love. It signifies also the ideal of the Congregation: works of Charity following the example of Jesus and recalls the primitive text of the Holy rule: "The Sisters of Charity, united in the heart of Jesus.....". But it is even more; just Christ's heart radiates love, the Sisters of Charity must radiate this love through their life and works.

2nd part: A gold band cuts right across the red background of the shield and superimposed on it are three red roses.

The red background represents the land of exile and struggle; the gold band is the golden pathway which those devoted to works of mercy trace, not only in this world of exile and strife (represented by the red background), but also in their own lives. Their love blossoms into three roses, identical in shape and colour, since the love that gave them, birth is one and the same, but each representing a different field in the same, but each representing a different field in which that love finds expression: TEACHING, NURSING, MISSIONS.

3rd part: The lily surrounded by twelve stars symbolizes the Virgin and reminds us of a part of our title "Sisters of Charity of Jesus AND Mary" and our programme: to obtain through a loving union with our Lady that she blesses our works and leads us to Jesus offering Him our humble efforts and keeping us in His Love.

The lily can equally signify the purity of our life, and the crown of stars, the cloister which protects this purity.

The Motto:

The role of the motto is precisely to set an ideal and a programme. Our Motto: "ONE HEART AND ONE SOUL" quoted in the special rules, art.318, indicated our ideal of life and our programme, not only in what concerns the interior life of the Congregation, but also its apostolate.

The Sisters of Charity must excel in Charity. They will, therefore, practise this virtue among themselves as perfectly as possible, so that it may be said of them, as it was of the first Christians: "They have only one heart and one soul". It is with this charity drawn from the heart of Christ that "one in heart and soul", they will work for the extension of the kingdom of God and for His greater glory.

The sign

DEUS CARITAS EST



The Sisters wear the cross with the inscription

"DEUS CARITAS EST" (GOD IS LOVE)

as a sign of their belonging to the Congregation.

The Founding Sisters



Sr. Amelia, Louise Maria Janssens (Belgian),
Sr. Alberta, Julienne Anne Donny (Belgian),
Sr. Mary William Charlotte Josephine Brennan (Irish),
Sr. Alexandra, Marie Odile Cooreman (Belgian),
Sr. Marcia, Irma Maria Bossaert (Belgian).

General Chapter 2017



GC/17 Logo: An Explanation

“SCJM, do you love me? ... Feed my sheep!” is a question and a directive that occurs within a post-resurrection scene (Jn.21:15-17). Jesus, having experienced the vulnerabilities of the human condition, is now able to identify himself with our own vulnerabilities. Peter, who also had hit the rock-bottom of his own vulnerability, is now revitalized and strengthened by the forgiving love of Jesus. He can now be entrusted with a mission directed towards the most vulnerable. The logo of GC/17 is a depiction of this reality.

The various elements of the logo can be seen as representing multiple layers of meaning and significance. Each one of us can find in it an inspiration, a call, a challenge...

Perhaps the most striking feature of the logo is the central image of a human figure holding a lamb in an embrace, at once portraying strength and vulnerability, warmth and care, dependence and surrender, love and compassion, tenderness and security... It evokes in us different images:

The image of the Father holding the Son, the Lamb of God, sent out to redeem the world to its original beauty, goodness and harmony;

The image of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, holding the weakest in his arms and inviting Peter to “feed my sheep” as “I have shown you”

The image of Peter embracing the most vulnerable and loving them as “I have loved you”;

Every SCJM, “being another Christ” embracing the weak and the wounded in compassion and tenderness;

The image of being a contemplative in action: immersed in God’s love and involved in the mission of God

The two colorful figures with up-lifted arms can be seen as a representation of our world: our sisters and brothers in need, irrespective of color, creed, gender, race or nationality. In the experience of being “my sheep” and cared for through our mission of being “another Christ” in the diversity of our context, they are able to move on to newer horizons of enhanced life, greater freedom, deeper joy and heightened enthusiasm.

The encompassing hand, emanating care and concern, compassion and tenderness, strength and protection, safety and security, can immediately be attributed to the comforting and convincing presence of the loving Father, holding up the entire world, especially the vulnerable. It is also

reminiscent of the accompanying presence of Jesus and the confirming presence of the Spirit: “I am with you always” – the backbone of all our formation and transformation.

The encircling branch, with leaves in the shape of the descending flames of Pentecost, can be interpreted as new life and vitality that propelled the apostles to the four corners of the world. It also reminds us of God’s creation of the earth and the sky, in the book of Genesis. The leaves of the branch, in shades of green and yellow, are also a reminder of our endangered planet earth; strong yet vulnerable; nurturing life yet its own sustainability imperiled. Weakened and enfeebled, the Mother Earth continues in its mission of feeding the “lamb”: sustaining and upholding life in all its forms.

The recurring circles, expanding and interconnected, hold together the entire presentation. They breathe an air of openness and receptivity, life and dynamism, growing and becoming.... In this gesture of giving and receiving, one can elicit the whole meaning of our mission today: the Father sending His Son as the “lamb of God” to bring the good news of God’s love for the world; the Congregation sending each SCJM to continue this mission today in the particular context of our own world; one generation of SCJMs passing on this mission to the next generation. Thus, as individual SCJMs, we come and go; but the mission continues into the future.

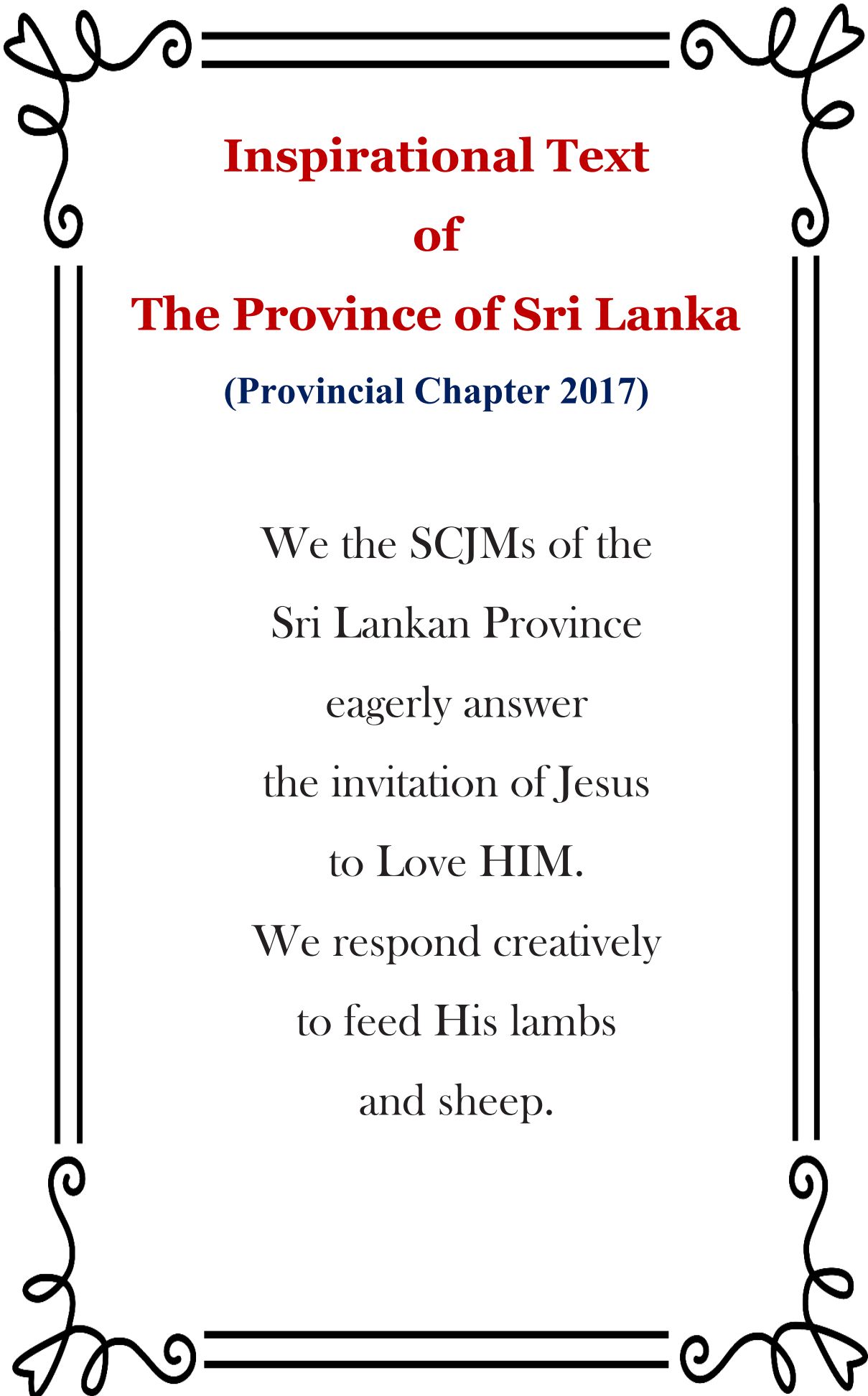
The depiction, rich in forms, shades and colors, seems a pure display of movement and dynamism, all engaged in a cosmic dance of joy and enthusiasm. There is an interplay of colors in light and dark shades, made out against the background of light grey, indicative of the all-encompassing presence of the Spirit of God impacting upon the entire reality of life. Taken together, they speak of numerous forms of interactions and relationships: the mystery of God's presence and action in the world (black) and the ongoing revelation in the Spirit (white), uniqueness and diversity, youthfulness and ageing, life and death, light and shadow, opportunity and danger...

In short, the logo of GC/17 represents many salient features of our spirituality: the empowering presence of the Trinity, the mission of being "another Christ" to the vulnerable,

being contemplatives in action, love expressed in service, being a good shepherd and a servant leader. The logo of this chapter symbolizes the evolutionary nature of our charism.

We are invited to welcome being the lamb in the arms of our Lord and master. This is indispensable to become aware of our own vulnerabilities and inevitable to understand and be empathetic with the vulnerabilities of others. Only then can we become a "shepherd" to the "sheep" after the example of Jesus. Vulnerable as we are, we are called to reach out to the vulnerable other in our world in love and compassion.





Inspirational Text
of
The Province of Sri Lanka
(Provincial Chapter 2017)

We the SCJMs of the
Sri Lankan Province
eagerly answer
the invitation of Jesus
to Love HIM.

We respond creatively
to feed His lambs
and sheep.

DOWN THE MEMORY LANE

1896

Arrival of the first five Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary from Belgium in Galle.

Mother Amelia (Mother Superior), Sr. Alberta, Sr. William, Sr. Alexandra and Sr. Mercia. The Sisters were invited by Bishop Van Reeth S.J. the first Bishop of Galle who was also the brother of the Mother General of the SCJMs at that time, Mother Bernadette Van Reeth.

- Opening of the Sacred Heart Convent School, in Galle.

1908

The opening of the SCJM Community in Matara, Convent of Mary Immaculate, on beach road.

A School, a Sinhala School and Girls' Home.

April - Visit of Mgr. Van Rechem, Superior General to Sri Lanka.

1909

The opening of the SCJM Community in Kegalle, St. Joseph's Convent.

A School, a Sinhala School and a Children's Crèche.

1912

The opening of the SCJM Community in Nuwara-Eliya, Caritas Convent. For an apostolic mission and also to be a holiday home for the Sisters during the school holidays and the month of excessive heat.

The first Group of Sri Lankan Ladies formed as Oblates of Charity in Galle.

1921

The Silver jubilee of the arrival of SCJMs in Sri Lanka.

1924

The opening of the SCJM Community in Ratnapura, Convent of the Child Jesus.

A School, a Sinhala School and an Orphanage (as it was called in those days).

1929

The Sisters received the Holy Rule.

1930

Inauguration of the "Van Reeth" Memorial Home in Galle.

1935

Two candidates sent to Belgium to enter the Postulate. The first was Mother Mary Ann Perera, our first Sri Lankan Provincial Superior who succeeded Mother Elizabeth de la Trinite. The next was Mother John of the Sacred Heart, who for many years carried responsibility as Principal and Superior of few Communities.

Visit of Mgr. Van Rechem, Superior General of Sisters of Charity to Sri Lanka.



At the Opening of the Kegalle Convent

1936

Beginning of the **Sri Lankan** Novitiate at Sacred Heart Convent, Galle. Under the guidance of Rev. Mother Elizabeth de la Trinite.

1937

January -First visit of Rev. Mother Cesaire, Mother General to Sri Lanka.



1952

St. Joseph's Convent, Kegalle extends the apostolate to the Home in Ranwala, Kegalle, to care for the Elderly Poor.

The Sisters were invited to the Archdiocese of Colombo to work for the Working Girls in Colombo and the Center was at Bailey Street, Colombo Fort, for animation and a place of rest for Working Girls in the city.

The Sisters moved to the House at Turret Rd. in Colombo 07, opposite the Town Hall (now the famous Paradise Rd. shop). This was for students and the apostolate at Bailey Street. This, apostolate was entrusted to Sr Marceline, a Belgian Sister. Two years later Sr. Marceline moved from there to Colpetty, due to insufficient space.

1954

The opening of the SCJM Community in Colpetty, Rheinland Place, “Marian House” and the apostolate at YCW at Baily Street for Catholic Working Girls to have a Center in the middle of the City continued with Sr. Marcelline and Sr. Mary Berchmans.

1956

Mother Elizabeth de la Trinite arrived in Sri Lanka as Visiting Superior.

1958

Mother Cesaire replaced as Superior General by Mother Marie du Cenacle, her Niece.

Aug. - Amalgamation of the Oblate Sisters as Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary, this was spear headed by Rev. Mother Elizabeth de la Trinite and Mother Gonzaga (RGS). And it was a move that impacted all the local Congregations that had Oblate Sisters.

1961

Nationalization of Schools: St. Joseph’s Convent, Kegalle, Child Jesus Convent, Ratnapura vested by the Government. Introduction of Sinhala as the official language by the government. Sinhala Only affected our ministries.

Many missionary Sisters left as the government imposed a visa tax on foreigners.

European Sisters had to leave Sri Lanka and a group of Sisters went to Australia, Mother Barbara, Srs. Annunciata and Mary of Fatima, for new foundation. They were joined by the Sisters of the Anglo Irish Province.

Sr. Mary Paul returned to the UK.

Some younger SCJMs from Sri Lanka were sent to Australia, to Bendigo, for training in Nursing and for Special Education.



1962

The opening of the SCJM Community in Hiniduma. Convent of Our Lady of the Cenacle. By Mother Elizabeth de la Trinite.

1964

The opening of the SCJM Community in Gonapinuwala. ‘SupemUyana’ Convent of Our Lady of Lanka. For services to the Mentally Handicapped Children, as they were known then.

1967

The New building was opened in Hiniduma for the new Community. Designed by the famous architect Mr Bawa, to fit into the scenic surroundings of the hills. Until then the Sisters had occupied the Parish Hall near the Church.

1968

Extraordinary General Chapter Renewal and Adaptation following the call of Vatican II. 1st session of the Provincial Chapter in Galle. - "Abide in my Love."

Mother Andre Avellin, Provincial Superior of the Anglo Irish Province, replaces Mother Marie du Cenacle as Mother General of the Congregation.

1969

Mother Mary Ann Perera replaces Mother Elizabeth de la Trinite, as the first Sri Lankan Provincial Superior of Sri Lanka Province.

The Provincialate moved from Galle to "Triest House" 563, Galle Rd. Colpetty, Colombo 03.

1970

Mother Elizabeth de la Trinite leaves Sri Lanka for Europe.

1971

'**Insurrection**' of the **JVP** in Ceylon.....troubled times in the country. Many youth were killed. The government was that of Mrs. Bandaranaike.

Aug.-Mother Andre Avellin, Superior General, arrives in Sri Lanka with two of her Councillors.

Sudden death...in December, of our dear Mother Mary Ann Perera in Galle, Sacred Heart Convent, a few days after her return from the Enlarged General Chapter in Belgium. At the time of her last moments she was surrounded by the Junior Sisters of the Province, who were present in Galle for a meeting.

1972

Feb. Srs. Paul Lenoble and Maria Christina, General Councillors arrived in Sri Lanka to preside over the special Provincial Chapter and the appointment of the New Provincial Superior.

Sr. Francesca of Christ acts as Provincial and is then appointed Provincial Superior of Sri Lanka Province.

Provincialate shifted to No.15, Don Carolis Road, Jawatta. Colombo 05.



1974

Provincial Chapter and the First Charism Retreat.

Sept. Golden Jubilee celebration of Child Jesus Convent, Ratnapura.

SCJMs at Paul the VIth Center, Colombo for service to women and children in the Street apostolate. They lived on the 6th floor.



1975

General Chapter in Belgium. - Sr. Ludo Vercammen replaces Mother Andre as Superior General. Sr Adrian from Sri Lanka elected as General Councillor.

Jan. 26th - The Congregation decided to venture for the 1st time in the Diocese of Jaffna. And the Official opening of SCJM Community in Cheddikulam, "ArulAham". First Community in the North. Srs. Tharsille, Marcilla and Naomie were the Pioneers. It was in response to the invitation extended to the SCJMs by the Bishop of Jaffna, Rt. Rev. Dr. Deogupillai. SCJMs in Alagollawa....an Inter Congregational Community in the Anuradhapura Diocese.

1977

March - Four Sri Lankan "Missionaries" left for Pakistan. Srs. Marie de Lorette, Edel, Alexander and Lauraine. This was in response to the appeal made, at the General Chapter by Sr. Christina Budha Mal who was the Regional Superior of Pakistan at that time. The Sisters took up this mission in order to help the region and also with the Formation.

Sr. Ludo Vercammen, Superior General visits Sri Lanka for the first time.

Sacred Heart Convent, Galle School ceases to be private as the Province was unable to raise the necessary funds for the payment of the teachers, although for many years a valiant effort was made to raise funds and keep the Convent School.

'Goal Consciousness' Retreat at Inter-Provincial level.

1978

Aug. - Provincial Chapter held at St. Anthony's Convent, Borella.

Oct. - Sr. Marie de Lorette de Silva appointed as Provincial Superior of Sri Lanka Province. Mother Elizabeth de la Trinite arrived in Sri Lanka for the Chapter.

Dec. - Sr. Francesca of Christ leaves for Pakistan to take up the new mission.

1979

Sr. Maria Jozefa, General Bursar, visits Sri Lanka for the first time.

April - Sr. Grace Perera leaves as a missionary to Israel, to serve the Elders in Isfiya, Mt. Carmel in the Diocese of Galilee, under Bishop Sayedna Maximus.

The Sisters follow the Greek Melkite Rite in their liturgy.

1980

April - The old "Sinhalese School" in Galle on the grounds of the main School, was amalgamated with the Sacred Heart Convent.

Caritas - Convent, Nuwara-Eliya in the Kandy Diocese, celebrated the Golden Jubilee of its existence.

August - Sri Lankan SCJMs celebrated the Provincial Chapter. District Chapter in Pakistan guided by Sr. Francesca of Christ.

1981

July - General Chapter...Sr Ludo Vercammen re-elected as Superior General.

Formulation of the new Constitutions.

1st Session. The working committee was Sr. Frances Mac Hugh for the English, Sr. Reinhilde Mathieu for the Dutch and Sr. Anne Marie Canaart for the French.

SCJM Community at Kotugoda. - Archdiocese, Negombo area.

SCJM Community at Passara for the Parish and Estate Apostolate. In the Badulla Diocese.

The Sisters initially stayed at Yapama Estate. Before they moved to the house that would serve as the Convent, on a little hill near the Church and close to the Parish House. Srs. Renee, Naomie, Gabriel and Carmel were the Pioneers.

1982

Dec. -Sr. Ludo Vercammen, Superior General arrived in Sri Lanka together with Sr. Adrian. 2nd session of the General Chapter to finalize the Congregation Constitutions. The book was then sent to Rome for approval. Followed by Provincial Chapter in Colombo.

House for Aspirants re-established at Child Jesus Convent, Ratnapura.

New block in the Provincialate opened on Palm Sunday by Rt. Rev. Bishop Edmund Fernando.

1983

Matara Community celebrated 75 years of its existence.

'**Racial Riots**'...in the country, "**Black Week**" much destruction and many Tamil people were confined to Refugee Ccamps. The Provincialate initially housed around 50 persons. The Tamil Sisters faced a very vulnerable situation...

Reflection on "Magnificat".

Jan.26that 1.30m. - A military "**Search**" at an unexpected hour,in our Convent in Cheddikulam.

It was during those troubled time. Only Srs. Naomie and Jayanthi were at home that fearful night, when the "Search" party arrived with a thumping on the front door and the voices ordering to open the door. It was all Armed forces - 8 of them. They cross-examined the Sisters and searched every nook and corner of the house for the wanted men. But found nothing. At the end they apologized for their visit at this unearthly hour and left the premises. But the sisters lived in fear.

Feb. - SCJMs called to serve in Korawella Parish, a very old mission in Moratuwa.

Sept. - Due to war situation in the country, and the lack of safety for the girls in the North to come to the South, a group of 3 SCJMs formed a Community temporarily, in Thalvupadu Parish, Mannar, for the formation of Postulants and Aspirants. The Church Parish Hall was

temporarily adjusted for this purpose. Rt. Rev. Dr Thomas Saundaranayagam, Bishop of Mannar blessed the “House”. Srs. Tharsille, Angeline and Rene formed Community with the Postulants.

A tense environment in the North with the constant presence of the Army and numerous check points and travel barriers.

1984

Jan. - 6 SCJMs from Sri Lanka participated in the Dialogue Session held in Pakistan. Conducted by Fr. Dolan of the Better World Movement.

April - The Sacred Congregation for Religious in Rome, accepted the Constitutions and Statutes of the Congregation.

May - Sr. Ludo Vercammen, Superior General and 3 Sisters visited Sri Lanka Province.

Oct. - Sr. Majella Fernando joined the Province of India. Due to the recent disturbances, the Generalate placed an option before the Tamil Sisters and a choice was given. Sister made this choice.

Nov.18th - Diamond Jubilee celebration of the Foundation of St. Joseph’s Convent, Kegalle.

1985

Sept. - Sr. Francesca of Christ re-elected as District Superior of Pakistan.

SCJM Community at Alagollawa, Diocese of Anuradhapura, at the invitation of His Lordship Bishop Henry Gunewardene.

SCJM Community formed in Pattim, Mannar, for the care of the Elderly. The Sisters lodged at Rosarian Convent till the Convent was ready, and the building of which was almost personally supervised by Bishop Tom Saundranayagam.

Oct.31st - The General Bursar, Sr. Maria Jozefa arrived in Sri Lanka.

Dec. 8th - Appointment of Sr. Anastasia Perera as Provincial Superior.

1986

July 12th - 150th Death Anniversary of the Founder Rev. Fr. Joseph Triest.

Celebration at St. Theresa’s Church, Thimbirigasaya, Colombo.

Sept.- Sent on mission. Sr. Tharsille leaves for Israel, to serve the Elders in Isfiya, Mt. Carmel.



1987

Feb.21st - Van Reeth Memorial Home, Galle celebrated their Diamond Jubilee.

Closure of Kotugoda Community.

Aug.- General Chapter in Belgium.

Sr. Ludo Vercammen re-elected as Superior General of the Congregation.

Sr. Marie de Lorette as the first Councillor. International General Team for the first time.

Sep. 27th - Caritas, Pattim Community officially opened.

Dec. 17th - Provincial Chapter.

1988

June 11th - Sr. Ludo Vercammen, Superior General arrived in Sri Lanka.

24th - Dehiwala, Caritas Convent officially opened.

Oct. Unrest in the country. Schools, Shops etc. closed and Curfew declared.

The Provincial and two Councillors attended the EGC at Kinshasa, Zaire.

1989

Mar. 3rd - Daya Mina Day Center for the Adult Mentally Handicapped at 23, Rheinland Place, given a very soft opening. With the presence of the brothers of Charity who had arrived in Sri Lanka for the first time.

Aug. Srs. Eustace, Melanie and Deepthika participated in the Inter Provincial Formation meeting in Belgium.

Sept. - Supem Uyana, Gonapinuwala celebrates the 25th year of its Foundation.

Oct. 25th - Daya Mina Day Centre officially opened.

Nov. - Srs. Marie de Lorette and Tessy, General Councillors arrived in Sri-Lanka.

Sr. Francesca of Christ returns to Sri Lanka from her mission in Pakistan.

JVP disturbances. Unrest in the country. Schools closed.

Dec. - Sr. Anastasia Perera re-appointed as Provincial Superior ... new Team.

1990

EGC at St. Francis College, Letchworth, England.

Superior General, Sr. Ludo Vercammen visits Sri Lanka Province.

Aug. 13th - The Community of Cheddikulam had to flee the Convent and take refuge in the Madhu Camp, Emil's block. It was a precarious existence amidst the thousands of refugees camped in the grounds. Many NGOs were present. The Sisters shared the front of the house with many NGO representatives, men and women. School was held under the banyan tree. Eventually, Sr. Noeline volunteered her services and was a Nurse in the Camp. Open air dispensary and for about two years.

Dec. 27th - Sr. Aline, General Bursar arrives in Sri Lanka.

1991

Feb. 2nd - Novitiate Community moved to Katugastota. Kandy Diocese.

Dec. - Inter Provincial meeting of Formaters in Colombo.

SCJM Community at Kudamadhu - Chilaw Diocese for the first time.

1992

Mar. 9th - Novitiate House officially blessed, opened and named "Nisala", by His Lordship Bishop Vianney Fernando.

Sept. - At the invitation of Bishop of Anuradhapura, the Sisters extended their evangelical ministry to Kekirawa near the town.

EGC at Tilburg, Holland.

Oct. 27th - Home for Elders in Pattim, Mannar blessed and opened by Rt. Rev. Dr. Thomas Savundranayagam.

Nov. 16th - Srs. Noeline, Michelle and Maria Goretti returned to Cheddikulam once again to begin the community, at the request of the Bishop. Sr. Anastasia joined them. The Convent had been severely damaged by the forces and was not habitable. The Sisters roughed it out, stayed in the Girl's Hostel. On 18th November there was an LTTE attack at midnight and heavy cross firing and the Sisters moved to the School and stayed with the refugees for the rest of the night.

Dec. 6th - Celebration of the Provincial Chapter.

1993

Sr. Gloria Gunawardena attended the Inter Provincial meeting of Bursars in Belgium.

Jan. 22nd - Mother Elizabeth de la Trinite called to her Eternal Rest in Belgium.

April - Sisters moved to Daya Mina Day Care Center for Special Children in Embuldeniya. Having first moved from Colpetty to Polhengoda - stay was one year's duration and then to Embuldeniya.

General Chapter: Sr. Marie Ange de Paepe elected as Superior General...new Team.

Oct.-The Sisters formed a Community at Rambaikulam, Vavuniya, stayed in a rented house.

Appointment of Sr. Marie de Lorette de Silva as Provincial Superior... new Team.

1994

Jan. - Sr. Anne Marie Dhooghe, elected as General Bursar, left for Belgium.

Sept.- Permission granted for establishment of a new Community in Nilaveli, in the Diocese of Trincomalee, for the displaced children of the war time and also for Parish work.

SCJMs moved to Komarasankulam, Vavuniya. They had stayed initially in the Parish Mission House - Sr. Melanie had the Postulants there.

SCJM Community withdrew from Kudamadhu.

1995

Jan.- Visit of our Holy Father John Paul II to Sri Lanka for the Beatification of Fr. Joseph Vaz, as the first Sri Lankan Saint, an Indian Oratorian Father, who gave of himself to build up and preserve the Catholic Faith during Dutch persecution.

Feb. 2nd - Primary School in Matara officially opened.

Feb. 23rd - The mission at Ramanadhapuram, Caritas Convent started during the period of Rt. Rev. Dr. Thomas Saundranayagam. The Jaffna Diocese was comprised the districts Kilinochchi and Mullaithivu. It was during the time of Sr. Marie de Lorette, Provincial Superior. The Community was comprised Srs. Arul mary, Jeyakody, Jacintha Gabriel, and later. Sr. Chandra joined the Community.

March - Sr. Marie Ange, Superior General, visits Sri Lanka.

July 10th - Enlarged General Council in Rome.

Nov. 24th - Inauguration of the Centenary Celebration in the Province, of the arrival of the first Sisters of Charity.

1995-1996-Dec. 26th- SCJMs withdrew from Eheliyagoda mission. This also housed the Postulate; the place was wanted by the Bishop of Ratnapura.

SCJM Community in Passara withdrew from the mission.

1996

Nov. 4th - Inauguration of the new Community in Thaladena. - Archdiocese.

Arrival of Sr. Sarto, General Councillor for the Centenary Celebration of Sri Lanka Province. The Apostolic Nuncio, Mgs. Osvaldo Padilla presided over the Celebration.

Dec. 29th - Inauguration of SCJMs mission in Kadolkele, on the Feast of the Holy Family.

1997

Nov. 2nd - Sr. Francesca of Christ left for Pakistan to represent the Sri Lanka SCJMs at their Centenary Celebration.

Sr. Tessa, General Councillor arrived in Sri Lanka for the appointment of the new Provincial Team. Sr. Marie de Lorette de Silva re-elected as Provincial Superior.

1998

Mar. 25th - New School building in Galle blessed and opened by Bishop Elmo Perera.

SCJM Community in Nilaveli, Trincomalee.

Oct.- Visit of Sr. Marie Ange, Superior General to Sri Lanka. Provincial Chapter.

1999

General Chapter. Sr. Anastasia Perera, elected as first General Assistant.

2000

Jan.-Sr. Anastasia Perera left for Brussels to take up the new mission.

2001

Sr. Michelle joined the International Community in the Generalate in Brussels.

Nov. - General Councillors, Sr. Anastasia Perera and Sr. Elizabeth Roche arrived in the country for the Consultation and Installation of the New Provincial Team.

Dec.8th - Sr. Marie Samaranayake, New Provincial Superior for Sri Lanka Province appointed.

2002

Mar.- Van Reeth Memorial Home for Elders in Galle, celebrated 75 years of its existence.

Jun.28th - Srs. Francesca of Christ and Melanie invited by General Government to participate in the Inter Province Retreat Team in Belgium.

Oct.-Srs. Nandanie and Marie Constance left for Rome, Italy as missionaries to work for the Evangelization of people. The invitation came from Bishop Malcolm Ranjith.

Dec.- Asian Formators meeting in Sri Lanka.

2003

Jan.- Asian Bursars meeting in Colombo. Sr. Anne-Marie Dhooghe conducted.

Srs. Peter and Angeline participated in the Bi-Centenary Celebration of the Congregation in Belgium.

July 22nd - Sr. Marie Samaranayake accompanied, Srs. Angela, Manohari, and Mangalika, to Legazpi, Philippines for the new mission after a period of preparation in India.

It was at the request of the Brothers of Charity but especially at the request of the Albay Diocese, to stay in the Barangay San Roque and to help the Street Children.

Sept. - Visit of Superior General, Sr. Marie Ange and General Councillor Sr. Perpetue.

Nov.1st - Bi-Centenary Celebration in Sri-Lanka in the Provincialate.

2004

Mar.22nd - Caritas Convent, Mathagal, Jaffna officially blessed and opened by His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Thomas Savundranayagam - Bishop of Jaffna.

April - EGC held in Sri Lanka at the Salasian Father's House, Dungalpitiya.

Nov. - Sri Lanka Provincial Chapter.

Dec.26th – **Tsunami catastrophe** destroyed part of Sri Lanka. St. Mary's Convent, Matara was severely affected by it. Sr. Bernadette Koolmeyer died in the Tsunami while distributing Holy Communion during the Holy Mass. The rest of the community left early morning to Colombo and were thus saved.

2005

Jan. – Sr. Anne Marie Dhooghe, General Bursar and Sr. Anastasia Perera, General Councillor visited Sri Lanka to support the Province in the aftermath of the Tsunami. They visited many of the affected areas especially Matara Convent and Galle, the North and East, as well as the Refugee Camps.

April- Sr. Marie Samaranayake, the Provincial Superior and the delegates participated in the General Chapter.

Sr.Valsala George elected as the Superior General of the Congregation. The first Indian General.

July - Foundation stone laid for the House of Prayer “Ashram” in Kegalle.

Sept.24th - Formation House - Nivedhanam in Pattim, Mannar declared opened by His Lordship Bishop Rayappu Joseph, Bishop of Mannar.

Oct.- Caritas, Nuwara-Eliya completed 75 years of its existence.

Sr Anastasia returned to Sri Lanka from the Generalate.

2006

New Provincial Superior - Sr. Anastasia Perera appointed with her Team.

Dec.- Our two Sisters who served as missionaries in Israel for a long time, Srs. Grace and Tharsille terminated their mission and returned to Sri Lanka.

Opening of the Home for Children affected by Tsunami, in Nilaveli, Trincomalee. With the generous funds of many donors local and overseas.

2007

Sep.8th - Foundation stone laid for the Home for Elders in Ratmalana.

House of Prayer “Ashram” opened in Kegalle.

Visit of Sr. Anne Marie Dhooghe, the General Bursar.

2008

June- International Finance Commission Meeting in Belgium, for the Bursars, organized by Sr. Anne Marie Dhooghe, General Bursar. Sr. Tharsille attended series of meetings.

July 30th-Ratmalana, Kithu Sevena “Marian Home” blessed and opened.

2009

The Sri Lankan Army started moving towards Kilinochchi from Mannar district. The people from Madhuarea were moving to places of safety. The place that seemed safe one day becomes dangerous the next day. Our Three Srs. Rita, Vasanthi and Kirutha together with the children had to flee from Kilinochchi to places of safety, constantly on the move and spending some time in the bunkers.

Jan. 5th2009 there was a big attack on the LTTE camp in Iranamadu. Our Sisters and Children were hiding in the Bunkers for few months. They have been walking through the jungle four days together with other people. Shelling and bombing continued night and day. There were moments the Sisters didn't know what to do, but the **strong faith** kept them alive. When the children heard the sound of the **Drone**, one rang the bell all others got into the bunker. It was the daily bread of suffering, fear and anxiety. But in the midst of it all they experienced God's living presence and His loving protection all through.

Over the years of the Civil war there was difficulty in obtaining permission to go to the North and held up at the Vavuniya check point for a considerable time. There were numerous check points all along the way but specially from Anuradhapura to Mannar. Jaffna was a near no go area.

Mar.25th- Sr.Valsala George, Superior General arrived in Sri Lanka. Her attempt to visit the Sisters in the North initially met with considerable difficulty.

June - Bro. Rene Stockman, Superior General of Brothers of Charity, visited Sri Lanka.

Conducted a few meetings on the Spirituality of Rev. Fr. Triest.

Dec.19th - Kegalle, St. Joseph's Convent Centenary Celebration.

2010

Jan.- International Asian Novitiate opened in **Tagaytay** in the Philippines. Sr. Viyuritha was the first to join from Sri Lanka Province for her Formation. Later others followed.

Mar.10th - General Assistants, Sr. Elsy Paul and Sr. Meta Scholastique arrived in Sri Lanka.

Mar. 20th - Sr. Deepthika Silva and her Team installed as a new Provincial Government.

Apr.20th – Daya Sevena Home, in Kegalle. - A new venture for the Older Intellectually Challenged, opened.

May 26th- 30th - Provincial Chapter in Colombo.

Aug.31st - 250th Birthday Anniversary Celebration of our Founder Fr. Triest at the Provincialate.

Sep.15th - Sr. Devika joins the **IAN** Community in the Philippines to help the Novices.

Nov.4th - “Shalom” Convent, Thaladuwa, Kadolkale opened. This was a renewal of our presence in Kadolkele.

2011

Jan. - Asian Bursar’s Seminar in Colombo. Organized by Sr. Anne Marie Dhooghe.

Apr.27th- Provincial Superior and the delegates left for Holland to participate in the General Chapter.

Oct. - Canonical visit of Sr.Valsala George, Superior General.

Nov. - Asian Formators Session held in India, conducted by Sr. Lucy Jacob. Four of our Sisters participated.

2013

Jan. - Sr. Lohini Fernando appointed as General Bursar of the Congregation.

Aug. 20th - Brown’s Hill Convent, Matara, blessed and opened. The outcome of many donations.

Dec. - Enlarged General Council held in Sri Lanka.

2014

June- General Councillors Sr. Lucy Jacob and Sr. Isabelle Ilunga came to Sri Lanka for the Consultation and Installation of the new Provincial Team.

New Provincial Superior, Sr. Deepthika Silva and her Team Installed.

Sep.27th – Supem Uyana, the Garden of love celebrated Golden Jubilee of its existence.

Nov.10th -15th - Srs. Rupika and Priyani Perera participated in the Asian Bursars Project management meeting in India. Organized by the General Bursar.

2015

Jan. - Holy Father Pope Francis visited Sri Lanka for the Canonization of Blessed Joseph Vaz, the first Sri Lankan Saint, who was an Indian Oratorian Priest who underwent many hardships to build up and renew the Catholic population of Sri Lanka, which was in hiding due to the Dutch persecution.

Jun.10th- Iranaipalai Convent blessed and opened. His Lordship Rt. Rev. Bishop Thomas Savundranayagam, Bishop of Jaffna celebrated the Holy Mass.

24th - Meth Arana, Wanathawilluwa Convent officially blessed and opened by Rt. Rev. Dr. Valance Mendis - Bishop of Chilaw.

Sept.- SCJMs terminated their service in the Apostolic Nunciature in Sri Lanka, after several years of generous and dedicated service.

2016

Nov.24th - 120 Years of arrival of the SCJMs in Sri Lanka.

Dec.- Retreat on the Spirituality of our Founder, preached by Bro. Rene Stockman, Superior General of the Brothers of Charity.
Sr. Deepthika and Sr. Rupika visited the Legazpi Community in the Philippines.

2017

Jan.6th - Asian Provincial Superiors meeting held in Sri Lanka. Sr. Valsala George, Superior General and other Provincial Superiors arrived in Sri Lanka.

Sr. Madalene Nueza, Filipino, together with Srs. Dileshika and Jeyalini followed the Sister Formation Course in the Aquinas, Sri Lanka. After her Final Profession she returned to the Philippines.

Mar.- Sr. Agathe Kayambi, Provincial Superior of the Province of St. Vincent de Paul R.D. Congo, arrived in Sri Lanka, for a three month stay as a preparation of a different experience in another province before the General Chapter.

July-Aug. -General Chapter in Belgium. Sr. Deepthika and the delegates attended the Chapter.

Sr. Lucy Jacob, new Superior General and Sr. Deepthika Silva, elected as her first Assistant.

Nov. 1st - Sr. Ajitha Fernando assumed duties as the Interim Provincial of Sri Lanka Province.

Nov.7th - Center for the service of the Special Children, an extension of Daya Mina opened in Mount Lavinia.

Nov.26th- Sr. Deepthika Silva left for Belgium for her new mission.

2018

Apr.4th - Sr. Nadisha joined the Community in Legazpi in the Philippines.

May - Arrival of two General Councillors, Sr. Roshni Barla and Sr. Cecile Nadiya for the Consultation and Installation of the new Provincial Superior and her Team.

June 2nd - Installation of the new Provincial Superior, Sr. Ajitha Fernando and her Team.

June - Sr. Fatima left for Philippines as the New Mistress of Novices at IAN.

2019

Apr.21st - Easter Sunday Massacre in the Churches of Kochchikade and Katuwapitiya.

It caused several deaths and wounded many. ISIS was suspected. Strangely the government while being alerted took absolutely no action to prevent it.

May 4th - A.Y.S Gnanam Elders' Home in Sillalai, Jaffna blessed and opened. Sr. Dominica placed In-charge. The trustees and a few invitees were present. Bishop Justin Gnanapragasam officiated.

July 20th-Blessing of the new Convent in Anandapuram by Rt. Rev. Dr. Justin Gnanapragasam, Bishop of Jaffna.

July 29th - Sr. Ajitha Fernando left for Kinshasha, Congo to participate in the EGC 2019.

Dec. - Outbreak of the **COVID-19** in Wuhan, China. Many people died.

2020

Feb.- First COVID positive patient found in Sri Lanka.

Mar.15th - The whole country was locked down due to the fast spreading of the Pandemic.

Jun. 28th- Sacred Heart Home for the Senior Sisters opened in Galle.

Dec.1st - Quasquicentennial Jubilee year (125 years of existence) declared open in Galle, Sacred Heart Convent Chapel by Rt. Rev. Dr. Raymond Wickramasinghe, Bishop of Galle.

2021

Feb.1st - Due to prevailing Covid 19 situation in the world, Sr. Lucy Jacob, Superior General could not pay her Canonical visit to Sri Lanka. Therefore Sister met each and every Sister in the province in the Virtual World of Zoom meetings.

Mar.7th - “Black Sunday” was declared in the country. A Silent protest organized by His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, pleading for the full and complete truth behind the bloodshed on Easter Sunday Bomb attack in 2019. Crying out for truth and justice.

April 21st - Rosary Rally organized in Katuwapitiya, in protest for Easter Bomb attack on the second Anniversary. About 1500 Priests and Religious participated; 30 SCJMs were among them. All the bishops and the new Apostolic Nuncio were also present.

May 9th - Sr. Nadisha returned to Sri Lanka after three years of generous service in Legazpi, Community, Philippines. She was on quarantine until 27th.

May 16th - “Ashram” House of Prayer in Kegalle ceased to be an Ashram. It's been converted into House of Formation for the SCJM Novices, officially blessed and opened

Augu. 1st- 15th - EGC 2021, took place in Virtual World.

Augu. 30th- Sept. 3rd - EGC Virtual Transmission 2021 was held in our Province became an unprecedented event since approximately all the Sisters could partake in it. This was an unbelievable and unforgettable experience for the Province of Sri Lanka. Since at present Sri Lanka is under lockdown due to the Pandemic. We are unable to move or travel and confined to our homes in order to be safe. However the Virtual Transmission gave us the opportunity to interact, to chat, to share, to see and enjoy meeting everyone in the Province including our dearest Elderly Sisters in Galle.

Nov.24th - Quasquicentennial Jubilee Celebration in the Province of Sri-Lanka.
125 years of existence of the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary.

Nov 27th- The actual jubilee celebration will be held at Sacred Heart Convent, Galle. The Chief Celebrant is His Excellency Most Rev. Dr. Brian Udaigwe, the Apostolic Nuncio of Sri Lanka.

Sr. Tharsille Savarimuthu



PHOTOGRAPH BY
Dian Yoko
Galle

CENTENARY
1896 - 1996
JUBILEE CELEBRATION 23rd NOVEMBER 1996
SACRED HEART CONVENT - GALLE
100 YEARS OF LOVE AND SERVICE

A History of the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary

Beginning of the Foundation of SCJMs in Belgium

The first summer in 1803 that Fr. Triest was the parish priest at Lovendegem, where he started Catechetical classes for adults after evening prayers on Sunday. He had already called upon Maria Lammens to collaborate with him in his plan to start an orphanage and during these lessons a second candidate Catherine Wierne presented herself. With the help of the Masters of the poor of the village he hired a room at the Noesche Wegeling. From there the first sisters started their activities. On 24th October Anna Convent from Mechelen joined them. On 27th October a nine day retreat started at the Castle of Caroline Limnander in Lovendegem. The novena marked the start of the actual foundation of the Sisters of Charity.

4th November 1803 was a very special day for Fr. Triest. A long awaited dream came true on that day. *The foundation of the Congregation not only had the three Traditional Religious Vows but also the Care of the Poor and Destitute as its aim.* He had already seen the failure of his first attempt at Renaix due to political interference, but this time the circumstances were more favourable. He had found three women who were prepared to collaborate with him in his initiative as well as a benefactress who gave him financial and practical support. The Novena at the Castle of Caroline Limnander ended

on Friday 4th November and closed with a celebration in the Parish Church of Lovendegem. *The Congregation was founded canonically on that day because of its Patron Saint, St. Charles Borromeo.* The latter also became the

Patron Saint of the congregation. Fr. Triest brought Maria Lammens, Catherine Wierne and Anna to Convent to their new house after the service. He had rented this house in the hamlet of Appensvoorde. *The three sisters spent the winter there, not knowing what the future held in store for them, unconscious of the fact that their modest, but courageous choice would lead them to the foundation of the worldwide Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary.* (Agenda 2003 Nov. 4th)

During the winter of 1803 there were 4 candidates for the new congregation. Fr. Triest received the Bishop's approval for his foundation on 4th November and a sister from another congregation joined to look after the spiritual formation.

The first years after the foundation of the Congregation the sisters did not have a fixed rule because its aim was so close to the spirit and aim of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul. Fr. Triest thought of giving them this rule VIA the Bishop and the Superior of the Daughters of Charity in Paris. On 13th February, 1805 he received a negative answer. So Fr. Triest realized that he would have to draw up a Rule himself for the Sisters of Charity.

In February 1816 Fr. Triest left for Rome with the aim of obtaining the papal approval of the Constitution of the sisters of charity. On 28th March he arrived in the holy city where he met several cardinals concerning his request. He was asked to make some amendments to the constitutions

especially concerning the strict silence and that it was impossible for the sisters to pronounce solemn vows. With this message he returned to Ghent on 13th June, 1816 after an absence of almost 4 months.

The approval of the Constitution by Pope Pius VII was announced in a letter from Rome dated 9th September, 1816. The Most important correction was the refusal of taking solemn vows by the sisters. After Pius VII approved the constitution of the Sisters of Charity in 1816 at Rome, Fr. Triest continued to elaborate the rule. The rules were submitted to the sisters in 1818 and accepted. The Bishop of Ghent has approved it on 20th January, 1820 after the reformulation of the text.

Fr. Triest made a visit to Our Lady of Lorette in Paris before he left for Rome for the approval of the Constitution. After he returned on 14th Jun, 1816 he gave each community a picture of Our Lady of Lorette asking them to place the picture between 2 lighted candles every evening while they sang the “Salve Regina”. Each picture had the following words written at the back of the picture by Fr. Triest himself. (“Celebravi in alma domo 23 Martii 1816”). “I celebrated mass in the High House on 23rd March, 1816”. P J Triest, Honorary Canon of the Cathedral of St. Bavo, General Superior of the Sisters of Charity”. These pictures are still kept in honour of Our Lady of Lorette by the Sisters.

The first article of the Constitution reads: “The Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary in the town and Diocese of Ghent, united in the Sacred Heart of Jesus under the protection of Blessed Virgin Mary. St Vincent de Paul and St Bernard combine a contemplative life with an active life as far as their duties permit. The active life consists in serving the sick poor without

discrimination, in caring for mentally deficient women, in educating orphans and other unfortunate young girls, in running schools, in a word in exercising all works of charity according to the spirit and rule of St. Vincent de Paul”.

The 76th article of the constitution reads as follows: “coffee is forbidden to the sisters just like all strong drinks or liquors, unless in special cases with the permission of the superior or on doctor’s advice. The reason for this prohibition of coffee was that at the period when Fr. Triest wrote the constitutions coffee was very expensive owing to Napoleonic wars. The sisters who took the vow of poverty which had no luxuries. In the course of 19th century coffee became a lot cheaper. On 15th 1856, his Lordship Bishop of Ghent with the permission of His Holiness Pope of Rome modified this article.”The use of coffee is allowed on the Rogation days, the feast day of St. Mark and all Saturdays of the year. Before the sisters drink coffee they must say a hail Mary for conversion of sinners”.

With the help of Carolinee Limnander a benefactress from Ghent, Fr. Triest decided to build a convent. On 27th February 1804, the nine houses in the Molendreef were purchased.

Other Initiatives

In 1835 a community started in Ghent with the name of Sisters of the Holy Childhood of Jesus. Their particular target was the relief of neglected children, foundling, orphans and sick children in general.

The profession of the first six Brothers of Charity took place on 26th November, 1811 at the chapel of Bijloke. The Bishop who had been banished by Napoleon could not preside. Fr. Bernard was elected as

Superior on the same day. Brothers of St. Vincent popularly called “Brothers of Charity” became a reality. It has been a long laborious road from the first attempt in 1807. Thanks to the perseverance of Fr. Triest in “*Deus Providebit*” and the confidence that he continue to show people and with the arrival of Bro. Bernard the Congregation was born.

On the 17th June, 1836 while the Cathedral was decorated for the Golden Jubilee of his ordination, Fr. Triest was suddenly overcome by a violent asthma attack which endangered his life. He was administered with the Last Sacrament. His health gradually declined; however he was fully resigned to God. His last moment inquiry was what the poor would get at his funeral. Without any agony he breathed his last on Friday, 24th June, 1836.

Beginnings in Sri Lanka:

On 4th November, 1896 the first five sisters assigned for Ceylon(Sri Lanka) left for Brussels from where they left next day for Paris. At the station they met Jesuit Fathers together they took the first train to Marseille. The sisters lodged there with the Franciscan sisters to await the sailing. The Ville de Ciotat set sail on Sunday 8th November, 1896. On the ship there were 10 more female religious and 22 priests all of them missionaries. This made the sisters happy because it helped to have 2 -3 masses daily and receive Holy Communion. The Ville Ciotat was the biggest ship and sailed directly to Colombo and on 23rd November they landed in Colombo.

Arrival of the Sisters of Charity in Galle.

On 24th November 1896 the first sisters of charity arrived in Galle. Mother Amelia gave her impression. “Mgr. Van

Reeth met us at the station and we received his blessing. After the ceremony at the Cathedral we were taken to our convent next to the Cathedral. Above the entrance gate we found a triumphal arch decorated with coconut leaves and welcome and on top a Belgium Flag. Mgr. showed us our convent and after a few moment the Mgr. and the priests took their leave. The people stayed in front of our house for a long time. In the dining room we had a very tasty meal prepared.”

This would be the only foundation on the Island for 12 years. This quote is taken from a letter dated 8th June 1897 by Mother Amelia Janssens who was the superior of Galle. She regularly wrote letters to Belgium with reports on the life and the functioning of the missionary station. “We have 3 kinds of children: first, some boarders who speak English and receive a quasi-European education. Then we have orphans. We were asked to respect the simplicity of their dresses and not to change anything, therefore they live according to local customs, they eat rice and curry with their hands, sleep on mats spread on the floor. And lastly we have a day school with 60 pupils among whom are 10 boys. The majority of these children are Catholics.”

At the beginning of December 1896 hardly a week after her arrival in Galle, Mother Amelia wrote a letter to Ghent. “Our house contains a parlour, a dining room which is also used as a work room, two bed rooms and a smaller room serving as a kitchen. Our yard is very small but we can walk around the adjacent school where the air is very fresh and the view of the nearby ocean is marvelous. In June 1897 a second adjacent house was put at the disposal of the sisters. Due to lack of space there was no chapel at the convent and this caused great sadness to the sisters. For the Eucharistic celebration the sisters

had to go to the cathedral situated higher up on mount Calvary.

On the arrival of the first sisters only a small percentage of the population was Catholic. In the entire Diocese of Galle there were about 4600 faithful out of a total population of about 900,000 people. There were only 13 churches and 17 chapels in the diocese and some were even neglected and abandoned. The situation was sad as regards education in 1895 there were 10 catholic schools with 700 pupils (boys and girls) The sisters arrived in this predominantly Buddhist region with a Catholic network that was very weak. There was a lot to be done. (Agenda 2003 Nov. 24th)

Soon after their arrival in Sri Lanka the sisters were aware of the desire of the native girls to live as religious. Already in 1901 a novitiate for the Holy Angels was opened at the convent of the sisters of Charity. In 1903 the foundation of this new congregation was confirmed by Mgr. Van Reeth. Their first apostolate was education in the vernacular language. In 1923 they became an independent diocesan Congregation.

Congregation of Oblate Sisters was set up for local girls who opted for Religious life. In 1913 the first Ceylonese oblate sisters entered and during the course of the time the number increased rapidly. There were equally as many native sisters of charity who did their novitiate in Galle from 1936.

In 1913 the Congregation of the Oblate sisters of charity was founded with the first native postulant Josephine Munasinghe from Galle. It was decided that these native girls would form a separate group due to differences in education, formation language etc. Their costume differed from the Sisters of charity and their rules were slightly different. However there was no distinction in their work between them.

On 21st November, 1913 the first two sisters were clothed. This Novitiate was closed in 1957 and the difference between the oblates and the sisters of charity disappeared.

In a letter dated 1955 the Bishop of Galle wrote to the General Superior: "When there were only European Sisters and Oblate Sisters nobody had problem with the different habit of the latter. But now the Sinhalese girls are accepted as Sisters of Charity, some relations of the Oblates and as well as outsiders wonder why they have to wear a different habit. Why is there this discrimination between them and the other Sinhalese Sisters? *An Indult of Rome from 5th July, 1958 integrated the oblate sisters of Galle as first oblates into the congregation of the sisters of charity of Jesus and Mary.*

At the erection of the Sri Lankan District within the Congregation in 1966 it was decided to establish the district government at Galle. At the moment of the final division into provinces, the Sri Lanka Sisters thought it was opportune to transfer the Provincialate to Colombo. On 11th June 1972 the Provincialate moved once more to Colombo. It was situated in the neighbourhood of a historical place an old pilgrim shrine of "Our Lady of Victory".

1969 meant a turning point in the history of the Ceylonese Province. In December 1969 the General Government appointed a Sri Lankan Sister, Sr. Mary Anne Perera as first Provincial Superior. Mother Elizabeth who was the District Superior of Ceylon returned to Europe on 16th February, 1970.

After the division of the Congregation into provinces, there was an increasing need for a management that was oriented more internationally. On the 19th August 1975 the General Chapter appointed a councillor from the Anglo-

Irish Province and from Sri Lanka Province

Foundation in Matara:

On 20th April, 1908 to comply with the request of the Jesuit Fathers a house was opened in Matara with an orphanage and an English and Sinhala school. The Belgian Mgr. Van Reeth blessed opened the convent. More than 200 flags decorated the road to the convent. The Catholic Community of Matara was very pleased with the arrival of the sisters. The orphanage started immediately with 10 children who had accompanied the sisters from Galle. In May the school opened its doors with about 20 pupils in the English School and almost 100 in the Sinhala School.

Kegalle: *On 18th December, 1909 two sisters left Galle to prepare for the foundation in Kegalle.* The first community consisted of 7 sisters. Three were new missionaries just arrived from Belgium. From the twenties onward numerous Ceylonese Oblates were added to this group. Together they were responsible for diverse educational and caring tasks. The first apostolate was education, an English school and a technical school opened in 1910. Some years later a nursery school was founded. The boarding school was very successful and attracted pupils from all over the Island. *The population of the boarding school was very heterogeneous: Tamils, Sinhalese, Burghers, Euro-Asians, Christians and Buddhists.*

Cambridge classes were organized at the institute. Beside education the sisters were also active in health care sector and among other things at the "Verstraetem Memorial the sisters took care of the unwanted babies. *In 1941 the Congregation took over an existing home for the elderly in Ranwala and the new home was placed under the*

protection of Our Lady of Lourdes. Sr. Claudina welcomed the new residents.

Ratnapura:

On 13th October, 1924 the English school for girls opened in Ratnapura. At the start only 2 borders were present. The Sinhalese and technical school were inaugurated on 11th January, 1926. The state recognized the school rapidly in 1928 and there were about 200 day scholars and 115 borders in the English Department. There were also junior and senior Cambridge classes preparing the pupils for studies in Cambridge University in England. Also music classes attended. In 1960 the difficulties started with the authorities in spite of resistance from the sisters and parents the state manage to take over the school. The English and Sinhalese schools were amalgamated. In 1927 an orphanage started.

Gonapinuwela:

On 10th September, 1964 the sisters opened a home for mentally handicapped children in Gonapinuwela. Right from the start they opted for a specialized team of psychologists, social workers, nurses, therapists and Montessori teachers. The target group was children from 1 – 6 years old. The idea was to rehabilitate children so that they would be recognized and accepted as mentally handicapped people in society. *All children were admitted without distinction of religion, class or race.* The parents who could afford gave a monthly subscription for the care of their child but the poor were taken without any payment.

Cheddikulam the first house:

Since 1975 the sisters ventured towards a new task to live among the people who were in real need of their presence.

There was also the request from the Bishop to come to the Diocese of Jaffna. The most of the villagers were displaced people from the upcountry (tea and rubber estates) waiting to return to a normal life. Sisters helped to uplift their livelihood, education and gave the youth hope and vision for the future.

In 1974, Srs. Tharsille, Marcilla and Naomie ventured into the North to work among the farmers. They were taken to Vidathaltivu by Fr. J.B Devaraja as the house in Cheddikulam was not ready. They went to Vidathaltivu and stayed in the mission house for 3 months. At the end of 3 months the Bishop Deoguupillai, Bishop of Jaffna visited them and said that the people of Vidathaltivuu want them to stay with them and asked for their opinion. Sr. Tharsille who was superior said that they came to serve the people in Cheddikulam as it was a very backward area and they would opt for Cheddikulam and left. After they left, the people of Vidathaltitvu wrote in the Jaffna Catholic messenger “why did the Sisters of Charity desert us?”.

On 20th January 1975, Srs Grace, Tharsille, Marcilla, Naomie and Arul Mary left Colombo by the night train to prepare for the new venture in Cheddikulam and arrived at Cheddikulam at 2.45 a.m. and walked to the house. They inaugurated the

kitchen and lit the fire and boiled the milk. Following this, they sat around and recited the office and had a prayer service. Then they cleaned the house.

On 22nd some equipments arrived and Srs. Tharsille and Grace hang the curtains while Srs. Marcilla and Naomie did the cooking and Sr. Arul cleaned the garden with some children. On 24th with the help of a carpenter Srs. Grace and Tharsille arranged the Chapel and fixed the Tabernacle to the wooden stand that was carved from a tree.

On 25th Sr. Francesca, the Provincial arrived with Srs. Adrian, Margaret Mary, Antoinette and Marie de Lorette. On 26th January, 1975 the opening of the first house in Cheddikulam; in the Diocese of Jaffna took place. The house was blessed in the evening. Rev. Frs. Devaraja, Jebanesan and Guy Fongelan, the Parish Priest concelebrated the Holy Eucharist. Sr. Francesca planted a coconut tree. Sr. Tharsille was appointed as the superior of the community at a small prayer service. On 27th Srs. Grace, Margaret Mary, Adrian and Marie de Lorette left Cheddikulam and Sr. Francesca stayed behind with the community.

On 29th at 5 p.m. the first community Eucharist was celebrated by Fr. Guy Fongelan, Parish Priest.

Sr. Nichola Emmanuel SCJM



First Four Houses Pioneering in the Pearl of the Indian Ocean



Galle – 1896



Matara - 1908



Kegalle-1909



Ratnapura - 1924

125 years of our existence

*“A jubilee is a year of blessing,
especially for the path which still
awaits us”*



It is with a sense of pride that we, the SCJMs in Sri Lanka, recall our glorious history of noble self-sacrifice and loving service, as we open the year of Jubilee on the 24th of November 2020. This Jubilee year is a year of gratitude to God

for His numerous blessings and to His people whose lives have touched ours, as together we continue to promote the mission of Jesus for our future generations in this beautiful land.

Humble beginning

The history of Catholic mission in Ceylon took its root in the 16th century. Dominicans, Franciscans and Jesuits followed in the wake of the Portuguese colonists. In 1895, the Catholic mission at Galle was entrusted to the Belgian Jesuits. Mgr. Joseph Van Reeth S.J., appointed as the first Bishop of Galle, took charge of the diocese. He was concerned about the education of the youth. His earnest desire was that the girls should have the similar privileges as boys. Accordingly, he contacted the Motherhouse of the Sisters of Charity in Ghent, where his sister, Mother

Bernadette Van Reeth, was the Superior General, and appealed for sisters for his diocese. The promise of the foundation was granted and the departure for Ceylon of the first sisters was fixed for autumn 1896.



Bishop Joseph Van Reeth

The 1st Bishop of Galle

On the 4th of November 1896, five Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary left for Ceylon, a beautiful tropical island situated in the Indian Ocean, with the purpose of revealing God's merciful and compassionate love by participating in the mission of Jesus.

They were: Sr. Amelia, Louise Maria

Janssens (Belgian), Sr. Alberta, Julienne Anne Donny (Belgian), Sr. Mary William, Charlotte Josephine Brennan (Irish), Sr. Alexandra, Marie Odile Cooreman (Belgian), Sr. Marcia, Irma Maria Bossaert (Belgian). These giant ladies paved the way for a wonderful era in a foreign country with the fierce tropical sun making them very uncomfortable. Yet, it was their fervent faith in Christ that gave them the strength and fortitude to set about their work. On the 24th of November 1896, this valiant band of sisters set foot on the *'Pearl of the Indian Ocean'*. When they arrived in Galle, they were warmly welcomed by Mgr. Joseph Van Reeth, Bishop of Galle, and the people.



foundation: 'Whoever believes will not be in haste.' (Is. 28:16)

The Lord carefully and lovingly chose the precious cornerstones that were to be the founding stones of this little mission. The time tested and proved that a foundation laid thus cannot be shaken. It would be an inspiring venture to reflect on these founding personalities that made this mission so strong and capable of witnessing to the primacy of love up to today.

The appointment of missionaries for Ceylon took some time. They searched for an experienced superior in good health. The choice fell on the 51-year-old superior of Beerlegem, Mother Amelia. She was scion of the Janssens family from Sint-Niklaas who has been so important for the history of the Congregation. Her uncle, Benedict De Decker, was Peter Joseph Triest's coadjutor and became the second Superior General of the Congregation.



Sister Amelia, Louise Maria Janssens

The foundation on solid rock of the mission of the SCJM in Ceylon

'Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure

Sister Alberta, Julienne Anne Donny, from Ghent, accompanied her to Tottington for the same reason. Sr.

Alberta, who was a bit younger (44 years old) than her superior, stayed at the convent at Papenvest in Brussels at the moment of her departure. There, the sisters had renowned institute for blind children and children with auditory disabilities. Perhaps this induced Sr. Alberta to exchange her function as teacher of children with auditory disabilities for a life in the tropics.

Sister Mary William Charlotte Josephine Brennan, from Ireland, was the third and the youngest sister (22 years old). Just like so many Irish people, the Brennan family probably had fled the unemployment in their own country and left for the North of England to work in the textile factories. In this way, the young Charlotte probably met the Congregation and decided to enter. After her profession, she returned to England and stayed in the convent of Tottington. She was the first Principal of Sacred Heart Convent School and served from 1896 until 1941.

Undoubtedly, Sr. William shall stand in the great history of this land. She was a valiant woman and a great missionary, a disciplinarian and an excellent leader. Sr. William brought to her work conscientiousness and devotedness. She was the soul of thoroughness and she demanded the same thoroughness and orderliness from her pupils in their studies and all else. To her teachers, she was always a considerate and sympathetic head. She was able to give so much of herself to those who worked with her because she had given all of herself to God, and what she gave to those around her was drawn from the Fountain-head of God Himself. Sr. William retired in 1941 as principal. During her lifetime, she saw the school she had begun grow and expand and fulfil its role of imparting a solid education and a set of moral values. Until the end, Sr. William continued to

be a vital part of Sacred Heart Convent. She passed away peacefully on the 3rd of July 1953. (*Extracts from longer appreciation and from the Sacred Heart Convent log book*)

Sister Alexandra, Marie Odile Cooreman and Sister Marcia, Irma Maria Bossaert

The two remaining foundresses of Galle were Sr. Alexandra and Sr. Marcia, both originating from Belgium and both 26 years of age. They entered the missionary novitiate of the Congregation to go to Congo, but the Lord's plan for them was different. After her profession, Sr. Alexandra stayed in Ronse where the Congregation served a civil hospital. This helped her to be grounded in nursing, which would have been probably useful in Galle.

The motto "*Cor unum anima una*" inspired the five sisters who set out to answer the needs of the people. To respond to the signs of that time, the sisters paid more attention to the education of children and the care of orphans, the elderly, the poor, the mentally ill and the mentally impaired.

A mustard seed

Our Founder, Canon Peter Joseph Triest, had a vision which was conditioned by his history. He experienced many trials, tribulations, failures and success, challenges and achievements during his time of ministry. The pioneering sisters, inspired by the spirit and zeal of Fr. P.J. Triest, laid down their lives for our people in Sri Lanka. They kept the

charism alive while being faithful to the spirit of the Founder.



An Oblate Sister in Ratnapura

Today, this charism is translated into the apostolic life of the Sisters of Charity manifesting the primacy of love in the mission. The essence of such spirituality has become the driving force behind all our efforts to respond to the challenges of our time with steadfast love and dedication. The sisters have opened their hearts with love to the needy, to bring the Good News of the Kingdom and to show the merciful love of Jesus Christ to everyone through their way of living, through their words and through their services.

And it becomes a tree, all types of birds come and perch in its branches. (Mt. 13:32)

At first, the sisters started teaching in the existing mixed school on Mount Calvary - Galle. In December 1896, Sr. William was made the head mistress of the school, took up the uphill task of starting this giant institution for education which was named Sacred Heart Convent. On the first day, eleven girls were present. Soon the numbers increased rapidly. Srs. Alberta and Alexander taught the smaller classes in the big room in the convent, and Sr. William went across to teach in the upper classes of boys and girls. A well

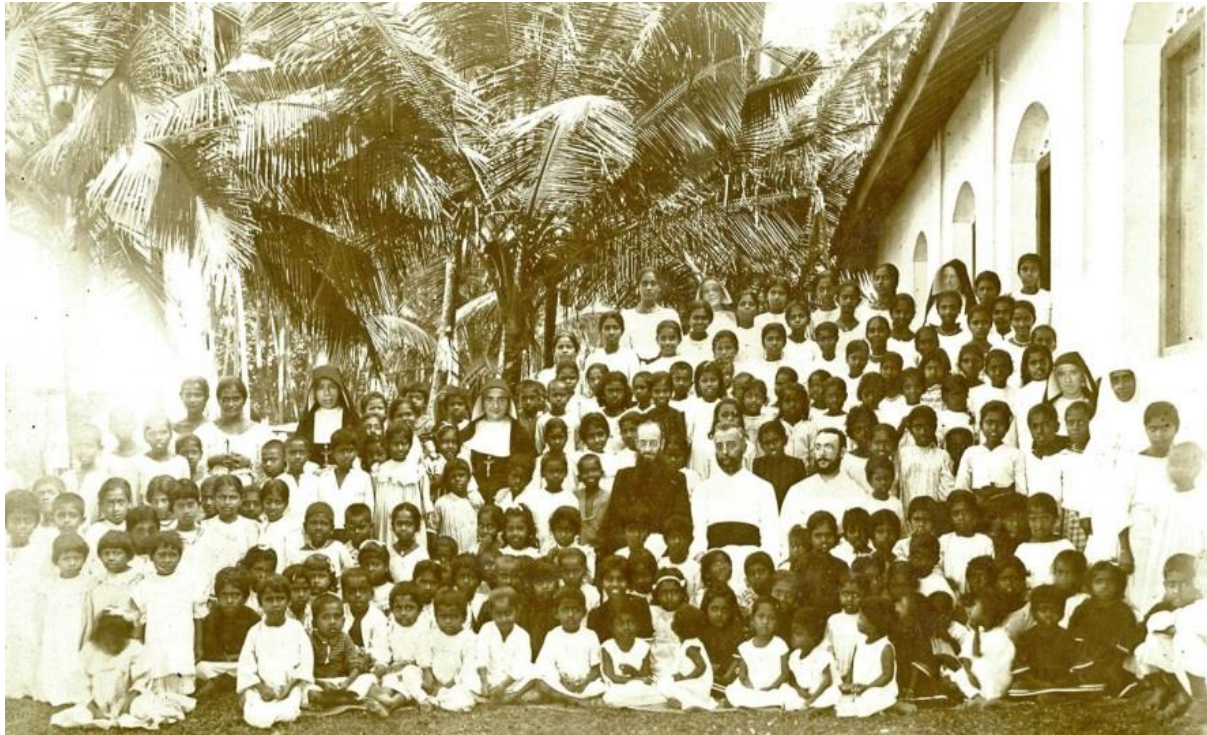
laid foundation cannot be shaken. It is not just teaching the subject but the formation of the heart and mind and helping the youth to be integrated persons to face the challenges of tomorrow.

On the 14th of February 1897, the first boarder was taken and boarding begun immediately in the convent, soon after the orphanage was started. It was in 1901 that the sisters took possession of the present Convent of Sacred Heart. They learnt the art of lace making and taught it to the girls both in the English school and in the Vernacular school. That time, lace making was a main industry in the southern part of Sri Lanka.

Within five years of its beginning, Sacred Heart Convent already consisted of an English school and a Vernacular school, a Cambridge examination class, a hostel for girls, an orphanage and a lace making class. It had become a busy place and an institute which served the needs of the country at that time. The school was mainly geared to the intellectual, social, and economic needs of the little community around the convent.



Convent Kegalle



Matara mission



Orphans in Galle

The pioneering sisters were drawn to many parts of our country to extend their mission to the people of that time. In 1908, they began St. Mary's Convent, Matara. And they went from the sea coast to the hills to begin St. Joseph's Convent, Kegalle, in 1909. Later, they captured the city of gems...and began St. Therese of the Child Jesus Convent, Ratnapura, in 1924, with courageous and effective leadership. They served zealously in witnessing to God's love and was a source of inspiration and strength to everyone.

Gratitude for the past

Someone said that *'gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow'*. At this juncture, it would be good to remember with gratitude all the SCJMs of yester-years for their contribution towards the growth and expansion of the Province. However, for the purpose of this article, mentioning of chosen few would suffice.

Sister Wilmer – The first principal of St. Mary's Convent, Matara (1908-1910)

Sister Wilma was small in size but had great inner strength. She was an educationist with exceptional ability and vision. She rendered selfless service in moulding the lives of thousands of children (in Matara and Kegalle). She was committed to the task and her invaluable contribution towards educating the younger generation was praiseworthy. Later, she became the first principal of St. Joseph's Convent, Kegalle (1911-1925). (Extracts from "75 Years of Loving Dedication" by Mrs. T. Abeywardena)

Sister Gethsemani - Principal of the Convent of the Child Jesus, Ratnapura (1924-1936)

Sr. Gethsemani had a mixture of cordiality and severity on her countenance. Behind that cloak of sternness, there was a heart that beat with love and sympathy for every child. She was a disciplinarian in every sense of the word. She never used the rod, her eyes and her look had enough of the lash in them. She had a sense of humour and wit that was not easily surpassed. She could keep a straight face while others would be rolling in laughter at some trite remark she had made. She was an excellent teacher who laboured lovingly, ungrudgingly, and sincerely. May the Lord be her reward exceeding great.

(Appreciation Sr. Gethsemane, Jubilee Souvenir)

***We salute you all, dear sisters,
for your pioneering and
visionary spirit,
your inspiring lives moulded the
character of the thousands
who entered the portals of the
convents,
and you imbued them
with a sense of all that is noble
and pure in life.***

***Under your guidance,
the mission reached out to all the
corners of the island,
and it flourished!***

The Jubilee Year



“A jubilee shall that fiftieth year be to you; in it you shall neither sow, nor reap what grows of itself, nor gather the grapes from the undressed vines. For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you; you shall eat what it yields out of the field” (Leviticus 25:11-12). It falls on every generation to celebrate God’s love, mercy and goodness for every person and every people.

This year offers us the opportunity to express our gratitude to God for the gifts of grace and holiness he has poured out on us and on the sisters who preceded us over the past 125 years. Anniversary year is also intended to be a time of spiritual renewal for the sisters in the Province. The Retreat Team has planned monthly reflections for the days of prayer and reflections on spiritual awakening and other activities, in order to:



Deepen the appreciation of the inspiring life of our Founder,
Celebrate the history of blessings in and through the Congregation,
Embrace fully the charism, our identity and provide opportunities to renew our covenant with the Lord,
Revitalize our way of life as SCJMs,
And make our presence more visible and felt by others.



We give thanks to our Gracious Lord, as we celebrate the 125 years of our life and mission. He has shown His admiration to us by giving numerous vocations and blessing us immensely. 125 years of nurturing the beginning, sustained by grace and fortified by trials and tribulations. We gratefully remember our Founder, a far-sighted visionary, a zealous missionary, a compassionate pastor, an ardent lover of the poor and a courageous prophet to all his children. We express our respect for the Spirit-filled valiant pioneering women for their faith and missionary zeal. Our gratitude goes to the visionary leaders of the Congregation who kept the charism and spirit alive, aware of the signs of the times, the senior sisters for their unmatched dedication in the service of God and the younger sisters for their vitality and vibrancy. We recount the goodness of all the Church leaders, lay collaborators, benefactors, well-wishers and families of the sisters at this joyful era.

Obviously, this year's celebration is being held in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. This is also a time for us to pause and reflect. Amidst the enormous hardship we have experienced locally and globally, the pandemic has brought many unexpected blessings. We have all been forced to find new ways of doing things and have seen how rapid communal adaptation and change are possible when there is good leadership, inspiring vision and a sense of common purpose. As we journey forward, we take courage and hope from these experiences, as we recommit as one family in Christ, celebrating the bonds we share with each other by spending time in prayer and reflection, which keeps us daring in action to realize the real meaning of Jubilee.

SCJMs today and tomorrow



At this memorable juncture, the SCJMs in Sri Lanka can truly be happy in exploring many ways of giving authentic witness to Christ and his mission in this rapidly changing world. In the last few decades, the Province of Sri Lanka has taken radical steps to live the charism meaningfully as prophetic women in responding to the signs of time.

Today we take the pleasure of serving the people in many parts of our country, through schools, Montessori's, centres for differently abled children and adults, orphanages, home for the aged,

pastoral care and many other apostolates. Through these works of mercy, we are fulfilling the words of Fr. Triest, our Founder, “Sisters of Charity, you are gods on earth”. The future in our hands totally depends on our hard work, self-sacrifice and dedication of today.

As we travelled along the way, we have discerned creatively to incarnate our charism in the concrete situations of our country today. In all our apostolic ventures, we delve into our own depths to remain creatively faithful to our founding charism, not just repeating what the founder said and did, by discerning the desire of God for us today, in this present context. We are challenged ever than before to let go of what is no longer adequate or to adapt it. We strongly hear the call to be rapid responders to emerging needs of our time.

Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, in his recent encyclical “*Fratelli Tutti*”, reflecting on the parable of the Good Samaritan, says; ‘*Jesus asks us to be present to those in need of help,*

regardless of whether or not they belong to our social group. In this case, the Samaritan ... crossed all cultural and historical barriers. Jesus concludes the parable by saying: “Go and do likewise” (Lk 10:37). In other words, he challenges us to put aside all differences and, in the face of suffering, to draw near to others with no questions asked. I should no longer say that I have neighbours to help, but that I must myself be a neighbour to others’. (FT 81)

Isn’t the challenge directed towards us, Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary of Sri Lanka today?

“Give yourself; forget yourself, in all generosity” (P.J. Triest)

Sister Pradeepika Perera



Our Main Apostolates



Mission of Formal Education



As a matter of fact, formal education has, been one of the most remarkable ministries of SCJMs from the beginning of the congregation. The Sisters of Charity started schools in Belgium before they moved to other countries. As a result, the Sisters of Charity came to Sri Lanka at the invitation of Rt. Revd. Dr. Joseph Van Reeth, Bishop of Galle.

Five daring SCJMs came to Galle in the year 1896. As they came, their first ministry was to open a formal educational institute. Sr. William, who was the first Principal of Sacred Heart Convent, Galle planted the, seed for it and today, it has grown into a massive tree sheltering thousands of students.

When the English schools were opened, they also opened a vernacular school and an industrial school 'where the girls were taught "Domestic Science", "Lace making" and "Embroidery."



As the sisters became well established in Galle, they moved on to Matara in 1908. At that time, it was the need of the society to educate the children who had limited opportunities to study outside Colombo.

In fact, mainly the financially stable and intellectually capable students benefited by the formal education, as they could climb the top rung of society by obtaining a qualitative education. In order to be a drop of deliverance to those who were in need of financial support, the industrial schools were thus begun. The training given in these schools paved the way for the children easily to be employed and earn a decent living.



The sisters moved to Kegalle from Matara in 1909 and started St. Joseph's Convent and then Convent of Child Jesus was established in Ratnapura. These schools became so popular in this little Island. Hence, students from all over Sri Lanka were admitted to the above schools as there were boarding schools and had a very good standard.

As the time passed, the tiring period came for the missionaries. In 1960,

when the government takeover bill was passed, the government decided to take over all the schools which belonged to the missionaries and thus, some of the missionaries were sent back to their own countries. By that time the local sisters were trained to take over the responsibilities as principals and teachers.

Owing to this situation, Sisters of Charity had to hand over three big schools to the Sri Lankan Government except St. Mary's, Matara.

SCJMs did not educate only the elite of the society but also, they gave their preference to the poor as the wish of their Founder, Peter Joseph Triest.



In fact, this is the reason why they started the vernacular and industrial schools for those who cannot afford. Thus, the sisters were facilitated and made much more resourceful with the introduction of teacher training courses in the colleges of education. Hence many sisters got the opportunity to enter teacher training institutions and as a result, a large number of Sisters had the chance to engage in teaching in government schools. These well-trained sisters rendered their services to remote areas seeking children who need the educational assistance. Northern, North central, Sabaragamuwa, South and Eastern Provinces were some parts where they covered with their services.

As a matter of fact, the sisters extended their services not only to educate the children but also to assist the families according to their needs. “So he took a child, stood him by his side, and said to them, “whoever welcomes this child in my name, welcomes me.” (Lk. 9/48)

Teaching is a profession where the teacher imparts knowledge while dealing with the 'whole life of the child including the parents. Most of our sisters who are engaged in the field of education are serving the poor.

Our Founder once told the Sisters of Charity, "I am a sister of Charity charged 'with the, education of children.

So I am accountable for this precious charge of so many souls, the salvation of those for whom I shall have to render account". (Peter Joseph Triest the founder).

Sr. Sandamali Kurera



THE DIFFERENTLY ABLED CHILD

Rev. Father Triest in his great love would instead call them God's Special Children! Who they are. Special! As society becomes more aware, the terminology changes. The current terms are; Children with Special Needs, Differently Gifted, with Learning Difficulties etc.

Our Founder's dream was that his sisters work for and serve the poor, the vulnerable, the marginalized and neglected. This dream resonated and resonates with Sisters of Charity. The saying of St. Francis, "Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible", contains briefly the story of the services of the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary, for these special ones. Diverse approaches and methods are used to discover their hidden beauty and talents, to believe in them and enable them to bloom.!



And so, the story unfolds: The dream and vision of Mother Elizabeth of the Trinity, ably backed by Rev.



Father Percy Abraham SJ. and implemented with tremendous enthusiasm, the joie de vivre of Sr. Damien Dissanayake and her young group of enthusiastic sisters were the beginning of the realization of the dream. The latter faced a herculean challenge, but with great trust in God transformed what was an old dilapidated and abandoned Walauwa, (Manor House) and 52 acres of overgrown, neglected and snake infested land into the beautiful Garden of Love, (Supem Uyana). The initial groups of sisters were daring and ready for any challenge. As can be seen clearly by this set of unclear photos!

Mother Elizabeth, envisioned a fully trained **multi-disciplinary** team of sisters to carry out the project to its heights. Supem Uyana, broke new ground, veered away from the practice of institutional care, introduced the cottage and family living, as the very first of its kind in Sri Lanka. Various locally based NGOs, Missio, Misereor and others, provided the Congregation with the finances needed to expand; and to put up a training center, cottages, and dispensary and make the place dynamic and vibrant.

The work in Supem Uyana, was recognized for its high standard of quality service by the Department and Ministry of Social Services, the Church

and the Country, as a leading and Trail Blazing Center. It also provided a Training for many young women, with a curriculum that was all inclusive, for a holistic training. Many later worked and took up leadership in this field in different parts of the island. Volunteers, local and from overseas, were regular participants. They helped expand the horizons and broadened the outlook of Supem Uyana so that it could be on par with leading homes and centers. (Supem Uyana, today)

Supem Uyana cares for boys and girls of ages varying from 3 to 20. Most of the children enter at a very early age and leave when they are sufficiently trained in self-care and independence and can take their rightful place in society.

As providence would have it, events in the history of the country, enabled us to open other centers. Firstly, the JVP uprising was instrumental in bringing the services to Colombo. It was the beginning of the Daya Mina Center.



From a humble beginning in the garage of Marian Hostel, Colpetty, to Polhengoda and finally to the current location, in Embuldeniya.

At this time, the city of Colombo, saw Sr. Anne Marie Dhooghe as the first nun on a scooter, clad in a Saari, whizzing around, scouting for a suitable place, which she did find almost miraculously! The money received from Missio was exactly the sum needed to purchase the property. As with Supem Uyana, Daya Mina too has many firsts to its name. The independent skills home unit in a cottage outside the campus, training for job opportunities, running a shop, food catering for the public and many other vocational skills.



The Sudaya Trust, an umbrella organization of lay experts was set up on the 6th December 1992 for the welfare of both Supem Uyana and DayaMina. And now, a “Dream Team” of Parish youth was just formed to work towards the motto: “that they may have life and have it in fullness.” A sort mod think tank!!!

Secondly, in the aftermath of the disastrous Tsunami of 2004, The Day Center Meth Mihira originally known as ‘Caritas’ in Korlawella, Moratuwa, was opened in August. It is active and vibrant, with lay involvement. Beginning with early intervention they

recently introduced vocational skill training for the older student.



The long-term residential care for persons over 40 years who have been to either Supem Uyana or Daya Mina, with parent involvement in Daya Sevana, Kegalle in April 2010 was another first in the Country. An urgent need, answering the pain of many hearts broken and anxious parents.

The latest project in the field is a day center for Autistic Children in Mount Lavinia.

All the above is but a sketchy backdrop. One cannot capture in a few pages the vibrancy of life lived, on the part of the SCJMs, as well as the students, staff and well-wishers. The seed planted in 1964 has grown into a beautiful tree and its fruit has been felt in the country and overseas.

And what is it for the future? Pablo Picasso says: “There is only one way to look at things, until someone shows us how to look at them with different eyes.”

So we look with different eyes!

What is it to care for the differently abled? And what are we trying to do with our services? What are the challenges we meet and more relevant, how do we see the future? What is the vision to take forward? Self-Advocacy is



not yet witnessed in Sri Lanka; it needs to come!

The apostolate demands that the sisters involved be imbued with the spirit of our Founder, for the voiceless and marginalized. It demands a total commitment and that they are knowledgeable. There are many high professional standards in this service in the society at large to realize and accept. This ministry may not see spectacular results but the mastering of simple little hurdles with great patience.



This field of service has many possibilities: Education individually and of society as a whole. Challenging and major innovations need to be thought of in research and prevention. Normalization, inclusion or community-based service systems. Accompaniment and support to parents, learning to co-work and collaborate, home training, curative approaches and facing the biggest dilemma of continued residential care. With so many questions we realize that it is not an area that receives sufficient attention even nationally and we need to stop and think and then of course Plan!!

What is the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on our services? What adjustment do we need to make? The apostolate as we knew it has changed, but this is the case in all the services Island wide. How do we think differently for the differently gifted person in our care.?



Rev. Fr. Kuriacose SJ. the Vice President of the Sudaya Trust would



insist that nothing but the best would do! The best care, the best training of the sisters and the best facilities. “Your Founder’s heart is here”, he said and if the Sister of Charity has no answers, who has? Similarly, Professor Reauven Feuerstein encourages search for islets of normalcy. We will indeed be overwhelmed by what we discover.

It is wished that everyone may get a chance to work with special needs children at some point in their lives. It is life changing, and these children are changing lives, and though they do not always know about what they are doing, it is to be treasured with gratitude.

Reference to all the web sites:

- www.SupemUyana.
- www.dayaminascjmservices.org
- www.methmihira

Rev. Sr. Anastasia Perera



MISSION TOWARDS THE ELDERLY



We the Sisters of Charity have a long history of caring for the elders, which can be traced back to the year 1806. So, on this occasion of celebrating the 125 years of Sri Lankan province we lookback with gratitude at the history of caring for the Elders in our Province. Although the way of caring has taken a great stride the spirit of service is the same. “Our Mission as Sisters of Charity is to reveal that God is Love” (Const. art.52)

In 1927 mid-February, at the official inauguration of the Van Reeth Memorial Home for elders in Galle was blessed and was made ready for 26 elders. The criteria being ‘all elders irrespective of religion would get the best care possible’. The name Van Reeth was given, because Msgr. Van Reeth was the 1st Bishop of Galle who was a friend and protector of the poorest. This being the 3rd Home for Elders in the island started by missionaries (85 years ago) was considered the best Home for elders in the South and a model Home, by the Social Services Department (log book 1957, 1982.)



The next venture was by the Sisters of St Joseph’s Convent, Kegalle who reached out to the care of the Elders in Ranwala Home, when they took over the Home in January 1941. As the buildings of the Home were not sufficient, with the generosity of the Wickramasinghe family of Kegalle, the foundation stone for new building was laid on the 11th of February, 1951, and was declared open on the 30th November by our first Prime Minister, Mr. D.S. Senanayake. It is Mr. D.S. Senanayake who after the findings of

the Ivor Jennings report in 1944 stating there were numerous poor elders in the country, decided to open a Home for needy elders in every District in Ceylon. (Sri Lanka)



At the beginning Ranwala Wickramasinghe Home was administered by the Sisters of St Joseph's Convent Kegalle, travelling daily to Ranwala. In 1967 a community was formed with Sr Gertrude Senenviratna as the sister in charge. During this period a need arose to care for the pensioners who were finding it difficult to live alone and we opened our services to care for the pensioners, for a nominal payment. So began the paying Homes run by the Sisters starting with Marian Home, Dehiwela.



The need again arose in the North as the aftermath of war many elders were left alone and who needed our care and concern. The Bishop of Mannar invited the Sisters to take care of the Home that was opened in 1986.

Since then, the Sisters have undertaken to administer Homes for the elderly that belongs to other philanthropists. Yet with the same spirit that prevailed at the inception "keeping in mind that we are called to witness to God's compassion and tenderness. Empowered by the Spirit continue the prophetic mission of Jesus bringing about freshness into our tasks of caring for the Elders and being zealous and ever creative in our Mission in the spirit of our founder, Peter Joseph Triest."

Sr. Edel Pieris

Montessories

Is: 63 Let me sing the praises
Yahweh's goodness
And of His marvelous Deeds
In return for all that he has done for us
And for His great kindness
He has shown us in His Mercy
And in His boundless goodness.

Montessori Education:

Your children
Though they be with you,
Thy do not belong to us.
You can give them your love
But much less your thoughts.
You can give shelter to their bodies,
But not to their souls.
Their soul lives in to-morrow's
mansion,
Which you cannot even visit in your
dreams. (From an ancient Chinese
poem)

The psychological needs of the pre-school child and the role of the pre-primary Institutions. This statement puts its' two terms in relation to each other and thereby firmly puts, pre-primary Education among those of education commonly called "Modern". The link-up between the psychological needs of the child before school going age (2 ½ yrs.) and pre-primary education in this function is a challenge.

We would like to call it a "charism-call". It should be the subject matter. Here is a conquest to be preserved and developed at all cost, and by all means. Here is something to fight for with all our energy and resources. This is a social question for which each individual in society should give full recognition.

Always quiet, elegant by nature, when people complemented her, she wanted them not to look at her finger but at childhood to which it pointed. In the first place to those poor children of the quarter of Lorenzo in Rome, Mama Montessori who from a physician became an educationist. She used to say 'Christ exhorted us to leave everything and follow Him'. Mama Montessori on a natural level left all to dedicate herself to her work of special redemption of bringing to light, the liberated soul of the child and his dignity in some form or other.



**The child is the Eternal Messiah
descending along fallen man to
lead them to the Kingdom of
Heaven.**



DECALOGUE

(Compiled from Dr. Montessori's Lectures)

- Never touch the child unless invited by him.
- Never speak ill of the child in his presence or absence,
- Concentrate on strengthening and helping the development of what is good in the child, so that

its presence leave less and less space for bad.

- Be active in preparing the environment, take meticulous care of it. Help the child to establish constructive relations with it. Show the proper place where the means of development are kept and demonstrate their proper use.
- Respect the child who makes a mistake and then or later correct it himself; but stop it firmly and immediately any misuse of the environment, and any action which endangers the child his development or others.
- Be ever ready to answer the call of the child who stands in need of you, and ever listen and respond to the child who appeals to you.
- Respect the child who takes rest or watches others working or ponders over what he himself has done or will do. Neither calls him nor forces him to other forms of activity.
- Help those who in search of activity and cannot find it.
- Be untiring in repeating the presentation to the child who refused them earlier, in helping the child to acquire what is not yet his own and overcome imperfection. Do this by animating environment with care, and silence with mind, words a loving presence.
- Never threaten the child with the best of good manners and offer him the best you have in yourself and at your disposal.

Sr. Francis Borgia

Tender Love and Compassion shared with the Needy Children.

“We respond to the needs of those to whom we are sent meeting them at the level of their deepest aspirations and so helping them to discover their dignity as human persons and children of God (C 52).

“Faithful to the spirit of Father Triest we devote ourselves to the instruction and education of children.”(C 53).

Tender Love and Compassion extend to helpless children in two registered homes for girls; one at Kegalle St. Joseph’s and the other at Convent of the Child Jesus Ratnapura. The convent of the Child Jesus Ratnapura began on the 10th of October, 1924 and Kegalle in the year 1925. One of the main apostolates of these convents are taking care of children.



The Vincent’s Girls Home was opened for children deserted and destitute and most vulnerable. It has 75 children (seventy-five) at present. The children were paid a small grant by the government which was insufficient to feed the children. Therefore, this has to be subsidized by donations and alms which were not always regular. The

main objective of opening such orphanages is specifically to provide the home for the homeless, to give the girls a good education to meet the challenges in the future lives and to provide the girls with opportunities to experience love and care by accompanying the children with love and compassion towards healing, equality, brotherhood, participation and sharing.



From the time of inception Sisters of Charity have been responsible for the children and their holistic formation. Sisters did their best to accompany the children to become their best. Most of the girls who completed their formal education were given special study courses according to their capacity. Almost all of them are leading successful lives. They do visit the home with their children.

The formation given to them helps them to grow into a balanced personality. They pray, study, play,

cook and work in the garden; support each other in their studies; organize functions and regular well-balanced meals with supplements are provided.

Special attention is given to children who are malnourished and weak. Those who are able to study the opportunities given for higher education at the university and other training courses. Non-formal education is given to school dropouts and those who have no opportunity for formal studies. Children who have no one are given in marriage and regular follow-up is done by the sisters in charge. Children who had been with us are doing very well, they are doing good jobs. There are few children who are employed abroad they communicate to the sisters.



The children in the homes at Kegalle and Ratnapura attend National Schools that are on the premises. They need to be supplied with all the facilities necessary like any other students in the school. The help given by Mary's friend is highly appreciated, as it provides the necessary assistance to overcome the difficulties faced financially.

There were only eight girls at the commencement of this Girls' Home in

Ratnapura and now there are 75 girls studying here. These 75 girls enjoy more facilities and are given a very good educational background with the sponsorship of Mary's friends. Most of the students do their best, they are good at studies and extracurricular activities. Few of them were serving the school being on the board of prefects. At St. Josephs' Kegalle there were babies too. At the beginning Sisters in charge then had really taken care of those babies almost like their mothers. They are leading successful lives some visit the sisters with their children. The bond continues as it is strongly and lovingly nit.

They attend Sunday schools and participate in religious programs such as retreats, bible competitions, etc. The children from other religions opportunities are provided to practise their religion. Opportunities are provided for retreats, confessions at the parish level. The students are been helped during lent and advent with special meditation with the catholic association in the school, unlike earlier days now the hostellers and the girls from coming together for functions and celebrations.

As the sisters accompany the children, they see God in them, they too learn from them. They find joy in seeing the children coming up in life. God bless the sisters who do this loving service sharing God's tender, compassionate love.

Sr. Rose Marina Kekulawala

Our Mission in Hostels

Inspired by the words of our Founder we the Sisters of Charity devote ourselves to the instruction and education of children, young people and adults.

Under the umbrella of education, school boardings became part of our apostolates. This mission which was initiated at Sacred Heart Convent in the first circle grew in the four main communities: Galle, Matara, Kegalle and Ratnapura.

In the latter part of the centenary hostels were started in the North: Cheddikulam, Nilaveli and Ramanadhapuram.

We maintain hostels to assist the children and youth to become mature persons. We are providing shelter to those who are seeking for protection and guidance from us. Most of them are from faraway places and majority of the hostellers are disturbed and coming from broken families.

For that reason, we try our very best to provide security they expect from us while building a healthy

atmosphere among them to grow with self-respect and dignity. We also make them aware to become other centered rather than becoming selfish and accumulating for them. With all these values it is our dream that these young girls become responsible citizens in the country and committed housewives one day.

Creating a Community of love we allow them to share their talents, capabilities, hopes and aspirations with one another. We also encourage and remind them to cultivate a deeper friendship through forgiveness and reconciliation.

We feel very proud to see the past pupils who are leading happy family life while being busy bees in the society. Together with the Psalmist we praise the Lord: "I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart in the company of the upright, in the Congregation. Great are the works of the Lord.... (Ps: 111 / 1-2)

Sr. Marie Constance Fernando



Apostolate on Pastoral Care



Since the arrival of the Sisters of Charity in Sri Lanka in 1896 Pastoral Care was undertaken by our Sisters. At the beginning it was limited to teaching Catechism in our own schools. Many other Charity services were done within the premises of the Institutions. As time passed our mission area got widened, so was our Pastoral Apostolate. Sisters entered the Government Schools for teaching secular subjects as well as Religion. Many others started teaching catechism at Parish level. After the schools were taken over by the Government in 1960, school curriculum allowed only two periods of religion per week. In such a situation, Pastoral work at Parish level became very important. New communities were opened in the North and the South with new visions. Some of the new communities were mainly assigned for Pastoral work. The new concept of the small communities heavily supported the Pastoral work, allowing almost all the sisters in the community to get involved in socio- pastoral work, beside the Apostolate of Education. In Sunday Schools sisters worked together with the lay Catechists to introduce Jesus

Christ and His way of life as well as the Sacramental life of the Christians.



Sunday school has become an oasis to build up the faith life of the children.

Sisters take up seriously the words of Jesus; “Go then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples; baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit...” Following the request of those who wish to embrace our Religion, there are adult catechism classes in most of the Parishes where our sisters take up the responsibility of preparing them. Sisters spend time with them to find out

whether they have the correct motive. Once they are on the right track, they are taught, they are taught from A to Z about Christianity. They are eager to know about Jesus Christ and His way of life. Once they receive the Sacraments, the catechist has to journey with them until their faith is somewhat strong.

Visiting of houses of the Parish Community is another important task in the Pastoral work. Sisters undertake this service willingly, knowing well that the personal touch with the parishioners is a great help to build up communion in their families. Family issues are discussed in these visits and help to find solutions which are a great help for them. Besides the visits, sisters also make use of ASIPA and small Christian Community strategies to help their faith life grow. In these meetings a few families come together to read the Word of God reflectively (days reading or coming Sunday) after which they share their own reflections. Finally, the group takes a common practical resolution while each family will take a resolution that will help them. This is done weekly and this type of group praying helps the families to become open to each other and grow in their faith life while bringing communion among themselves. Sisters play an important role in these gatherings.



The power of the Holy Spirit is ever present in every person as well as in the whole creation. The Church is no exception. Once Mr. Lalith Perera, a devout Catholic has introduced in the Church a movement namely, the “Community of the Risen Lord” (CRL). Throughout our Country these cells are functioning. Some of our sisters in the pastoral field are working with these CRL groups as to encourage more lay people to deeper prayer life and charitable activities. CRL groups invite the participants to meet weekly for group prayers (Praise and worship) during which they praise, thank, ask pardon and entrust their lives into the hands of God. Finally, the participants invite the Holy Spirit to fill them with the gifts and fruits of the Spirit. Empowered by the Holy Spirit they bear witness to the Lord and engage themselves in intercessory prayer groups to pray for the needs of the humanity. Not only that they are led by the Spirit to carryout various charitable activities for the needy. Some of our sisters join with these CRL groups in different Dioceses to encourage more lay people to prayer life and charity-based activities.

It is worth recalling to mind two major events of the recent past where our sisters spent their lives in the service of the people to build up the shattered



lives of people both spiritually and economically.

26th of December 2004, is an unforgettable day for all of us in Sri Lanka and nearby Asian Countries. On this day Tsunami struck the Country devastating whole coastal area in the Island. It has levelled the mighty and the lowly alike. Our sisters in the North and the South alike joined hands with these Religious Congregations to meet the needs. Along the sea belt of Sri Lanka from KKS to Dondra nobody was spared. Nearly 40000 people were marked as dead. Among them our Sr. Bernadette Koelmeyer was also counted. While some buried dead, others took care of the living. Providing basic needs was one thing, consoling the weeping was another. To convince the people that God still cares for them was most difficult. This special type of work continued for several years. There was a beautiful spirit of networking among the Religious as well as the laity. Faith life of the people was built up gradually after keeping close touch with them and praying with them as often as possible.



The pastoral work of our sisters has reached its peak moment in the aftermath of the “Easter Attack”. The health sector; hospitals and doctors did their utmost best to heal the physically wounded but healing the hearts and minds of people was much bigger job than what one would imagine. Together with other Religious - women and men, Sisters of Charity- our sisters too accomplished a tremendous service in the areas of Negombo -Katuwapitiya and Kochchikade - Colombo. The networking was commendable. Visiting house to house, counselling and using other psychological therapies in the gentlest way was no easy task. Beside these, healing the mind and heart was most difficult. “Why did God do this to us Catholics?” was the question of every victimized. It was prayer that helped hundreds of people to forgive their opponents. The anger and the hatred towards the other ethnic group was gradually removed by the power of prayer of all those who served them. Thank God, all Religious groups and Lay movements did their best in the Pastoral field forgetting themselves. Still the work is not yet over. Our Sisters in those areas continue their programmes with the victimized. Slowly people are beginning to understand God’s plan which is very different to our human plan.

Finally, we hope and pray that our Sisters engaged in Pastoral work will reach out to those who do not know God.

Sr. Marie Samaranayake

Lived Experience of the Pastoral Activities in the North

As we are celebrating another important milestone of our religious congregation in Sri Lanka, the 125 years of love experienced and service rendered to the people, urged by the tender compassionate love of the Good Shepherd, we the SCJM communities reach out to the vulnerable by our comforting presence and care for the poor, the sick and the afflicted. Having heard this call, we are sent on a mission of Love.

During the past 125 years of love and service when we look at the pastoral activities in our mission area, the sisters were pushed to care for the flock that were under their care. The lived experience of the pastoral activities of the sisters having been one of caring and comforting especially all those who are wounded in life, the sisters' presence was bringing wholeness and reconciliation to the war victims.



During and after the war the people lost hope in life. Our sisters' presence have helped them to regain their dignity and start their life with the scraps left after the war. The sisters also took care of the

physical, spiritual, mental and psychosocial needs of the people, especially in all the women headed families. Youth and children were the target groups that was shown much care and concern.

When the civil war started in 1984 between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government army, our first community in North-Cheddikulam was much affected by the war. People lost their lives and their goods; properties were damaged or looted. Suddenly people were missing. All the families who found in missing their husbands, sons and loved ones, flocked to the convent asking the sisters to help them to obtain information about their dear ones who were disappeared from the army. Our sisters bravely went to the army commanders and pleaded for the



release of the young boys and fathers who were taken away by the army.

Sisters also provided shelter and food to the people who lost their houses and belongings. At that time, there were funerals to be attended and families to be consoled. This was our sister's service to our people just to be with them and enter into their suffering, in giving them hope.

During the severe war period, three of our sisters- Rita, Vasanthi and Kirutha were able to recount their gruelling and challenging experiences. Three months along with the people sisters fought for their survival and protected the girls in their care. To find food and shelter was much difficult. They just stayed alive while in the meantime giving courage and hope to all around them. Our sisters were displaced seven times during the three months and had to find shelter and new areas each time. It was also hard for them to know that their convent has been affected and not much is left behind. Our sisters were also grateful to Rev. Fr. Roch, their Parish Priest who journeyed with them in their painful moments.



During the war and displacement, sisters attended the urgent needs such

as medical helps and provided food and clothing to all those who are affected. They also protected many young girls from the forceful recruitment of the LTTE. Each day the Sisters attended as many as funerals they could be and consoled the people.

Reflecting the article 52 of our Constitution, with full of trust in God who called us to walk into the unknown at all levels who were affected by 30-year war and Tsunami. After this experience the families have their own unhealed experiences. In some parishes the senior citizens have strong faith in God. Their simplicity and simple faith are not much shared to the next generation. As a community the sister felt to pay more attention on spiritual and moral needs and also education. The sisters felt that each family is sacred and respected their needs and listened to their stories. The people have much trust in the sisters and their prayers. This made the sisters to feel their presence is very much needed and witnessing life have touched the people.

Sister's continuous visits and guidance of the families reminded the senior citizens life style and their faith experience to the young ones and the young families to become more praying families. It has led them to have a peaceful family life bringing understanding, forgiveness and accepting members and situation. Experiencing our charism of love, we grow together witnessing to God's compassion and tenderness bringing warmth and light to all specially the wounded in our society.

Recognizing the most vulnerable the sisters have been caring them and been

a healing presence to the people who have lost their properties, loved ones and their identity owing to the war. Amidst all the loss and painful experience, the sisters move to the people to give hope and courage to them. The hardships and the difficulties that the people have gone through helped them to become stronger in their faith.

To deepen their faith and trust in God sisters continued to serve the people by different pastoral activities such as preparing them for different sacraments, conducting catechism classes and different pious association participating in ASIPA (Small Christian Communities) taking communion to the sick, visiting sick and old etc.

During the war and after the war, sisters constantly visited the wounded and provided medical facilities and listened to their stories by been with them. Sisters also visited the refugee camps and distributed clothes and food items to the people. The women headed families were supported by self-help projects. Counselling was given to the women and children. Extra care was given to the youth to come after rehabilitation, helped the poor people to educate their children by conducting evening classes.

On the course of time sisters also saw the improvement in the life of people. The families

became more praying and motivated their children to be educated. Family bond was strengthened. The people also learnt to be happy with whatever they have and shared with each other. Sisters also saw lot of leadership in people. The children gained education with discipline and morally. The understanding among other religions and languages was improved.

They started to respect different cultures. The people became more selfless and some of them involved in social activities.

They learnt to appreciate and encourage each other. Lot of positive thinking was created. They gradually started to cope with life and be happy.

Sr. Malar Coonghe



PROVINCIAL SUPERIORS IN SRI LANKA



**Mother Elizabeth de la
Trinite
1968 - 1969**



**Sister Mary Anne Perera
1969 - 1972**



**Sister Francesca of
Christ Augustine
1972 - 1978**



**Sr. Marie de Lorette de Silva
1978 - 1985
1994 - 2002**



Sr. Anastasia Perera
1985 - 1994
2006 - 2010



Sr. Marie Samaranayake
2002 - 2006



Sister Deepthika Silva
2010 - 2017



Sister Ajitha Fernando
2018 -

List of the Provincial Teams:

- 1. Mother Elizabeth de La Trinity** **1967 to 1970**
Sr. Marie de Lorette, Sr. Margaret Mary, Sr. Francesca of Christ, Sr. John of the Sacred Heart.
- 2. Mother Mary Anne Perera** **1969 to 1972**
Sr. Grace Perera, Sr. John of the Sacred Heart, Sr. Antonette Silva, Sr. Francesca of Christ
Bursar: Sr. Michellis Swysen
- 3. Sr. Francesca of Christ** **1972 to 1976**
Sr. Grace Perera, Sr. Antonette Silva, Sr. Margaret Mary Fernando, Sr. Adrian Doran
Bursar: Sr. Berchmans Varnakulasingham
- 4. Sr. Francesca of Christ** **1976 to 1978**
Sr. Marie de Lorette de Silva, Sr. Margaret Mary Fernando, Sr. Grace Perera, Sr. Maxima Rupasinghe
Bursar: Sr. Tharsille Savarimuthu
- 5. Sr. Marie De Lorette De Silva** **1978 to 1981**
Sr. Francesca of Christ Sr. Margaret Mary Fernando, Sr. Maxima Rupasinghe, Sr. Anastasia Perera
Bursar: Sr. Tharsille Savarimuthu
- 6. Sr. Marie De Lorette De Silva** **1981 to 1985**
Sr. Anastasia Perera Sr. Benignus Silva, Sr. Eustace Tilakaratne,
Bursar: Sr. Tharsille Savarimuthu
- 7. Sr. Anastasia Perera** **1985 to 1989**
Sr. Gloria Fernando, Sr. Benignus Silva, Sr. Melani Silveira, Sr. Rosina Nanayakkara/ Sr. Celestine
Bursar: Sr. Margaret Mary Fernando
- 8. Sr. Anastasia Perera** **1989 to 1993**
Sr. Benignus Silva, Sr. Melani Silveira, Sr. Francesca of Christ, Sr. Marie Samaranayake
Bursar: Sr. Gloria Gunawardena

9. Sr. Marie De Lorette De Silva

1993 to 1997

Sr. Vineetha Malagoda, Sr. Francesca of Christ, Sr. Gloria Fernando,
Sr. Isabella / Sr. Goretti Sebastianpillai
Bursar: Sr. Gloria Gunawardena

10. Sr. Marie De Lorette De Silva

1997 to 2001

Sr. Alex Molligoda, Sr. Marie Samaranayake, Sr. Arul Mary Ravel, Sr. Goretti
Sebastianpillai, Sr. Anastasia Perera/ Sr. Malkanthi Fernando
Bursar: Sr. Ajitha Fernando

11. Sr. Marie Samaranayake

2001 to 2006

Sr. Deepthika Silva, Sr. Malkanthi Fernando, Sr. Benignus Silva,
Sr. Jeyakody Visuvasam, Sr. Ajitha Fernando
Bursar: Sr. Lohini Fernando

12. Sr. Anastasia Perera

2006 to 2010

Sr. Sandamali Kurera, Sr. Ajitha Fernando, Sr. Gloria Fernando,
Sr. Nichola Emmanuel, Sr. Goretti Sebastianpillai
Bursar: Sr. Lohini fernando

13. Sr. Deepthika Silva

2010 to 2014

Sr. Lohini Fernando, Sr. Marie Samaranayake, Sr. Dominica Swampillai,
Sr. Sakunthala Kandasamy, Sr. Sandamali Kurera,
Bursar: Sr. Rupika Perera

14. Sr. Deepthika Silva

2014 to 2017

Sr. Ajitha Fernando, Sr. Jeyakody Visuvasam, Sr. Pradeepika Perera,
Sr. Marie Samaranayake, Sr. Rita Anthonypillai
Bursar: Sr. Rupika Perera
Assist: Sr. Priyani Perera

15. Sr. Ajitha Fernando

2017 to 2022

Sr. Patsy Pitchai, Sr. Malkanthi Fernando, Sr. Lanka Fernando,
Sr. Yogarani Rajaratnam
Bursar: Sr. Priyani Perera



Diamond Jubilarians 1961-2021



Sr. Francis Borgia



Sr. Benignus Silva



Sr. Edel Pieris

New Insertions



Periya Komarasankulam, Vavuniya

In August 1990 all the people of Cheddikulam (about 30,000 people) moved to Madhu Shrine for safety due to ethnic disturbances. There was no one left except for security forces. The priests and sisters along with the people leaving all their belongings in the church and in the convent left for Madhu with minimum necessities they could afford to carry. During this time a good number of people from all parts of the North including Cheddikulam went to India as refugees. The community consisted of Srs. Laetitia, Hilary, Goretti and Concy. His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Thomas Saundranayagam, Bishop of Mannar was also residing in Madhu Shrine with the refugees.

In November 1992 the Indian Government has sent back the refugees from India and the refugees from Cheddikulam also returned. They were settled in Cheddikulam School under the care of security forces. When the refugees returned to Cheddikulam, the Bishop requested the Sisters to get back to Cheddikulam.

On the 16th November, 1992, Sr. Anastasia, the Provincial Superior, the Bishop, Srs. Noeline Punchihewa, Michelle Lambert and Maria Goretti went to Cheddikulam to start the community. The convent was severely damaged and the sisters stayed in the hostel. On 18th November there was an attack and cross firing and the sisters spend the night with the refugees in the school. Sr. Michelle left for Colombo.



On 1st January, 1993, Sr. Noeline fell ill and was taken to Colombo. Sr. Goretti was left alone as it was not to move to that place due to fighting. Sisters moved to Vavuniya HF convent and was travelling to Cheddikulam School daily. On 14th October, 1993, Sr. Concy got her teaching appointment to Vavuniya and the Provincial government decided to rent a house in Vavuniya and Sr. Jeyaseeli joined as 3rd member of the community until they returned to Cheddikulam.

After some time, Bishop Rayappu Joseph the New Bishop of Mannar took the sisters back to Cheddikulam to find that the army was occupying the convent and the hostel. The Bishop wanted the sisters to wait till the army moved but it was taking long and the army was not moving.

This paved the way for the Sisters of Charity to move to Periya Komarasankulam.

Returning to Cheddikulam seemed impossible; the Bishop was convinced that the Sisters moved to Komarasankulam. In March 1994, Bishop Rayappu expressed his desire that the Sisters of Charity to venture into the new mission at Komarasankulam where 75 catholic families reside and start a convent. At this time Srs. Goretti and Concy were attached to Rampaikulam MV School, Sr. Jacintha Sebamalai was teaching in Koilkuulam and Sr. Angeline was involved in pastoral work in Rampaikulam.

In April 1994 Bishop Rayappu who met Sr. Marie de Lorette - the Provincial Superior and expressed his desire and requested the presence of Sisters of Charity to Komarasankualm and she agreed. The transfer of the two teaching sisters to Komarasankualm came into effect on May 1st,1994.

There was no accommodation for the sisters at Komarasankualm so the two sisters travelled daily from Rampaikulam a journey of 10 miles. The Bishop assured that the Parish Priest would vacate the Parish House soon and the sisters could occupy the house. Fr. Soosaipillai, the Parish Priest left the presbytery in July and the Bishop requested Fr. Devasahayam to arrange the house for the sisters to move.



New Venture of the Sisters at Periya Komarasankulam

On 3rd1994, Fr. Devasahayam brought the four sisters from Rampaikulam to the new mission at Komarasankulam to the presbytery which was a temporary arrangement. Sr. Melani cleared up the place and used as the formation House for the candidates while continuing the pastoral care.

Bishop Rayappu informed Sr. Marie Samaranayake, the Provincial Superior about a new plot of land set aside for the convent very close to the church and requested to build the convent for the sisters. Sr. Lohini, the bursar visited the plot of land. Necessary steps were taken and land deed was obtained from DS Office.

On the 8thApril, 2005, Rev. Fr. J. B. Devararajah laid the foundation stone after the Eucharistic celebration with the parishioners. Rev. Fr. Jeyanthan OMI organized a prayer service for the laying of the Foundation.

The convent was blessed and opened by Rt. Rev. Dr. Rayaappu Joseph on 11thFebruary, 2006. The traditional boiling of the milk took place. The Parish Priest Fr. Sahayanathan, the parishioners and Sisters from all the convents in Sri Lanka were present. Sr. Jeyam prepared a meaningful liturgy for the opening ceremony. The community members were Srs. Jeyam, Rene, Neelmino and Concy and Sr. Jeyam appointed as the superior.

Apostolic Involvement of the Sisters:

- Two sisters were full time teachers at the GTMS Komarasankulam. The

- attendance in the school climbed up to more than a thousand children due to the influx of the refugees.
- All the sisters conducted Catechism classes on Sundays and assisted in weekly prayer meetings (Anpam - BCC) in different homes.
- Animating the youth of the Parish and regular Gospel sharing with them
- Animating the Liturgy commission and Church Choir.
- Animating the Parish Devotional Groups such as: Legion of Mary, Mothers' Union, Maria Goretti and Holy Childhood.
- Visiting the families and spiritual animation to Komarasankulam and sub stations in Sithampapuram, Veppankulam and Achchipuram

Sisters teaching in school were happy in their apostolate because they have scope for bringing the Good News among the Christian students and giving value education to the majority Hindu children. The Sisters responsible for the liturgy and parish animation were able to have contact with the youth and families. The parishioners were very happy with the presence of the sisters and cooperated well with them in the pastoral activities.

This house also served as a formation house to keep the aspirants. Srs. Virgin, Ahalya, Rasamary spent their candidacy in Komarasankulam.

Sr. Jeyamalar Jacob

New Venture into Ramanathapuram

The mission in Ramanathapuram began at the request of His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Thomas Saundranayagam, Bishop of Jaffna. The Jaffna Diocese is comprised of Kilinochchi and Mullaithive Districts. In response to the request of the Bishop the Provincial Team decided to open a community in Ramanathapuram to be a healing presence and bring reconciliation and relief to war torn people in the North.

The Sisters left Colombo on 14th February 1995 with some necessary items in a lorry. They were stopped in Vavuniya army check point for seven days. Sr. Goretti and Arul Mary met the army commander and got the pass to precede the journey. On the 9th day they reached Vattakachchi. They strongly felt the providential care of God throughout the journey.

Caritas Convent was blessed and opened on 23rd February, 1995 by Rev. Fr. Sebastian the Parish Priest. Due to the prevailing situation the Bishop was unable to come and bless the house. Sr. Marie de Lorette the Provincial Superior and councillors Srs. Francisca of Christ, Gloria, and Bella blessed the occasion with their valuable presence. The community was comprised Srs. Arul Mary (Superior), Jeyakody, Jacintha Gabriel. Sr. Chandra joined the community later.

The Parish Priest and the people of Ramanathapuram gave a warm welcome. The Sisters felt as if they were in a different world altogether. It was an opportunity given by God to the Sisters of Charity to be with and accompany the war affected and the suffering

displaced people. They had to face lot of hardships and inconveniences without communication, electricity, fuel, transport, medical facilities and certain food items also. Only with passes the sisters could move out or come in. This pass procedure took more than seven days; sometimes no pass was issued. However, with all these short comings and struggles the sisters were very happy and started their mission of serving the needy with joy and heart contended dedication.

The very presence of the sisters was a great support for the suffering war torn displaced people. The Sisters visited the families, brought healing and consolation. They also distributed dry rations as the people were deprived of even essential need. They helped in the parish pastoral activities such as teaching Catechism and attended to other urgent needs.

They had to face very painful experiences such as the death of Sr. Jayakody's father and Sr. Arul Mary's mother. They got the message after 17 days and were unable to travel to attend the funeral. Sr. Chandra got caught to the cross firing and had a narrow escape. She was under shock for several days. There were many such incidents with no one to turn to or nowhere to go. In this manner they served three years.

Suddenly peace agreement broke out and war started again. Along with the people the sisters too got displaced and went to Puthukudiyiruppu in 1997 and continued the mission. They went back but could not continue to live in Ramanathapuram due to the war. At

this time there were no communication facilities and no authority could be contacted. On 30th December, 1998 the sisters decided to move to Madhu refugee camp after prayer and discernment. From Madhu they went to Keerisuddan 5 km away and continued the mission. Keerisuddan was an Army training camp previously and was released later. After being in Keerisuttan almost for three years the sisters planned to return to Ramanathapuram as the people had already reached.

On 21st May 2000 together with Sr. Arul Mary – one of the councilors, the new community of three sisters, reached Ramanathapuram in the night. The house was occupied by the Parish Priest, Fr. Aldrine OMI. He left the house at the arrival of the sisters. A large number of displaced families from Jaffna were residing in the Church compound. When the people saw the sisters, they were all very happy and helped the sisters to clean the garden and the compound. The community started their mission of pastoral activities and the school. The life was moving happily and smoothly and the LTTE was fully governing the whole of Vanni.

Tsunami affected the people of Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu in 2004, December 26th. The Parish Priest, sisters and youth went to help the people.

Seeing the pathetic situation of the children, the sisters were inspired to start a hostel for girls to support them in their studies. JRS was approached and the building and the maintenance were affirmed by JRS in Sri Lanka.

With the support of the Bishop of Jaffna, Rt. Rev. Dr. Thomas Saundranayagam and the Provincial Superior Sr. Marie Samaranayake, the foundation stone was laid for the hostel on 28th May 2005. Seeing the urgent need, about 15 girls were accommodated in the sister's quarters until the building completed. Though the place was not comfortable the number of children was on the increase.

Slowly the Sri Lanka army started moving towards Kilinochchi from Mannar district. The people from Madhu area were moving to places of safety. The place that seemed safe one day, becomes dangerous the next day. The consequence of little incidents between the two parties was becoming stiff and many people started flocking towards Kilinochchi. No food stuff, no safety, no work, no money and the forceful recruitment by LTTE were strangling the people. As days were passing people were finding life unsafe and many started to experience starvation.

Our Own Experience during the Latter Part of War in 2009:

There were moments the sisters did not know what to do, but the strong faith kept us alive. When the children heard the sound of the drone one rang the bell and all others got into the bunker. It was the daily bread of suffering. One evening the superior and the Parish Priest went in search of a place to go when troops were approaching. Before we all got ready, we buried many building materials and some other crockery and cutlery.



On the 5th January 2009 there was a big attack on the LTTE camp in Iranamadu. After being in the bunker whole night, it was decided that all move from Ramanathapuram to a place little further not realizing we were going to walk for miles and miles. On 6th of January, 2009 early morning the first displacement started, some by tractor, others by a van. Since our Parish Priest Rev. Fr. Anton Roche had a vehicle it was easy for us to take big girls who were hiding with us. We started moving in batches. Sr. Rita and Sr. Kirutha accompanied them. After the second batch left by vehicle, the third batch was waiting for the tractor to come back. Suddenly a shell blasted in near the school junction, a few people got injured and rushed to the hospital. With this blast all were got frightened and when the tractor arrived, loading a few things the last batch of children and Sr. Vasanthy said good bye to the convent.

When the whole group reached Visvamadu it was around 5.00pm. All those of us who reached early were in tension about the rest of the group. With no hurt all reached the place safely. We had a small kadjan hut where we cooked, ate and slept. It was enough at that time.

Only for a few days we were at peace. They started fighting again and it was announced to vacate the place to the no war zone. Again, we packed and went to Suthanthirapuram which belongs to the Mullaitivu District. As we couldn't find a vehicle to take all our belongings we had to leave many things behind. In this place we put up a hut, a wash room and a bunker. We were managing sparingly. Here and there we had to stay in the bunker for hours and eat half boiled grams and rice without curry. After 4 days the big fight began from all sides. We could not come out of the bunker for the whole day. Our ears were almost getting deaf and hearts beating fast. Shelling and bombing didn't stop till evening, which began early in the morning. Late in the evening the fight was little ceased and a few of us came out of the bunker and saw no one on the road or outside and a shop close to our hut and was burning. We were all frozen; creeping slowly went to the house of the parents of Fr. Mariyathas. They gave us a place in their bunker. All were terribly hungry and Sr. Kirutha and a few girls went and brought something. It was so tasty and soothing to our hungry stomach though everything was half boiled.

Our Parish Priest with the help of another Priest took us to Suthanthirapuram colony, considered to be safer. About 9 pm, two OMI Priests Frs. Confucius and Reginald came walking to take us.

With much difficulty and in fear of being attacked we reached the third place with minimum things in our hands. On the following day our Parish Priest and other Priests helped us with some essential items. After we reached the third place, we put up a bunker

again and managed with great difficulty. This place became worse in two or three days later. By this time many people had started to leave the war zone on the sly and go to Vavuniya and Jaffna.

One night some fathers and sisters decided to leave slowly with all our boys and girls. We started walking late in the night and reached the place, but we knew that it was impossible for LTTE had spy everywhere. As we were watching we saw a shell attack. Thanks be to God it was a plastic shell sent to frighten the people. After some time, the army started to shell ferociously. So, we ran for life and ended up in some one's bunker. We stayed there till morning and started toward Iranapalai. We all walked for fifteen miles. On the way we had to face big aerial attacks. We saw many dead bodies and people dying and calling for help.

On the way the children cried for water but we had no water. We ran and reached a place called no war zone. From morning to evening we had neither food nor water to quench our thirst. Some good people gave us plain tea. Now it was a crucial time for us to decide what to do. We decided to go to Iranapalai. We were welcomed in the house of Fr. Augustine's niece. Luckily, we had money and we were able to buy things to satisfy our hungry stomach and keep us safe.

After a week, shelling and bombing started and people were running to Valayarmadam. We too joined the people. Some of us walked; others went by a vehicle.

When we reached there, late Rev. Fr. James Pathinathar was standing with a smile to welcome us. What cannot be

taken from our mind is that he had already set aside a room for the charity community. He provided what he had and supported us very much. As all fathers and sisters were around the place, we were alive in safety. Our daily curry was drumstick leaves and another vegetable. Many people were starving and dying by shelling and bombing. No sooner the war was getting bad to worse. The children were still with us. As we found very difficult to hide them anymore and couldn't feed them, we called the parents who were near to us and handed over the girls. In the meantime, we decided to go to the no war zone as it was too difficult to stay and getting sick. We were refused to go by ship. For more than two weeks we were walking up and down. After a big fight two of us got the permission and one had to stay back. As we refused for this arrangement, we were asked to come and try. We had daily mass. Our days and nights were all in the bunker. By this time our Parish Priest had already gone to Vavuniya.

It was 23rd of March, 2009 on a Sunday after mass the three of us started our journey with fear and anxiety of being even attacked half way to Mathalan, said goodbye to Our Lady of Puthumathalan. When we left, we practically had nothing in our kitchen to cook. Thanks be to God, there was a catholic boy near the ship and quickly boarded us.

The ship started around 2.00 p.m. and reached Pulmottai, Trincomalee around 7.00pm. From there we were taken to a God forsaken place and given some hospital bed on which we could only sit till morning because it was such an open place where army and navy

personnel were walking around whole night.



The following day we were given lunch packets around 1.00 pm and put in a bus. Our future was in God's hand because we didn't know where we were taken. By 6.00 p.m. we were in Omanthai. After finishing all the procedures, we reached Vavuniya by ambulance. From there we were taken to the Komarasankulam community. On the following day then Superior General Rev. Sr. Valsala George, and our Provincial Superior Sr. Anastasia Perera arrived at Komarasankulam to meet us. We are still grateful and will be ever grateful for this kind gesture. After having a few weeks rest all three of us were placed in different communities.

In 2010 Sr. Deepthika Silva, the Provincial Superior went to Ramanathapuram to see the condition. She was accompanied by the community of Cheddikulam, Frs. Sebanasaratnam and Augustine. Everything was stolen and the house was in a mess.

The sisters went back on the 25th of April 2010. Sisters Rita and Vasanthi had much joy of coming back amidst all the difficulties. It took more than six months to bring the house in order. The province helped to repair the whole

house put the house in a beautiful condition. Slowly we started our mission in the Schools and in the Parish. With the help of the province, we started the livelihood project for the women headed families. It was much successful at that time. We helped some other preschools through donors; parish apostolates specially bringing the people together in faith; encouraging and helps such as writing to different authorities for support and aids for the affected people.

While we were still trying to get over what we lost during the war we thought of starting the hostel again in keeping the demands of the people. So, we sought for funds from different sources. We were able to collect a good sum of money from Canada and Mr. Janaka Boteju the proprietor of Bernard Shirt Company. The Bishop of Jaffna and the SCJM province of Sri Lanka too contributed towards the finishing of the hostel building. While the construction was going on, we tried to register the hostel but failed. We got it registered under the voluntary social services organization. When the building was completed, there were many people who came asking for the place in the hostel for their daughters, grandchildren and nieces.

So, on the 1st of January, 2013 we reopened the hostel with five children. From then onwards many children started coming to continue their studies. Today there are 30 school going girl children from grade one to thirteen.

Together with the mission as teachers we look after the children and do Parish apostolate.

Sr. Rita Anthonypillai and the Community.

Caritas Thalahena

In the year 1996 the Congregation was to celebrate 100 years of arrival to Sri Lanka. With that background searching for insertions for a new way of life style, Rev. Sister Marie de Lorette, the Provincial Superior and the Team evaluating about two insertions experimented in Thalahena and Kadolkelle.

Invitation:

At the beginning sisters were invited by Rev. Father Gregory Jayantha, Parish Priest of Thalahena to visit the village. In 1995 December Sisters Fatima and Shirani went to Thalahena to visit the families and, to help with all the services in preparation for the Church feast.

Soon after in 1996, 24th of April, accompanied by Sister Marie de Lorette the Provincial Superior three Sisters Fatima, Matilda and Carmelita landed in Thalahena and they stayed temporally in the Church premises, now it is called 'Kurusa Mandapaya'. Later Sister Fatima left and in the middle of May Sisters Malkanthi and Stella joined the group.

At the beginning sisters had to rough out with limited facilities, for an example all the sisters had to live in one room, and there was only one bed, others had to sleep on the floor. Sisters had to struggle with insects and rats, the place was not much safe but sisters experienced the providence of God and the protection from the people. During their stay many of the villages helped in many ways particularly, Mrs. Shanthi, Florida, Viyani, Sisiy Amma, and Poline. Sisters were there until the new place was ready. The new place was the existing mission house and it has to be renovated.

Approval and Renovation

Approved by Rev. Mother General Marie Ange and the team, sisters received further permission for the installation of a community in Thalahena

Later we received the message from the Parish Priest Fr. Gregory Jayantha, that the villagers are very happy to welcome the Sisters of Charity and they were ready to repair the prevailing mission house and to help sisters generously.



In 1996 15th of October villagers started renovating the house and they fixed cement grills, afterward one of the generous people volunteered to put up a wall around the convent garden. In order to arrange convent compound sisters organized a "shramadana" but there was no response. Afterwards something interesting happened. A villager, Mr. Tudor rang the church bell to get the people. So most of the people came rushing for the sound of the bell and the "Shramadana" was successful. After the renovation it looked like our first house in Lovendegam.

Inauguration of the SCJM Community at Thalahena

On 4th of November, 1996 Rev. Sister Marie de Lorette the Provincial Superior and her Councillors Sisters Francisca, Gloria, and Vineetha and the 1st community Sister Malkanthi the Superior, and Sisters Carmelita, Stella

and Matilda had a prayer service and settled in the new convent. The next day Rev. Fathers Placidus Silva, Gregory Jayantha, Ronie and Nishan blessed the new convent, and the parish community welcomed the sisters of Charity to Thalahoma village.

Ministry

After establishing the community, the sisters were fully engaged in the parish work and Sister Stella continued in the Ministry of Education as a voluntary teacher in St. Mary's College, Negombo.

In 1997, 6th of January admitted 27 children and started a Montessori School in the convent premises. Rev. Father Gregory Jayantha blessed it and Rev Sister Sylvia Cullen was in charge of the Montessori. Same year sisters started to teach in the Sunday school at Thalahoma and Basiyawatta. Sr. Matilda was teaching at Thalahoma Sunday School and Sr. Sylvia was in charge of the ministry at Basiyawatta. In spite of all the parish work Sisters Malkanthi and Carmelita started visiting the Prison in Negombo. Also gave special concern on recruiting young girls.

Rev. Sister Pradeepika joined Thalahoma Kanishta School as a permanent teacher on the staff in 1998, 13th of June. In 2000, 24th of January Sister Chandrika joined the Ministry of Education as a voluntary teacher at Munnakkaraya Roman Catholic School. Due to lack of space for more children in the convent premises the Montessori school was shifted to a rented house close by in 2000.

As the time passed the need of expanding the place arose. With this need the sisters thought of shifting the Montessori and the convent to a permanent place at Palliyawatta, where the Good Shepherd sisters resided previously. Eventually sisters started finding funds and build the new Montessori and opened it, in 2003, 25th of January. For this task the parents of

the Montessori children, specially Mr. Priyantha and the parishioners, together with Sister Priyani Assanthi and the community contributed to a tireless work. The new Montessori was blessed and opened by Rev. Father Joe Wickramasinghe, Episcopal Vicar for Northern Region and the Provincial Superior Sister Marie Samaranayaka.



While the Montessori was functioning in the new place the foundation for the new convent was laid, and under the supervision of Sister Priyani and the community it was completed. After completing it was scheduled to be blessed and opened by Most Rev. Dr. Bishop Oswald Gomis, His Grace the Archbishop of Colombo in 2006, 28th of January. Due to an unavoidable situation the Archbishop couldn't attend the ceremony, therefore Father Joe Wickramasinghe, Episcopal Vicar for Northern Region declared opened the new convent during the time of Fr. Ciswan de Cross.

Sisters were happily engaged in the service and ministries of the village and they were invited by Saletian Fathers of Don Bosco institution at Dungalpitiya to engage in the teaching. Sister Gloria Fernando did the apostolate of educating children of special needs in "Santhosa" foundation at Kapungoda. In the year 2012, 16th of May, Sister Margret, the Superior and the Community inaugurated the Society "Friends of Father Triest" with 12 members. After a year in 2013, 1st of August they took oath as Associates of

Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary with 17 members. They are carrying on the work in the village with the spirit of Father Triest.

In 2021 we are completing 25 years of arrival to Thalahena village, and at present sister Stella the Superior is engaged in Montessori Education and Sunday school at Thalahena. Sister Nidhoshini is engaged in adult Catechism and Sister Shrimali is engaged in Parish work at Basiyawatta and teaching in Maris Stella College, Negombo.

As we have reached 25 years of our services in this village and we are grateful to God and all the people who cooperated with us in our journey so far.



Sr. Stella and the Community



Twenty-Five Years of Invaluable Service in Kadolkele

At the Local Chapter held in the year 1996 the young Sisters wholeheartedly suggested that our Sisters should initiate a new mission for the poor and the marginalized.

Since it was the year of our Centenary of the arrival of the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary to Sri Lanka Rev. Sr. Marie de Lorette, the Provincial Superior, readily agreed to initiate such a timely programme. Under her guidance we sought the assistance of Sarvodaya Movement to find a suitable venue for our mission. Thereby a group of Sisters were sent to visit with Sarvodaya Shramadana Team to some villages where they could seek the feasibility of initiating a new mission for the needy and the marginalized. Hence our initial step was a success.

One fine day Sr. Malkanthi and I together with the Provincial Superior went to Kadolkale, Negombo, one of the villages where the shramadana campaign was held. Having had a discussion with Rev. Fr. Lesley Fernando, the Dean of the Negombo denary and Rev. Fr. Nihal Ivon the Parish Priest, Kadolkale we realized the kind of a mission required. We were called to cater to the needs of a fishing community where there were many school dropouts and many youth who got married at their tender age. We decided to challenge the challenges in the name of Our Lord and to accept the people of God as they were and to bring them closer to God.

The Parish Priest was quite happy to welcome

the Sisters but unfortunately there was no proper place for a convent. So we the Sisters Therese, Sylvia Cullen, Sharmela and I decided to reside in Thammita, where the Parish Priest stationed. Initially we went to Thammita every Friday and visited the houses in Kadolkele the whole of Saturday. Having participated in the Holy Eucharistic Celebrations on Sunday, we visited some houses and on Monday morning we returned to the Provincialate. It was a nice experience for us to be with people and to support them in their spiritual needs.

With the grace of Our Lord, we found a house from the village for a short period of time. It was under construction and the Parish priest promised us to get the kitchen, and a bath room done without any delay. So the Sisters Therese, Sharmela and I had to do lot of ground work in order to settle there. We somehow decided to live with the available facilities. That was the beauty of this mission. To serve the poor we should experience poverty. Somehow we got established before December 17th and were welcomed to the village. By then many of them had become our good friends.

For our living three of us started teaching in close by schools. Sr. Sharmela was teaching at Santa Maria and Sr. Stella was teaching at St. Mary's College, Negombo as volunteers and an allowance was paid. I started teaching at Loyola collage as a registered

teacher. When Sr. Sharmela got transferred, Sr. Shirani joined the community and started teaching at Loyola collage as a registered teacher. We did not get a sufficient income for our living, but we did not depend on the subsidy from the Province. Even though the majority of the villagers were poor at that time, they provided us with fish, dry fish, chicken, vegetables etc. Therefore, we were able to manage without being a burden to the Province.

We lived a very simple way of life with minimum basic needs. There were days that we did not get water at all. Sometimes we had to awake till 12 mid night to collect water from the road taps. At the end of the day we were naturally tired but were happy. In spite of all the hardships we never missed our religious and community responsibilities. We were faithful to our community prayers, personal prayers, Holy Masses, community meetings, and the first Friday Holy Hour etc. through which we were spiritually nourished and strengthened.

We as a community were united and helped each other to fulfill our mission. In the morning three of us went to school, and Sr. Therese looked after the cooking, cleaning, gardening and teaching needlework for school drop outs. In the evening after our evening prayer we had 'Lama Samaja' (Children's Clubs) and followed by the Holy Mass and Yovun samajaya (Youth Clubs). There were opportunities to reach the children and the young in the village. The participation was quite successful Saturday was the only day we reserved for our cleaning and our personal work in the convent. On Sundays having engaged in

Catechism we visited families and addressed their physical and spiritual needs with the support of the Parish Priest.

We organized sport meets, Celebrations for the Sinhala and Tamil New Year, concerts and prize giving, Christmas concerts and carols during Christmas time, special Holy Hours during the Lent Season and organized the Way of the Cross etc. We also organized street dramas to discourage the youth being addicted to drugs and alcohol. We are grateful to the youth and the parents for their generous contributions.



Until 2010 we shifted to seven houses and now we have a permanent house named "Shalom" Convent. Sr. Priyani Asanthi, the Superior, a member of the staff at Our Lady of Miracles M.V. Negombo, Sr. Therese Cooray, who is conducting sewing classes and Sr. Mangalika Fernando, in charge of the pre-school in the Risen Lord Church at Kadolkele form the present community. The Sisters continue their mission successfully addressing the timely needs of the flock while maintaining cordial relations with the people.

Sr. Lohini Fernando

The Humble Beginning of the Community of Nilaveli – Trincomalee



‘Here I am Lord your servant is listening’ (1 Sam 3/10)

In the year 1994, in response to the invitation extended to the Sisters of Charity by the Bishop of Trincomalee, Rt. Rev. Dr. Kingsley Swampillai, the Provincial Superior Sr. Marie de Lorette de Silva, accepted to launch out in the East. Reading the signs of the time, being fully aware of the need of the people at that time with the existing ethnic problem in the country, it was a wise decision to begin a new mission in the East. To help and serve the helpless people who were made refugees and displaced families who were at St. Joseph’s Church, Nilaveli, Trincomalee.

Our two daring, generous Pioneers Srs. Rosita and Manohari, trusting in the Lord confidently travelled towards the East.. On arrival they did not have a proper place to lodge in therefore they roughed out in the parish house where the refugees were. This was the humble beginning. Being with the people, listening and sharing their pain and suffering the Sisters were moved by compassionate love and they attended to all their needs under the guidance of Rev. Fr. Leo the Parish Priest. Since the war continued the refugees slowly

removed their tents and put up little huts. Seeing the devoted and loving service of the sisters, the Parish Priest requested the Bishop to make a permanent SCJM community over there. This message was expressed to the Provincial Superior and they received a positive response.

The Sisters committed themselves to many activities in the parish and to the people in dare need. Their service was extended to the little ones too. With the support of the Parish Priest they started teaching the small children in the Parish and provided meals for them. This gesture was greatly appreciated by the parents. During that time a sudden visit of a foreigner to the camp noticed the place where the children were taught without any facilities. In his kind heart and generosity he promised to put up a Nursery school. This was named as St. Joseph’s Pre-school. Until the present time the service is being continued for the children in the vicinity. While services are being rendered to the people in the camp, the sisters also visited the families of the people. This brought about a closer contact and connection with people and their needs and aspirations. Later the sisters

found an abandoned house which was close to the Church.

The community was formed consisting of four members. Srs. Vasanthi and Patsy joined the two pioneers. They were assigned to teaching in the R. C. School in the Parish. The people profited much by the help and presence of the sisters which gradually helped them to overcome their fear and grievances and was able to get back to the normal routine of life.

As people began moving back to their own villages, the mission was extended to sub stations: Sampaltheevu, Kumprupity and Pulmodai. In the year 1997, 4th July the foundation stone was laid for the SCJM Community. While the construction work was going on, the sisters planted coconut trees around the garden which are bearing fruits now.

In the year 1999, 22nd February, the Convent was declared opened by Rt. Rev. Dr. Kingsley SwamPillai, Bishop of Trincomalee. At the opening ceremony Sr. Anastasia Perera represented the Provincial Superior Sr. Marie de Lorette. For few years life went on peacefully until Tsunami struck them.

In the year 2004, 26th December a biggest catastrophe of Tsunami made them one again refugees. During this awful, painful period the sisters offered

great services to the Tsunami affected victims. Later with the help of generous donors and their support the families were able to build up their life once again. A new building was erected for the Tsunami-affected children from this village. 30 Girls (students) were accommodated and they attended T\ Nilaveli Kaileshwara College.

While this bitter experience began narrowing down, in the year 2009 the war broke out in the North and East of the country, which created deep wounds and scars in the lives of people and made their life utterly miserable. An year later when the children were allowed to attend nearby schools the present building was used for war children.

This mission continued by the Sisters of Nilaveli Community with the help of Rt. Rev. Dr. Christian Noel Emmanuel, the Bishop of Trincomalee. We are grateful to GOD for all the rich experiences during our stay and for the sacred services rendered to the people of this Parish community and the larger community.

The Sisters of Charity joyfully celebrate their 125 years of existence and service to the people in this beautiful Island.

Sr. Sakunthala Kandasamy

SCJM Foundation in Legazpy, Albay, Philippines



Pioneering Community

Sr. Manohari Santiago, Sr. Mangalika Fernando, Sr. Angela Fernando (L to R)

On the 22nd of June, 2003, Sr. Deepthika Silva and Sr. Francesca of Christ, bid blessing and fairwell to the three pioneering sisters who were missioned in Legazpy, Albay, Philippines. They were SR. ANGELA FERNANADO, SR. MANOHARI SANTHIAGO AND SR. MANGALIKA FERNANDO, accompanied by the Provincial Superior, SR MARIE SAMARANAYAKE. They were welcomed by Bro. Jeol Ponsaran, Reginal Superior and Bro. Aurel Valdrez, Superior. The sisters stayed with the Brothers of Charity in their mission house, Pandacan, Manila.

The sisters arrived on July 27th, 2003 at Brgy. San Roque, Legazpi City in response to the invitation of the Brothers of Charity through His Excellency Rev. Josa C. Sorra D.D., Bishop of Legazpi, Philippines and His Excellency Rev. Lucilo B. Quiambao, D.D., Auxiliary Bishop of Legazpi. This opened up to a blessed thoroughfare

and teamed up with different sectors, persons and the concerned mission communities too. Thanks to the Hon. Mayor Noel Rosal in Legazpi, the friends of Fr. Triest, Mrs. Mediatrix and Sr. Ellaine Madonna Villanueva and their families, SCJM staff, along with many other volunteers, individuals, families and other religious groups and congregations, especially the St. Raphael Parish of Legazpi.





The Congregation of Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary in Legazpi, through the apostolic mission live the teaching of Fr. Peter Joseph Triest based on the charism of the congregation: God is Love. It is to reveal God's compassion, tenderness and the belief that children and the young are our greatest treasure.



Together with the people in the world, they recognize the need to network together to protect these children and to keep them as intangible wealth. In the year 2004 the SCJM started their community-based mission to the target areas of Brgy. Victory Village, Brgy. Pigcale and Brgy. San Roque. Later, the services were extended to Rizal, Lapu lapu, Baybay, Malilipot and Taysan. The sisters started with 125 street children (children working in the streets) as the target clientele group. There had been livelihood projects of Cadana De Amor such as

broom making, bread and other food products, soap and ointment/herbal production, cards/beads/rosary/fancy jewelry and recycling plastics into handy bags and folders, vases, etc. there was printing t-shirts and poster making for children's skills training, martial arts and basketball and educational field trips, etc. The new provincial team, headed by Sr. Anastasia Perera and the provincial team, empowered the sisters to sojourn in this quest with missionary zeal and team spirit.



However, in the cause of time the mission focuses now on 35 indigent families with the attainable goals of: Empowering and Strengthening the Family Value System, Education of the Young, Advocacy on Environmental Conservation and Child Protection and Development, Self- Health Care, Skills- Training and Sustainable Livelihood Projects on Candle-Making and Housing Assistance to the Beneficiaries. These would eventually reduce and/or eliminate the root cause of the societal problems, at least starting with a few families at the grassroots level. For nearly 18 years of mission here in Legazpi city, the sisters have decided themselves to bringing these forsaken children/ youth working in the streets and those

belonging to the indigent families/urban poor, to have a normal life characterized by the freedom to be children with the privilege to be educated, be taught proper values, be equipped with the skills they need, clothed, to have shelter and to have a sense of belonging in the center where the members recognize these needs and where they are assured of acceptance and unconditional love. All the programs and services are anchored on God's greatest gift, being the children of God in His image and likeness. There they may live with dignity and respect. Between the years of being missionaries, the sisters had their most tragic yet challenging, risk-taking, life and death experience of several typhoons and volcanic eruptions especially in 2006, 2009, 2016 and 2020. In faith and trust, they rely always in God's providential care and protection with the intercession of Fr.Triest.



Furthermore, the present situation in Legazpi still comprises a large number of inhabitants/families in the concerned areas still regarded as marginalized in the society despite much progress and commercialization in Legazpi. Much of the development is towards the goal of making Legazpi the tourist destination with enhanced and/or increased job opportunities within the local areas. However, the concerned areas of the mission are densely populated. Houses are made predominantly of wood, bamboo and other light materials that are cheap, second hand and recycled. These children and their families live there on a daily basis. Most of them are extended families.



The present status of the barangay may be described as poor housing and sanitation facilities, less educational attainment of many people, the increase of drug addiction, cyber-crime, child-labour, extra-marital relationships/ broken homes/ irresponsible parenthood and guardianship, abuse and prostitution; along with increased numbers of cohabitation, extended families and unemployment/ underemployment.

The SCJM Triest/Apostolate/ center caters to the children (grade 3) up to college level according to their urgent needs. Most of them are from the indigent families. Other clientele groups that the center focuses on are

the elderly persons and families of the scholars, especially their parents and/or guardians. This is to ensure a better family/ home atmosphere, as the services are rendered to them. There are 35 scholars indifferent school levels.

The schedule of activities are from Tuesday to Saturday, between 8.30 in the morning to 4.30/5.00 in the afternoon. Most of the activities start with a prayer, Bible sharing and/or other spiritual exercise like Shibashi and Yoga and followed by different activities like Self-Enhancement/Advocacy, Tutorials/Arts and Beads-Rosary-Making. There is also a supplemental/feeding program. In the afternoon, before going back home, the scholars and the sisters/staff pray the Rosary.

This is to inculcate in them the essence and purpose of living a Christian life, which is to be nourished with the Word of God despite being of different religious backgrounds or beliefs. Being centered in God enables each person to rediscover their worth and dignity. This gives time and space for everybody to mutually grow and mature, being respected and accepted, being and becoming a person with apposite outlook and care, love not only for oneself but also for other creation, including living and non-living things/ environment.

Furthermore, programs and services are successfully implemented together with the linkages, networking and/ or partnership with other Organizations, both Government and Non-Government Agencies/ Religious Organizations, plus the generosity and

loving services of the Associates (Friends of Fr.Triest), Enfants Du Mekong, Bro. Leo Alqurios and LOA Foundation, Sir Raphael Sanchez, Maam Angelina, Maam Lydia, Bishop Joel Baylon and Bishop Emeritus Lucillo Quimbao, Hon. Mayor Noel Rosal, The DSWD-Sir Arnel Gracia and the Licensing Department, and in addition the Volunteers, the Local Sponsors and Donors and All other well-wishers who have loving support towards this mission. Aside from them, the SCJM Sri Lanka Province (Sr.Ajitha Fernando and the Team), Reigion of Lavang-Vietnam (Sr.Animasuman Toppo and the Team), and SCJM Generalate (Sr.Lucy Jacob and the Team) continue to endeavor to empower and guide the mission in Legazpi according to the spirituality of its Founder, Fr.Peter Joseph Triest and co- Foundress Mother Theresa Van Der Gauwen, under the inspiration of St. Vincent De Paul and St. Bernard. SCJM abides in the love of the Father through the example of Jesus, who came to serve and not to be served, and to the Holy Spirit who dwells and empowers each one to join together as “One Heart and One Soul”.

Aside from the community-based services rendered, there are also th celebrations of Christmas, Easter an the Foundation Anniversary of both Congregation and mission here in Legazpi, the feast days of Patron Saints and the Birthday/ Death Anniversary of Founder and Co-Foundress’. The Friends of Fr. Triest from year 2004 to present have been engaged in various activities to bring forth more meaningful and purposeful

events/activities. Together with the beneficiaries and the Working Committee/ Teams, the SCJM, from the beginning, has brought an impact to the lives of both beneficiaries and sharers of gifts and blessings.

However, as of the year 2020, there was realignment of programs and services due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Hence, the budget for education and other enhancement activities was spent mostly for the food allowance/ groceries for the scholars and their families. To further help and sustain the safety and health condition of the sisters, staff, volunteers and the beneficiaries, the center was closed and the distribution of good supplies/groceries and other office work was done from the convent to the concerned areas, and VICE-VERSA. The provision of other services was also catered according to its urgency and availability of person concerned and/ or funds such as the housing and livelihood projects.

SCJM COMMUNITY, LEGAZPI

Insertion into Jaffna Diocese in 2004

Mathahal

Reading the signs of the times, the felt need at that time was to be a healing presence to the people who are wounded by the war. Moved by the Charism of our Founder, our Provincial Team led by Sr. Marie Samaranayake, readily responded to the invitation of the Bishop of Jaffna Rt. Rev. Dr. Thomas Soundranayagam to serve and be with the people who were returning after the major displacement.

In November 2003, the Provincial and the Councillors - Srs. Marie Samaranayake, Benignus, Deepthika, Malkanthi, Ajitha and Jeyam went to Jaffna in order to meet the Bishop. The Vicar General Rev. Fr. Nicholas accompanied the sisters to visit few places. After which the Provincial Team chose Mathahal, because the people were returning after the war and they needed pastoral care and healing. Therefore on the 4th January, 2004, Sr. Marie, our Provincial, together with Srs. Patsy, Pricilla, Prista and Jeyam left towards Jaffna.

The Parish of Mathahal consists of three Churches: namely St. Thomas, St. Sebastian and St. Anthony. The existing Convent was occupied by the Holy Family Sisters over hundred and twenty five years. Due to the war situation, the sisters have left the place. This house needed a complete renovation. The Bishop did some changes, the parishioners and the Navy personnel led by the Navy Commander cleaned up the place. Until the place was ready the sisters occupied the Sacristy of St. Anthony's Church. In the meantime, Sr. Patsy was able to get her appointment to St. Joseph M.V. Sr. Prista occupied with the pastoral work and taught

Catechism at St. Thomas in the Primary School. Srs. Melanie, Lohini, Deepthika, Jeyam and Laetitia arrived here on the 24th February, 2004. Since the place was not yet ready, they stayed at Pandaitharippu, Holy Family Convent.

On the 22nd March the official opening of the convent took place. Rev. Fr. Christopher, being the Parish Priest was very much helpful to the sisters, and his fatherly concern was very much appreciated and was supportive. The parishioners organized a grand welcome. Some of our sisters from the South were also present. **It was a moment to witness to our 'Cor Unum'**. Bishop Thomas Saundranayagam was the chief celebrant, many priests, sisters from Holy Family and Apostolic Carmelite from the Diocese of Jaffna came for the opening. Sr. Marie, the Provincial Superior thanked the people and the Bishop for inviting the sisters to Jaffna Diocese to serve the people and for the trust placed on them.

Our former General Superior Rev. Sr. Marie Ange and the General Councillors visited the community on the 3rd of May 2004. It was a good gesture shown to the sisters by their visit and the sisters really valued their presence at that time. Mother General blessed the sisters with the following words: ***"The Lord has called you as SCJMs to bring healing, unity, peace and love among His suffering people. May your union with God and with one another be your living and driving force, so that all may have life and have it in abundance."***

Sr. Anastasia Perera, the General Councilor and Sr. Anne Marie, the General Treasurer visited Mathahal community and visited the places affected by Tsunami on 1st February 2005. They also visited Mullaitivu and saw the tragic situations and they discussed the urgent need of having a hostel. Sr. Anastasia was the first one to rush to such places with courage and strength to be with the sisters. When we look back, the foot prints left by our Sisters Marie de Lorette and Anastasia who took risks in travelling to such places to support our sisters, were remarkable. Sometimes they were caught by the crossfire and escaped death. They exhibited heroic courage by depending on God's providential care. The sisters appreciate them for their courageous interventions during the history of the war in the North.

Srs. Patsy, Leatitia and Prista visited families, formed ASIPA groups, distributed Communion to the sick, spent time to listen to the stories of displaced people. They gave their time and energy generously and built confidence in the heart of people. They drew strength from daily Eucharist and were very faithful to the prayer life. Of course some priests and sisters from the Diocese visited and supported them, and the parishioners really cared for the sisters.

Mid-January 2005, Sr. Marie Samaranayake, the Provincial Superior, Srs. Francesca of Christ, Concepta Coonghe and Jeyam Jeyakody visited the community. They brought along with them lots of goods to distribute to the people traumatized by Tsunami. Priests from Jaffna Diocese appreciated our sisters for their willingness to work with the people affected by Tsunami. We are grateful to our province for the readiness to send the sisters in times of affliction to serve and to be with the

suffering people.

In July 2008, Sr. Dorothy joined the community and took charge of the Montessori. She has been very supportive in the community. Sr. Patsy served the community for four years and did well in the school and maintained good relationship with the parishioners and school staff. They appreciated her approach to people. There was farewell and a thanksgiving Mass and sister left Mathahal community and joined Ratnapura community in 2008.

Sr. Sakunthala took over the responsibility of the community in 2008. Srs. Dorothy, Leatitia, Pricilla and Consa arrived in Mathahal for community experience, formed part of the community. This community took the responsibility of visiting the refugee camps at Kaithady and Chavakachcheri and listened to their problems and Sr. Sakuntala was teaching at St. Joseph's M.V. and sister was very much involved in finding the lost children, finding their parents etc... This period has been very critical moments in the history of the war in the North. There was heavy fighting between Tamil Militants and Armed forces and people were caught in between. Thousands of people were killed. Some were scattered and lost. Children were separated from their parents, and some were found in the refugee camps. It was an urgent need at that time to take care of these children and to give them protection. Our sisters were courageous enough to meet the Army personnel and redeemed the children from the refugee camps. Since the sisters visited the camp and went for mass, Sr. Sakuntala was able to build trust among the Army personnel, and brought the children to Mathahal community. There were about 35 children who were brought from the

camp. This was the history of the Children's Home in Mathahal in 2009. Our Provincial Superior at that time was Sr. Anastasia Perera. She sent a lorry load of goods for the children accompanied by Sr. Lohini Fernando, our Provincial Bursar. She travelled up and down to Mathahal and sought every need to take care of these children. At that time there were many check points, sister faced lot of risks and challenges.

The sisters along with the parishioners were able to look after the children, give them education, arranged counselling sessions for them. One child came with one leg and the other with clutches. The parents of these children, some were killed and some were in the prison. These children had been well off but the war brought them to this condition.



Our Superior General Sr. Valsala George and Sr. Annemarie Berchmans visited the community on the 28th February, 2006 and left on the 1st of March. From Mathahal they went to Killinochchi to see our sisters. Before their departure Sr. Valsala blessed the sisters with the following words: ***“In the war-torn area here may each of you be a sign of hope, by your presence, your passion for Christ and your compassion for the people which will urge you on, in creative ways. Having seen the massive***

destruction, and the will power of the people, I pray that justice and peace become a reality.”

Since the house was not enough to cater these children, the hostel was built by Rev. Fr. Ananthakumar who was in charge of the project. Fr. Eugene was the coordinator. It was funded by “Our Lady of Deliverance”, Tamil mission - Montreal Canada and implemented by Caritas Hudec Jaffna.

It was declared open on the 14th April, 2011 by His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Thomas Saundranayagam. From then onward the sisters worked tirelessly to share their Charism and sacrificed their lives for the service of the people and children who were under their care.

Unfortunately, the hostel was closed in 2011, because of the problems created by the Department of Probation.

Later Sr. Arul Mary took charge of the community, Srs. Concy and Michael joined as community members. Together they continued to serve the poor from Kaaduppulam. They brought the children to the hostel on weekends. Although extremely poor, they were well cared by the sisters. When both the sisters were transferred to Mannar and Iranapalai in 2017, Sr. Jeyamalar joined the community as the animator and got the appointment as the Principal of St. Thomas Primary School. Sr. Mary Rose joins in 2018, and was in-charge of the Montessori.



Sister was involved in pastoral work together with Sr. Rosita.



In February 2020, Sr. Yogarani was appointed as the animator of the community, and she got the appointment to St. Joseph's Maha Vithiyalayam. Sisters Leatitia, Rosita, Concy, and Dorothy formed the community. Sr. Ahalya joined as a student and did her nursing at the Holy Cross School of Nursing. All the sisters committed themselves to teaching of catechism, visiting families, taking communion to the sick and old, attending liturgy meetings in three Churches, the Choir, Legion of Mary, altar servers, counselling were done by the sisters.

Our dear Sister Leatitia was called to the Lord on the 22nd July, 2020. It was indeed a sudden death, as Sister was always healthy and energetic, who totally occupied herself with the welfare of the children, who are poor and vulnerable. She was a visionary and wanted to uplift the Children for a better future. Being an excellent teacher, she started educating the little ones. Her magnanimous approach was appreciated by the people. Her heart was drawn towards the vulnerable. She has worked miracles through her prayers, many problems were solved and people-built confidence in her. For all those who approached her, she was a sign of hope. A good community

member, very generous, very humble and simplicity was marked in her life style. She has lived and witnessed our Charism to the full. Sister has also implanted the Charism in the soil of Mathahal and wherever she worked. May her soul rest in peace with the Lord.

The Pandemic has brought us close to the Lord. We as a community spent time in prayer and recited the Rosary imploring God's mercy. It was a time we focused on reading Pope's Encyclical "**Laudato Si**" and spent time in the garden, made our garden green. Teaching Sisters prepared online classes and special study packs were being prepared for the students. They come and collect it, do the home work and bring them for corrections. Sisters feel for the poor children who haven't got the means for the education. Most of the poor children do not benefit from the online education; it was a big question mark concerning the Education of our children during this quarantine period.

When we look back on all our experiences of the war and how we responded is unimaginable. How the Lord has accompanied us through each one of us is beyond our grasp and understanding. North or South we worked together for the best. Those who were unable to participate joined hands in prayer. As we celebrate 125 years of our existence in this beautiful land, let us sing the Mercies of the Lord forever.

Sr. Yogarani Rajaratnam
Community of Mathahal - Jaffna.

NIVEDHANAM (an offering)

Formation House in Pattim, Mannar.

It was during the civil war the province decided to open this house with much reflection and prayer. Earlier the candidates from the north had to face many difficulties and inconveniences in travelling to go to the south to follow the formation program. They needed to obtain pass from the north and the south. The candidates were suspected and had to undergo many hardships, which would lead them to be discouraged. Understanding this background, the province opened this formation house in Mannar. The foundation stone was laid on the 16th February, 2003 by Rev. Fr. Xavier Croose, the Vicar General of Mannar diocese. Rev. Fr. S. E. Emillianuspillai the Parish priest of Mannar, regional superior Sr. Jeyam, superior of Komarasankulam Sr. Jacintha and Srs. Rene and Angeline from Pattim community, Mr. Duke and some staff from home were present for this occasion. After the blessing of the foundation the traditional food such as Pongal, fruits and coffee were served.

Sr. Rosita was entrusted with the responsibility of building the formation house. Since it was the war time, there were lot of bombing and shelling constantly occurred and they were living in fear and anxiety. They needed to obtain passes from both the LTTE and the government to bring the material for the construction. It was an uphill task to get cement and other materials for the construction during this period. In spite of the life-threatening experiences, Sr. Rene along with Sr. Rosita was very supportive and shared the burden and accompanied her in this mission. Trusting in the providential care of God they courageously went about building this house. The house came to a completion on the 20th of September. In order to support the sisters in the north Rev. Sr. Marie de Lorette, Sr. Francesca of Christ, and **Rev. Sr. Marie Samaranayake the provincial superior** arrived on the 23rd of September. Sr. Marie has been very keen



to complete this house and she was constantly supporting the sisters through contacts. In the presence of the sisters and the candidates they boiled the milk. Sisters had a prayer service and thanked God for the protection and care experienced by the sisters. Their presence was an encouragement for the sisters in the north.

The opening of the house was on the 24th of September, 2005. Rt. Rev. Dr. Rayappu Joseph celebrated the Holy Mass. Some priests from the diocese of Mannar, and some of our sisters from the south came for this opening. It was a happy moment to see the presence of our sisters from the south and it was a moment to feel that we are one. The COR-UNUM was experienced on this day. After mass they prepared delicious meal and all enjoyed.

And so, the first community was formed. Sr. Rosita was in charge of the formation, and with her Sr. Malar and Sr. Dorathy formed part of the community. And so, the formation continued. We are thankful to the provincial and the team for their full support in this endeavor.

God Bless you!

Sr. Jeyakody Visuvasam.

Kithu Sevana Marian Home Ratmalana

No 24, Malwatte Rd, where the Marian Home was situated was condemned by the municipality as unhygienic for habitation especially that would be the case for the elders. The then provincial and her team searched for places that would be suitable. The province was also as always in financial straits. therefore, the request by the Parish Priest of St Joseph's Church Ratmalana was seen as opportune. There were a few applicants of other Congregations but Rev. Fr. Mahendra Gunathilake and the parish council chose to give it to the Sisters of Charity.



The proposal Rev. Fr. Mahendra had was to run a home for poor people,

housed downstairs and have a few paying couples in the upstairs section. The friends of Vincent de Paul would help the sisters with the practicalities even finances and the overall. The donor built it; he did in memory of his wife. The sole request was for a plaque and the name Kithu Sevana. A compromise was reached since the name "Marian Home" was emotive for the sisters as it went back to the time of the home being situated in Rheinland Place, Col. 03. Therefore, it was called Kithu Sevana Marian Home.

The adjacent land was purchased and built on to comfortably house the elderly of Malwatte Road. The foundation stone was laid by Mgr. Emmanuel Fernando on the 8th September, 2007 and the formal opening by His Lordship Bishop Oswald Gomis was on the 30th July, 2008.

As the new home was on the premises of St. Rita's Church and had a large garden as well as a Grotto at the end it was deemed ideal for the elderly who had been residents at Malwatte Road.

Sr. Grace Perera with her long experience of running the elders' home in Israel was appointed as superior and she had a supportive community.

The holistic care of the elderly is always a pressing need and in line with the Charism of the Congregation. The sisters are expected to do their very best in providing this apostolic service for the defenceless and vulnerable people in our society.

Rev. Sr. Anastasia Perera

Brown's Hill, Matara

"Praise the Lord, O Brown's Hill"

August 20th, 2013 was a memorable day and we recall the inauguration of the new Community at Brown's Hill on the Feast of St. Bernard who is our Patron Saint of Contemplative life of our Congregation. The history of this newly built Convent runs back to nine years to the period of catastrophic incident, the Tsunami 2004. This tidal wave hit the complex affecting the Community at beach road.

The Government insisted that all people should move to places, 100 meters away from the shore. Thanks to God Almighty, we found that the many owners of the Brown's Hill land which is the highest place in Eliyakanda, Matara were ready to sell their land. The place is blessed with a beautiful scenario joining the country side from North and the blue Indian Ocean from the South. The purpose of buying the land was to build the school, Montessori, Hostel and the community quarters for sisters.

Thought of moving the school to a safer place was born in the minds, under these circumstances and as the Province cherished the memories of a rising of another Community.

With the help of generous organizations from various countries we were able to construct many sections. Here I must mention gratefully the former Bishop of Galle - Rt. Rev. Dr. Harold Anthony Perera and Late Rev. Fr. Raja Perera who became pillars of strength to us and freed us from many areas of concerns.

By 2013 the Montessori, Hostel and a part of Primary section was completed. As the Primary section was inaugurated by 2007 and the children were using the vast area, the need for the community to be residing

arose. The Provincial Superior- Sr. Deepthika Silva and her Team, with the consultation and permission of the General Government initiated and appointed a community to reside in the new branch of St. Mary's Convent.

The pioneering Community consisted of Sisters Ajitha Fernando, Shirani Perera, and Pushpa Manori. It was a blessing as the Community was situated on a hill top and they could radiate the light to all directions, especially to the children who came here for education.

At the beginning the hostel was open only for the primary students. At present we have provided all the necessary facilities to twenty University students who are studying at Ruhunu University and seeking for protection and guidance from us. We also extend our mission to the Parish as we are involved in teaching in "Daham Pasala". (Sunday school) As Jesus has called each one of us we the Community of Brown's Hill pledge to bring conversion and healing by visiting them once a week especially the vulnerable families of our Parish and the families of the students.



The surrounding land was cultivated with cinnamon and coconuts while the soil continued to be fruitful by having varieties of fruit trees many who visit this place fall in love with the natural beauty. The quietness of the place tells the tranquility and sacredness of this land.

We are grateful to all those who assisted us - the SCJM family in Matara from 26th December 2004 up to now. Among the Great personalities;

- o Mrs. De Kretzer
- o Mr. Peter de Kretzer,
- o Mrs. Christine and Mrs. Dorathy
- o Mr. & Mrs. Sumedha Kulatunga
- o Mrs. Janakie Gamage
- o All those who joined us with voluntary services in various aspects.
- o Rev. Sr. Marie Samaranayake - the Provincial Superior
- o Rev. Sr. Lohini Fernando - the Provincial Bursar
- o Rev. Sr. Anastasia Perera - the General Councillor who raised funds for us with the SCJM family in Belgium.
- o Rev. Fr. Charles Hewawasam - the Parish Priest
- o Rev. Fr. Herman Fernando - Director SED Galle
- o Rev. Fr. Damien Arsakularatna - Director SED Galle
- o Rev. Fr. Beede Fernando - Who found donors for various sections
- o Mr. Christophe - Caritas Essen, Germany
- o Mr. Rudy (friend of Fr. Bede) - who funded for the hostel
- o Mr. Host Galand - From Germany, funded for the Primary School



The Good Lord continues to bless all of you who have had a hand in helping us in our difficulty.

Together with the Parishioners and the residents of the vicinity we thank Our Heavenly Father and Our Blessed Mother for leading us in His light, so that we may be able to bring many more individuals to His fold. Praise Him for His Mighty Deeds!

Sr. Marie Constance Fernando

Our Presence in Iranapalai / Anandhapuram

“Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News”,

We moved into the war-torn area of Iranapalai to be in solidarity with the war-stricken people, who suffered loss of lives, destruction of homes, properties and belongings, displaced and were living in jungles carrying in their hearts the horror of war. We ventured in to listen to their cry, to heal their wounds and to bring them new heaven and new earth inspired by the words of our Founder.

“When you feed the hungry, dress their wounds, give them shelter are you not letting manna fall from heaven. You are creating a new heaven and new earth. You are gods on earth”



Our initial intention was to listen to their cry, be a healing presence and be in solidarity with their sorrows and pain as Vatican II instructed. **“The joys and sorrows, the hopes and anxieties are yours....”**



In 2012 four sisters settled in a house and began their healing mission. They visited the families listened to their stories and were a healing presence giving hope to the people who have lost everything in life and were without hope. However, after six months the sisters left Iranapalai saying that they will return.

At the request of Bishop



Thomas Savundranayagam and under the leadership of Sr. Deepthika Silva, the sisters of Charity went to Iranapalai. As there was no convent, at the request of the Parish Priest Rev. Fr. Arudchelvan, Mrs. Jesimala came forward to offer her house for us for 3 years. Fr. Arudchelvan with the help of his parishioners and youth, helped the sisters to settle down in the new house. Sr. Rita Anthonypillai together with the candidates, Sulaxana, Justina and

Silojini moved into Iranapalai on 1st June 2015 to prepare the house for the sisters to reside.



On 10th June, Bishop Thomas Savundranayagam blessed the house and installed the Blessed Sacrament. In August Sr. Rohini, (Superior), Srs Sylvia and Dorothy started the community and Sr. Rene joined in November as the 4th member of the community. With the coordination of the Parish Priest we ventured into mission of education, pastoral activities (Catechism, Holy Childhood, Pre-Cana classes and visiting houses) and social development. One sister taught in Ananthapuram School, another one taught Catechism in Ananthapuram and Iranapalai and

Sr. Sylvia was involved in social development and resettlement in Nedunkerni with CMRS Project after the war.

Iranapalai has three sub stations; *i.e.*, Anandapuram, Puthumathalan and Valagnamadam. Iranapalai consists of 380 catholic families, Ananthapuram 95, Puthumathalan 130 and Valagnamadam 85 catholic families. There are Hindus also but we worked irrespective of caste, creed and religion. We faced lots of challenges

but the presence of God and Word of God continues to strengthen us and to go forward without fear as St. Paul says: ***“I can do anything with the strength that God gives me”***.

At the end of the contract of the house the present bishop of Jaffna Rt. Rev. Dr. Justin Gnanapragasam recognizing our healing presence and the continuation of our mission offered to build a convent for us in Ananthapuram. Fr. Leo Armstrong the Parish Priest with his untiring effort and the parishioners constructed a beautiful convent called “Anantha Aham” which was blessed and opened by the Bishop on 21st July, 2019.

Our mission is extended to evening classes for poor children and slow learners and helping the economically poor. We live a simple life as to be a witness to the vulnerable whom we serve. Our community is an open house for the poor and needy extending hospitality to all those who come into our house. We share with the poor our products from our garden and the poor share with us.

As Fr. Triest said, “as you see the suffering Christ in the poor, they see the healing Christ in you”, we welcome everyone who come into our house whether they are poor or rich, educated or uneducated. Our mission is to make them experience the compassionate love of God. We serve with joy and live with a heart filled with gratitude to God.

God is Love.

**Anantha Aham Community
Anandhapuram**

Meth Arana Convent - Wanathawilluwa

“We identify and get involved in the needs of the people and reach out to the most vulnerable”

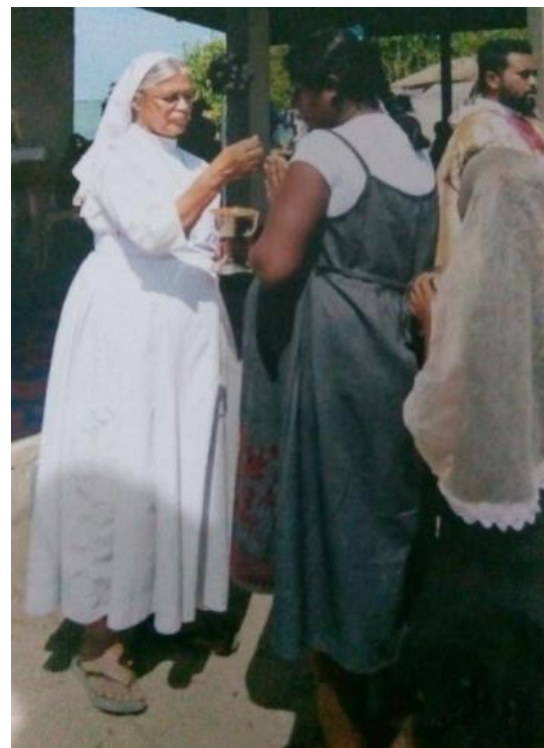
(Step 2, Provincial chapter 2011)

With the approval of Rt. Rev. Dr. Valence Mendis, the Bishop of Chilaw, Rev. Fr. Kamal Damian, the then Parish Priest of Wanathawilluwa invited the Sisters to visit his parish and organize a programme in order to ensure the spiritual wellbeing of the flock. In response to God’s call, Rev. Sr. Deepthika and her team accepted the challenge and initiated a mission in Wanathawilluwa, where there were many vulnerable people who were in need of God’ love.



Initially Sisters Harriet, Fatima, Dileshika, four postulants and two candidates organized a three-month exposure program in the parish. Rev.

Sr. Thilini, who was one of the four postulants and, is a member of the present community in Wanathawilluwa now, recalled her nostalgic memories. Having arrived on 27th June 2013 the Sisters went to the parish church the same evening for the Divine Mercy Novena. A parishioner who desired to welcome the Sisters to the parish cried aloud in the Church, “Heavenly Father, we thank you for answering our prayer and sending the Sisters to our parish.”



Shelton Mudalali was very generous and provided us with food and lodging since the house meant for the Sisters

was still under construction. The Sisters too supported the workers in whatever possible manner to expedite the renovation of the house. Although it was a life full of hardships at the beginning, the Sisters gradually got used to the new way of life. The Sisters who were deprived of the basic facilities, walked quite a long distance to fetch water. At the end of the day the Sisters retired on a mat spread on the floor for a deep sleep. Initially it was a challenge for the Sisters, but at the same time it was an eye opener for them to understand the hardships of the people whom they were going to serve. All these challenges encouraged the Sisters to deepen their faith.

Wanathawilluwa comprises twelve sub stations including the famous Pallekandal church situated 18 km to the interior of Wilpaththu game sanctuary, where St. Joseph Vaz had initiated this miraculous Church. We inaugurated our mission by participating in the Holy Masses offered in all the twelve churches from Friday to Sunday.

Since there were no proper roads and public transport available in many places we walked miles and miles for house visiting. We were reminded of the mission of St. Joseph Vaz when we came across wild animals on the road.

We were saddened and shocked to see how some people lived in extreme poverty. Their houses were just huts put up on the sand. They were not only poverty stricken but also illiterate. We started our mission from the grassroots level and catered to their needs. We maintained a healthy rapport with the people and guided them to rally round Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

Having accomplished the preliminary programme, the Sisters left Wanathawilluwa and again on 4th June 2015 the Provincial Superior and the pioneering Sisters; Bernadine, Nidhoshini and Priyanga revisited Wanathawilluwa. We are grateful to the Bishop of Chilaw for gifting us with a suitable house for a convent. With the least facilities available, the Sisters kick started their mission placing their unwavering trust in the Lord and confidence in the loyal and supportive parishioners. Rt .Rev. Dr. Valence Mendis, Bishop of Chilaw declared open “Meth Arana Convent” on 24th June 2015. At the opening prayer a very clear rainbow was visible for all to see in the light drizzle and that was a symbol of God’s abundant blessings upon the Sisters and their new mission.

Rev. Sr. Bernadine Amarasinghe, the Superior and a teacher at Serakkuliya Government School, Rev. Sr. Margret Whittal, who engaged in pastoral work in the parish, Rev. Sr. Delicia Rodrigo who managed the Pre-school and Rev. Sr. Thilini Fernando who was a student at the College of Education form the present community. The Sisters assisted the Parish Priest whole heartedly to nourish 1000 Catholic families in Wanathawilluwa. When the Sisters walked down memory lane, they would recall with gratitude the choicest blessings the Lord had showered upon them during the past

six years. They should be confident that their mission is quite pleasing to God. May the Sisters always find the strength and guidance of the Good Shepherd and serve with love and compassion all those who flock to them in pain and disappointment. May the Sisters of Wanathawilluwa be the Good News to all those who meet and greet them irrespective of race, colour or creed!

Sr. Bernadine Amarasinghe



AYS Gnanam Elders' Home – Sillalai, Jaffna

The Province of Srilanka having obtained permission from the Bishop of Jaffna Rt. Rev. Dr. Bernard Justin Gnanapragasam, willingly accepted to render service to the Elders on the invitation extended to the Sisters of Charity by Mr. R.S Gnanam and his family.



Rev. Sr. Anastasia Perera being a visionary during her tenure as Provincial Superior understood the need and was inspired to collaborate and work with the private sector in order to give expression to our Charism of Compassionate love to the most vulnerable in our society and be free from financial burden as this concern with finances is a hindrance to focus whole heartedly on our mission.

The home in Sillalai is the second such institution built and maintained by Mr. R.S Gnanam and family. It was declared open on the 4th of May 2019 by the Bishop of Jaffna. Due to the Easter attack on Churches and the tense situation that prevailed in the country, number of invitees for the opening was limited to only 75 persons. In order to protect and guard

this small gathering, there were more than 125 service men.



Sisters of Charity claim no ownership of this beautiful building, brilliantly designed and constructed to give shelter to the elders most in need. It is to be a home for all the elders who come to reside here. The task of transforming this huge house into a home is a tall task entrusted to the community of three Sisters who render service in keeping with our charism. A home can only be nurtured with characteristics that cannot be purchased. A home becomes a home when there is genuine love, caring and concern for each other and forgiveness among the residents and all those who serve them. This indeed is a difficult task as it demands a constant self-examination to assess our thoughts, words and deeds. As elders are not in their formative stage, the sisters need to be blessed with unlimited patience to accept them as they are and accompany them in the Autumn of their life and the age of senility – remembering the stark reality that their life has not been a bed of roses as they have been deprived of so much



May this mission that was so close to the heart of our Founder be blessed forever and the Sisters of Charity may always experience joy and fulfilment in rendering their service to the most vulnerable.

Sr. Dominica Swampillai.

materially, emotionally and spiritually. This home provides a refuge and a haven for 24 elders most in need.

The sisters also offer service to the parish community whenever possible. There are 275 families in the main parish and 135 families in the four sub parishes, their needs are manifold and what we contribute is just a drop in the ocean. Due to Covid 19 reaching out to render service is curtailed, yet we remain united through prayer.



Communities in the Jubilee Year...

South Region



Galle



Matara



Hiniduma



Gonapinuwala

North Region:



Nivedhanam



Madhahal



Nilaveli



Cheddikulam



Ramanadhapuram



Sillalai



Komarasankulam



Anandhapuram



Pattim

Colombo Region



Kadolkele



Thalahena



Nugegoda



Wanathawilluwa



Koralawella



Pamunugama



Jawatte



Ratmalana

Sabaragamuwa Region



Kegalle



Ratnapura



Ranwala



Nuwara Eliya

Sisters in Foreign Missions



Legazpi



International Asian Novitiate



Belgium

Frontier Missions

Called to be Prophetic

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has anointed me to bring good news to the poor and to set free the oppressed ...” (Lk. 4: 11-16)

“You cannot raise your arms to God without stretching your hands to the poor (Fr. Triest)

The poor must forgive us for the bread we give them because it is their right” (St. Vincent de Paul)



This is my foundation for my involvement in social justice ministry, to bring the kingdom of love, peace and joy to the poor, the oppressed and marginalized.

After my Sister formation in 1971, Sr. Francesca of Christ my Provincial recognizing the call in me to work in development field, sent me to India along with Sr. Gloria Fernando to follow a community development course in Stella Maris College, Madras. From there we explored and went to Indian Social Institute (ISI), Bangalore to follow a three months certificate course in community Organization. Before going to India Sr. Francesca sent us to work with Sarvodaya to gain field experience. This gave us the opportunity to work in Sinhala villages with Buddhist monks irrespective of caste, creed and language.

Thus, Sister prepared me and she was instrumental for my involvement in social justice ministry and I owe my gratitude to Sr. Francesca of Christ for what I am today in my mission and becoming a catalyst in this field.

Challenges faced in the Estate Mission

After returning from India I was sent on a mission to Dhurraba Estate, Bandarawela and Lunugala in Badulla to work among the plantation workers. The late Fr. Rajanayagam was the Parish Priest of Lunugala. He obtained permission to start a primary school for estate children in Yapama Estate where no school existed previously. He gave me a shed for the school. Today it is registered as a secondary level Government school.

Besides the school, my option was to be involved with social issues of the estate people with the help of the Superintendent. Later the estate management was handed over to the Board of Directors. There was an issue which caused problem to the Tamil estate workers. A plot of land which they have been cultivating for 25 years was taken over by the Sinhalese living close by. I took up this issue with the DS of Badulla. As a result, I received a letter that the board cannot pay for two teachers and asked me to resign. When I informed Sr. Francesca, she told me to continue to work without payment and I continued. ***This was the price for opting for social justice”.*** ***“You cannot paint a perfect picture of Christ without helping the needy” (Fr. Triest)***

Involvement with the Refugees and Indian Plantation workers in Cheddikulam

Due to communal violence in 1977 refugees, especially from the plantations were flocking to the North from the South

of Sri Lanka. I asked for a transfer and went to Cheddikulam to work with the refugees. The AGA of Cheddikulam asked Fr. James Pathinathan the Parish Priest of Cheddikulam to attend to the refugee problem. Rev. Fr. J.B Devarajah organized the sisters from the South to come and work with the refugees and Sinhala sisters from different congregations opted to work in the refugee camps in Cheddikulam and Kilinochchi. The Sisters lived in the refugee camps with the people and resided in the Church close by.



Called to be a healing presence and voice of the voiceless among the displaced people.

My mission was to bring new heaven and new earth to the displaced and especially for 1050 families who were settled in 26 settlements in Cheddikulam. Dr. Rajasundaram who was killed in Welikade prison in 1983 was organizing the refugee work in Vavuniya and we coordinated with him. Majority of them were Hindus except for 50 catholic families who were settled in St. Anthony's Shrine, Periyakattu. Sr. Francesca was very helpful and understanding and encouraged us in our mission. Crown lands were encroached and given to the people to settle. I played the role of a surveyor to measure 2 acres of land per family. Seminarians from the Jaffna Seminary helped us with clearing the jungle and putting up temporary sheds.

“When you feed the hungry, give a bed to their injured body...., you are letting down manna fall from heaven. You give them new heaven

and new earth. You are gods on earth, sister of Charity”. (Fr. Triest)



We had 11 sub stations and were involved in pastoral activities. We opted for small insertion and employed no working girls. We did not have electricity but kerosene lamps and no running water system. We used the well for washing and bathing and watering the garden. We used push bike for our mission cycling 10 - 20 kilo meters. We lived a very simple life style and were very happy doing our mission and refugee work.

A tragic incident took place in 1979. On 2nd January at 3.30 am, some intruders walked into the parish house got into the room which I had locked from outside. As they could not come out to enter into the room where Fr. James was staying, they opened the back door and ran out. They hid themselves near the gate and waited for father to come out. The villagers came and they shot one of the villagers and ran away. With this incident the bishop took Fr. James out and sent him out for studies.



Since my security was in danger, I moved to Colombo and joined the Secretariat for AMOR (Asian Meeting of Women Religious) I served as a secretary for three years. My mission consisted of speaking up for social justice in the light of the social document of the church and publishing a magazine. During these years I went to

Manila to do a course in social justice and went to Taiwan for AMOR meeting and visited Bangkok to meet the different religious congregations working with AMOR. In the Philippines I opted to have exposure program in the slums as to be in solidarity with the marginalized of the Philippines. Living in the slums was an opportunity to live out of the comfort zone and experience the struggle of the people.



In 1983 another communal violence broke out in Colombo and the government sent the Tamils to the North as they could not give protection. I was sent to Galle for safety. This was a desert experience for me and I read “Poustinia” (Desert) by Catherine Deherty and jotted down in my note book “God is preparing you for a new mission” and this was fulfilled soon after. I had to leave Galle as my life was in danger during the riots. Through the negotiation of Sr. Francesca who had come on holiday from Pakistan I got permission from Sr. Marie de Lorette and moved to Jaffna to help in the refugee camp run by the Lions Club.

Sr. Adrian as General Councillor visited me in Jaffna. After Sister returned to Belgium, she arranged for me to go to Belgium due to security reasons and I left for Belgium in September 1984. After doing one year French Course in IFCAD Sr. Ludo asked me to study in Louvain University. I said, in Louvain I have to study in French but if I go to England I can study in English and also work in the Centre for Tamil Refugees in London and Sr. Ludo agreed. Sr. Adrian arranged for Oxford University and I did two years of Diploma in Social Studies. After Oxford I did my Post Graduate Diploma in Reading

University and Masters in Education in Manchester University. I bow my head to dear Sr. Adrian for her understanding and concern.

Challenges faced for opting out to work for the oppressed and marginalized in Sri Lanka:

I returned in December 1989 in the thick of the war. I was in Dehiwala for some time getting ready to go to Jaffna to work with the refugees. CID came in search of me and inquired about my involvement with the refugees and my stay abroad. Since my security was in danger, I left for Jaffna in 1990 when the war started. At first, I stayed with the Holy Family Sisters and later I got a house for myself. I joined SCF (Save the Children Fund) UK as project officer for women and children. ***St. Nicholas, my patron saint was the protector of women and children.***

My area of work was with the displaced, helping with relief and development activities, arranging workshop for women and children, Education and training for pre-school and livelihood for women. Helping them to survive and continue my mission amidst bombs and shells and displacement was my option.

This period was ***an experience of living under bombs and shells day in and day out, which cannot be explained in words and cannot be bought for any price in the world.*** One night we had 12 planes and bombers hovering over us the whole night and Jaffna Bishop’s House and one of the Holy Family Convent was bombed. All the people were gathered in the seminary for safety and we were on our knees whole night storming heaven. Many villages were destroyed and people were displaced. This went on till 1995 and in 1995 we had the exodus where everyone walked out of Jaffna with one urea bag as their only belonging. We had thunder showers during this exodus and many died on the way. ***The Exodus was not just a story in the Bible but it was our living experience during the war.***

After the exodus I went to Madhu to continue work with SCF helping the

refugees providing nonfood items and relief assistance. People from the North flocked to Madhu due to bombs and shells. Madhu was the haven for the displaced people since 1984 when Mannar district began to be bombed and people began disappearing. In 1990 the people from Jaffna began seeking refuge in Madhu. About 45, 000 refugees were residing in Madhu in the jungle. ICRC approached the people and asked to vacate since Madhu was going to come under attack. People said “***Our Lady of Madhu will protect***” and refused to vacate. Next day the Defence Minister died in a bomb blast in Colombo.

In 1999, a shell fell on the Madhu church killing 40 people and injuring over 60. Bodies were taken to Mannar hospital and Bishop Rayappu arranged to make coffin and brought the bodies to Madhu and buried. The situation became worse after 2000 and Madhu was cut off in 2003 and the people slowly moved to Mullivaikkal during the last stage of the war. From 2003 - 2009 the displaced people moved from place to place to about 15 - 20 places.

My involvement as a Human Right Activist:

...I am setting you over nations and over kingdoms, to tear up and to knock down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant” (Jer. 1: 10).

The year 2009 saw the end of the war and over a hundred thousand refugees were brought to transit camps in Cheddikulam. There were seven camps and Bishop Rayappu got permission for Sisters and priests to visit the camps on Sundays. The refugees in the camps asked us to provide ***Bible and Rosaries only***. I visited the camp and used this opportunity to meet the people after Mass and attended to the needs of the widows, the families of the disappeared, of the prisoners and education of children. For one year the people were not allowed to go out of the camps except for hospital. Sisters and priests acted as intermediaries between the camps and hospitals to transmit urgent messages for the refugees. When the foreigners and NGOs wanted to visit

these refugees, I got them to Cheddikulam convent and they met them. The refugees have to come out of the camp saying that they were going to Cheddikulam hospital.

In 2009 injured people and people without limbs and legs were brought to Vavuniya hospital and Sisters and priests went to help these people. They came with only what they were wearing and they have to be provided clothing, food and medicine. By-standers were sent to camps in Cheddikulam and the injured were left alone without anyone to help. One old man told me that his wife was in another ward but his clothes were with her and asked me to bring. ***To my shock when I went, she was already dead and buried.*** What do I tell the old man?



I brought his clothes and told him that she would not come. It took me one week to tell him that his wife was dead. This was the situation in which we worked. The hospital was under the control of the army and we were not welcomed and faced lots of problems. ***“You will be weeping and wailing while the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful but your sorrow will turn to joy”*** (Jn. 16: 20)

In 2010 I joined the Nonviolent Peace Force (NP) (INGO) and became involved in human right activities. I was under surveillance and my life was in danger. In 2011 the organization NP closed as they faced problems with visa. Steve Alston the coordinator inspired me and helped me to register CDI (Child Development Initiative) as VSO (Voluntary Service Organization) in Vavuniya DS Office in January 25th, 2012.

I continued as HR activist and visited Mullaitivu and Puthukudyiruppu

resettlements with HR activists, the media and the NGOs. Once I was in Puthukudyiruppu visiting the families with Asia TV, the army and CID came and told us that we cannot carry on activities and we had to leave. Next day I got a phone call, the caller asked me whether he can help me in HR activities and I asked who he was. He said a friend of my friends with whom I visited Mullaitivu and asked me to stop these activities and work as a nun. If not, he would arrest me and produce me to courts. Since then, I did not answer calls from new numbers and I changed my sim.

After this I had to take precaution and work under surveillance fearing that any moment I could be arrested. My involvement is with war affected and economically poor women and children, families of the disappeared and the prisoners, assisting in the education of children and livelihood projects for widows. I take part in protests against human rights violations, abuse of women and children and the international day celebrations of children, women and of the disappeared. I take part in Government and NGO meeting and workshop on women and children and meeting of HR commissions.

I Went to Geneva to take part in the UN Human Right Council (UNHRC) session in March 2017 and for UPR (Universal Periodical Review) in October - November 2017 to be a voice for the voiceless and to demand Truth and Justice for the war affected and marginalized people.

In October 2019, the CID (Criminal Investigation Dept.) and the Police came to my office to check on me and my organization. I said I am a religious and working for women and children and not a criminal. They came to the convent and gave a letter requesting me to come to the 2nd floor in Colombo. I informed Colombo HR Commission and the commissioner intervened and stopped. Previously they had been inquiring about me from next door neighbours and trishaw drivers close to my office.

Again, in September 2020 they began searching for me and the TID (Terrorist

Investigation Dept.) with a translator came to my office on 18th August and wanted to check on me. I said that they are from the terrorist investigation and I am not a terrorist and I asked for a date as they cannot come without previous information. They came on the 31st October and wanted to speak about my organization for half an hour. But they went on from 10.30am to 3.30pm. Sr. Jacintha Gabriel was present with me. I said that they wanted to check about my involvement but they were asking about my personal life, my birth, my study and my joining religious, mission etc. When I objected to this, they asked me to come to Colombo to the 2nd floor. Then I agreed to face ordeal and finish. I told him this must be the last ordeal and he agreed.



However, the situation of surveillance continued for all HR workers. I have opted to follow Jesus who opted for the poor, down trodden and marginalized. Fr. Triest started the congregation after the French Revolution to serve the poor and the war affected women, children, convicted prisoners in Devil Castle. He made the Devil Castle into a Haven. For him every child born in this world is a child of God and must live with Dignity as human person and child of God.

So, I marched forward into the unknown taking the risk, facing challenges to follow the Master.

“I can do anything through Him who strengthens me”.

“The one who is in me is greater than the one out in the world”.

“It takes courage to answer a call; it takes courage to give your all;

*It takes courage to risk your name;
it takes courage to be True.
It takes courage to bear what no
other will share, to be standing
alone,
one whom no one will own.
To be ready to stake for another
man's sake; It takes courage to be
True.*

Sr. Nichola Emmanuel



JUSTICE AND PEACE

- **Context**

When I began to jot down some thoughts on my commitment to the ministry of Justice and Peace, my memories spontaneously went back to the period of training in the novitiate. It is there that I began to first taste the richness and the depth of Christian Faith. I should mention here with much gratitude the role of the Novice Mistress of our time who guided us in our faith journey. I joined the novitiate in 1970. When looked back, the particular phase of my life as a novice, it was historically a very crucial period for many reasons. It was a time of youth unrest all over the world and almost every university in Europe was in turmoil. In Sri Lanka, although a new government with left orientation was ruling in 1970, a youth uprising took place in 1971. The two decades of 1960-1970s was a unique period for the Catholic Church as well.

- **Justice Spirituality**

The origin of Justice Spirituality in me can be traced to the 1971 when the three of us Sr. Concepta Coonghe, Sr. Carmel Perera and I (3 Cs) were the first years in the traditional Novitiate located in the Sacred Heart Convent, Galle. During this period Sri Lankan Church on the one hand began to feel the impact of the teachings of the Vatican 11 and also of the youth rebellion. Needless to remind that Vatican 11 was the most significant and influential religious event in the Church in this century. Pope John XX111 by calling the council opened the Church to the world outside. During this period a few spiritual



giants such as Bishop Helder Camera also appeared in the scene. I still remember a thought-provoking statement he made. “When I give bread to the poor, they called me a saint. But when I ask why people don’t have bread, they called me a communist.”

- **Changes in Formation**

Shaken by these historical events our superiors too began to read the signs of the times and they introduced us to the spirit of Vatican 11. The new concepts such as “Promotion of Justice”, “Church of the Poor”, “Servant Church” and “Frontier Missions” were discussed regularly at our training sessions. Our superiors also made drastic changes in our formative methods. As a result, we left the traditional institutional life style to become the guineapigs to experience all kinds of newness by living out in a rented house in a poor area called Kaluwella. The fact of exposing ourselves into social reality outside which was rough and tough was the beginning of my journey of Justice and Peace Building. Going the Extra Mile to live a SCJM life is nothing but an experience of “getting my hands dirty,

my feet wet and recognizing the beauty of imperfection.”

- **My “Burning Bush”**

The ‘brutal killing of an innocent five-year-old child’ in Kaluwella by the Police during the curfew hours made me to reflect critically and question the unjust system and deepen my thoughts on good governance, justice and peace. From that day the death of the innocent child has been the “burning bush” in my life. This incident that happened at the very early of my religious formation gave me immense subject matter for reflection all the time until today. Reflecting on my religious commitment begun from Kaluwella and continued in Nuwara Eliya / Paul VI Centre / Ekala Young Christian Worker hostel / Kotugoda and Seeduwa has inspired me greatly to identify an authentic way of religious living with allowing myself opening to wider possibilities.



The YCS-YCW-CWM apostolate at Paul the VI centre was another turning point in my Justice Ministry. There I was inspired by Fr. Cardijn, the founder of YCW, particularly its method: See, Judge and Act. It taught me very valuable lessons. One important lesson learned was that unless we begin to see reality critically and make our judgments based on the teachings of Jesus and act accordingly, we will not understand life in its totality or change the social situations for better.

- **Justice for the Oppressed.**

The workers, minorities, women, students were the lot which suffered most by the unjust system introduced in 1977. Since 1980, there were numerous struggles of people in which we as Janawaboda Kendraya as a team got deeply involved. At the national level, there was the demand for justice for the worker victims of the General Strike of 1980, issues of democracy and freedom, struggles of the students, farmers, women and the domination of the WB and the IMF in the formulation of national policies.

The ongoing conflict between the Sri Lankan Tamils and the Sri Lankan State has been one of the major issues which constantly urged us to take a stand. We supported the policy of “no to war” and demanded a political solution instead.

The immediate issues in the area of Negombo were the landlessness and lack of shelter among the low-income people, more particularly the fisherfolk and the lagoon.

Later I began to realize that in Sri Lanka the youth rebellion has not ended. The second uprising erupted in 1989/90. The ethnic war lasted for 30

years. It can take place again. It is the poor who suffer at all these events.

The state of poverty, of landlessness and of displacement experienced by peasants and industrial workers has been worsened since 1980. The rural women have been doubly oppressed. State violence against women has also worsened with women activists constantly harassed. The mothers were not spared. The violence based on gender is rooted in the organized oppression. Sri Lankan women continue to face oppression and violence in all forms from the impact of globalization, corporatization of agriculture, ownership or lack of access to land and resources, fundamentalism, militarization. Land ownership is dominated by men with a mere 10% of land owned by women.

There are more than a thousand widows whose husbands were victims of forced disappearances and politically motivated killings. Intense exploitation of women migrants, plantation workers and domestic workers continue. Their rights are lost due to low wages (lower than the male workers), minimal or lack of benefits, job insecurity, use of hazardous technologies, discrimination in homes and work and physical violence. Women are also becoming more displaced living in temporary shelters, as a result of the 30-year war conflict. There are also high incidences of women being trafficked and child labour. The lack of a national policy, lack of women's representation in the parliament, ethnic conflicts, and the impact of the tsunami disaster are but a few challenges that the women communities experience. The right of every citizen of Sri Lanka follows her/his religion has also come under attack from recent past.

- **Frontier Mission.**

Spelling out the aims of religious life in the year 2016 Pope Francis exhorted us; to *“look to the past with gratitude”*, to *“live in the present with passion”*, and to *“embrace the future with hope”*. *“This looking, living and embracing are geared towards “waking up the world,” revealing a radical way of living and loving, caring and sharing, forbearing and forgiving that involves contemplative presence”*.

My involvement in such struggles deepened my understanding of social realities and then to determine the nature of my responses as a religious. It taught me that the cries and the pains of those victims could not be resolved merely by extending relief and welfare services. It became clearer and clearer that their sufferings were created by an unjust system. Therefore, our response ought to be a participant of the struggle of the victims to create a just social system. Peace has to be built on Justice. In such circumstances, I began to view the teachings of the Bible from the perspective of “my burning bush”. It is continued as an inspiration of justice in the ministry of Peace Building.

Pope Francis's teaching always inspired me in this journey. He once said *“A way has to be found to enable everyone to benefit from the fruits of the earth, and not simply to close the gap between the affluent and those who must be satisfied with the crumbs falling from the table, but above all to satisfy the demands of justice, fairness and respect for every human being”*.

- **Conclusion**

I came to the realization that my vocation is not found in the four walls of the convent but among the people where majority of the poor are exploited, suffer injustices and vulnerable to untimely deaths. Peace Building with the struggling poor is the difficult yet rich aspect of life with very refreshing experiences. Right through my life I face up to my own powerlessness and incompetence and yet strongly shaped my spiritual life making me to live the gospel better experiencing the joy of the Truth and Justice. The narrow path I have chosen is hard and rough and yet with Jesus by my side, I struggle with joy to arrive in hope. With suffering people who struggle together in deep faith for one destiny I am no solitary traveller and we believe that God loves us individually and collectively. This option is all my life as a SCJM even if it hasn't always been welcome.

In December 2014, Pope Francis invited all believers to an examination of conscience, especially whether 'the poor, weak and marginalized are the center of our thoughts and daily actions'. *"We need a great daily attitude of Christian Liberation to defend the poor rather than defending ourselves from the poor and to defend the weak rather than defending ourselves from the weak"*.

Sr. Noel Christine Fernando.



Friends of Father Triest– our Associates

“Our vocation is love”.

Our Charism; the call to love, and to witness to compassionate love, was one that found an irresistible response in my life; obviously also in the lives of many SCJMs throughout the world. Therefore, as a logical consequence there was a strong desire to share the richness of our charism with others, especially the lay people with whom we worked. Initially this move was introduced at one of our General Chapters and some Provinces took it up. The Pakistan province called their group the ladies of Charity. In the Anglo-Irish province, they were named “Companions on a journey. In the Philippines they are called: Friends of Father Triest.

This movement of grace eventually filtered down to me. My pastoral ministry in the Parish of Avissawella and my service to the estate folk, urged me to share our charism with the laity. I expressed my desire to Sr. Anastasia, the then provincial superior. It had been the sister who had officially passed this proposal through at a subsequent General Chapter and had drawn up a formation procedure and a formula of commitment for the Associates. Therefore, her encouragement and support was a strength for me to initiate this in 2008 and eventually form the associate group; open to men and women. I accompanied them for a period of one year, as they studied and reflected on the spirituality of our founder. At the end of the year they made their commitment during the Eucharistic celebration. Sr. Anastasia and her council were present.



The Avissawella Associate group comprised people from the town as well as the estates; different backgrounds, languages and ethnicity and in spite of this there was a strong spirit of unity among them as they worked together, trying to understand each other and helping each other. In today’s splintered society this in itself was an outstanding witness. Inspired by the life of Father Triest and his any works of mercy, they wished to work for their fellow human beings in the same spirit; revealing Christ to the poor, the sick, the lonely, the youth, the children of the parish and the estate folk.

Their eager desire to study the books available on our Founder was near



tangible and so we planned to have regular prayer, reflection and sharing

each month. What was witnessed in their gatherings was the wonderful, caring and joyous spirit among them; a mutual welcome as they shared their own life history and supported one another.

I was well supported in my apostolate in the parish and the estates by the friends of father Triest. With great love and fervor they pray for the Sisters of Charity all over the world and refer to them as 'our' Sisters. They in turn looked to us for prayer and support, this is also stated and promised in the little handbook on the Associates.

Father Triest was a man with a great heart and showed this in his life in the care and love he extended to all. Over two hundred years later he continues to inspire and encourage lay people and this was very evident in the group of Avissawella. They desired to live their lives in this spirit and it was for me personally a source of tremendous encouragement. Let us encourage more groups to gather around the spirituality of Father Triest who lived and witnessed to Christ's compassionate love.



Following the group at Avissawella, the seed was planted in the Parish of Kegalle under the guidance of Sr. Melani and Sr. Chrysanthus. Many

ladies attended the sessions on the spirituality of Father Triest; as a result after they made their commitment, one of them for life, they engaged in many charitable works and also helped out in the Parish.

The community of Thalahoma followed suit. A dynamic group gathered together under the guidance of Sisters Margaret, Chandrika and others. Inspired by the burning zeal of Father Triest for souls and the neediest they too were happy to band together to serve the less fortunate, to pray for the



Congregation, and to spread the mantle of charity to all in need.

The Charism that the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity, is an inexhaustible gift of God's mercy to us. Received under the blessings of the Founder, Father Triest, and nurtured by the spiritual legacy of Mother Placide it is something we inherit very specially and cannot be hidden or contained. It calls out for a sharing of God's gift of love with others, and so we pray that the movement of the Friends of Father Triest, first introduced for our province by Sr. Angela in the Philippines, will spread its branches, enticing and inviting people of good faith to LIVE and LOVE!

Sr. Naomie Rajanayagam.

From an Associate

I am Mrs. Anuruddika Adittha from Thaladena, Negombo. As an Associate of sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary, I am grateful for giving me an opportunity to share my experience.

We started our association in May 2012. We initiated our association with 12 members. Then we were introduced to the Charism of the Congregation "God is love". We were encouraged to live according to the spirit of Fr. Triest. We were named as Friends of Fr. Triest.

Meditation and praying before the Holy Eucharist are the most valuable gift we received. As associates we were trained to pray before the Holy Eucharist for an hour or more. It was for the intentions of others. There we experienced the source of joy by sharing our prayers with others. Meditation changed almost everyone's life. By meditation we came in touch with our inner self.



We were strengthened to face the storms of life. After a year we took our oath as Associates and then we received our badges. Since then we started our journey as Associates. Some of us started to pray for the sick

while some of us helped sisters to teach poor children. In every Christmas and Lenten season we help the needy. When the need arises in the parish we give our services.



We have associates in Avissawella and Kegalle too. Every year on the 4th of November on the Congregation Day we get together as a group. From time-to-time new members join us. We continue our journey of faith as Associates of Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary.

Thank you, God bless you.

Mrs. Anuruddhika Adittha

Unforgettable Events

The Tsunami and its aftermath

The scent of the Christmas breeze spoke of the Birth of Peace. The holidays were given and the Sisters of Charity were celebrating the joys and blessings of Christmas. In the school all the administrative work had been attended to in preparation for the coming year. Everybody was waiting to welcome the New Year. But our dreams were shattered on the 26th December 2004! The Tsunami that destroyed the South Asian coastal line did not spare St. Mary's Convent, Matara. Before Christmas could even be celebrated properly, about 9.20 in the morning, the tsunami hit our school with such a battering that everything moveable was washed away, leaving behind a mass of debris and rubble, destruction all around us and hearts gripped with a tremendous sense of fear.



The computer lab, physics lab, chemistry lab, with all the



scientific instruments, musical instruments, pianos, organs, key boards and library were just some of the things that were destroyed. Property was one thing; but the loss of lives was immeasurable. The school counted the loss of teachers, helpers and children and the convent mourned the death of Rev. Sr. Bernadette Koolmeyer. Almost immediately after the Tsunami sisters from all over the country and also from abroad, reached Matara to offer their fullest support to clear away the rubble and destruction and to put some semblance of order in what was around us. We managed to collect and salvage what we could. Among the things we manage to save, were the log

book, some birth certificates and also some valuable books.

Throughout the aftermath of the Tsunami we knew that we were never alone; so many came to our aid.



It was overwhelming! Parents, well-wishers from abroad and locally, friends, past pupils, volunteers and so many others lent a helping hand in every possible way. In spite of the enormity of the destruction, we never gave up. So many gathered to paint the verandas and to clean, wash and repair the school. As the boundary wall had been washed away and the people still had fear of the rather turbulent waves of the sea, we made a temporary “wall” with cadjans and within a month. As desks and chairs had been



generously donated to us we managed to reopen the school for the new year on the 25th January 2005!

Undaunted by the damage caused and trusting in God who manifested His goodness to us through hundreds of concerned and caring people, we were able to gradually surmount the destruction of this natural disaster and move forward with hope.



However, there were many negative consequences. Just five hundred students were present for the 1st day of school. The overriding fear that affected the parents due to our extreme proximity to the sea impelled many of them to remove the children from the school and admit them elsewhere. The parents staged a protest and with good cause too. But ours was in an almost helpless situation. Matters were worsened by rumours and false tsunami alerts. Panic was constant. It was also essential as the Principal of

the school, to provide the children with a mentally conducive environment, with counselling and other helps. We had to meet with the parents and those concerned and arrive at a decision to move the school away to a safe location. ... And so to buy a land and build a new school! Not an easy task; but surmountable.... a dream, to make Reality...

The aftermath also saw an unceasing flow of support in the arrival of the much-needed requirements such as computers, lab and office equipment and many other essential items, donated to us both by foreign and local donors. It was truly a case of "*Deus Providebit*" (God will Provide). This was to such an extent that we were even able to help others around us.

Every cloud has a silver lining. With the blessings of God and the protection of His Blessed Mother, we have overcome many an obstacles and we presently set our face towards a future on Mary's Mount with the banner and flag of St. Mary's flying high! A centenary has passed; a centenary and more to come. We thank each and every one of you who has made this a possibility. Let our motto be a reality in our lives! *Respice Stellam!* "Look to the Star"

Especially remember the death of Sr. Bernadette Koolmeyer:



Sr. Bernadette who was a member of the Convent of Mary Immaculate, Matara at the time of Tsunami on 26th December, 2004 did not go for her home visit on the said date, but was present at the Eucharistic celebration at the Parish Church. When the first tsunami wave forced into the church sister was just giving the Holy Communion with the ciborium in her hand, the eye witness said that she was carried away with the wave just behind the church. Sisters who came from Colombo found her body in the General Hospital, Matara. She was given a respectful funeral in the cemetery. May she rest in peace.

"In the sweet bye and bye, we shall meet on that beautiful shore."

Sr. Marie Samaranayake

Easter Attack

As citizens of Sri Lanka, we experienced thirty years of internal strife and then the country was back on the track for development. But with this attack once again the country has turned back from the development trail.

In the Christian calendar Easter is the Central Mystery of Christian faith and the most solemnly celebrated annual feast. We renew the proclamation made by the Angels; “**Jesus is risen**” (Luke 24: 5) and we joyfully announce “**Christ is alive!**”. During the 40 days of Lent the Catholics pray both as individuals and as a family. Through prayer and good works, they allow God’s grace to bring about interior conversion. Very especially the Catholics of Negombo observe fasting; abstinence and works of mercy to those who have less in life, as the Lenten discipline guides us into these spiritual virtues.



It was in the year 2019, 21st April, Easter Sunday, during the Holy Eucharist, this traumatic incident took place. It still brings back horrific memories to our minds. The bomb blasts took place during Easter Sunday services at Kochchikade, St. Anthony’s Shrine - Colombo, Katuwapitiya - St. Sebastian’s Church, Zion Church in Batticaloa and also in certain leading Hotels in Colombo. The bombings killed 258 persons. Death is not an end in itself but

a beginning of a new life. The injured were more than 500 and those affected are hundreds. The majority of the dead are Sri Lankans with at least 46 foreigners among those killed. Hearing the startling news so many Priests and Religious gathered around these Churches. From different parts of Sri Lanka, the Sisters of Charity came to render a helping hand and listen to the cry of the family members of the victims. The Sisters stayed on the spot and rendered valuable services to the people. It was indeed our “**Cor Unum**” experience, appreciated very much.

The carnage which took place on Easter Sunday has had a great impact on all of us. It has taken the faith and trust especially of the family members of the victims who are with us today. They keep asking: where is God and why did He allow this to happen? It happened in His own temple as His devotees were there to thank Him for the Gift of the Resurrection given to His Son Jesus Christ and to all of us.



His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, the chief Shepherd of God’s flock, maintained peace and harmony in our country. He led the Catholics in Sri Lanka along the path of unity. Leaders from different religions joined hands with us. It was a common cry for justice

irrespective of religious or political affiliations. A few days after the Easter Sunday attack there was an attempt made to rouse the Muslim community against the others. The Church intervened and prevented disturbances on that occasion too.

Two years have passed since the bomb blast. The time given for the previous regime to mete out justice to the victims and their families is of no use. So far no serious action has been taken. The people with great hope and expectations voted for this regime into power. But it is sad to note, that the perpetrators of this bloodbath and those behind the scenes are yet to be identified. What is clear to us is that the government now in power, like the former, shows no interest in doing justice to the families of the Easter Sunday victims. Therefore as a united Church we will not remain in silent any longer.



His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith organized a protest called “Black Sunday” on 7th March, 2021 at Katuwapitiya. Later special Prayer Service was held at Tewatta National shrine of our Lady of Lanka interceding Our Blessed Mother to bring about justice for the Easter victims. Many Priests and Religious participated in the Service. In all the houses of the departed victims Holy mass was celebrated.

To mark the second year Remembrance of the massacre there were many services held in Colombo, Negombo and some other parts of the

country throughout past two years. More than thousand Priests and Religious gathered in Negombo town, reciting the Rosary in a prayerful manner, walking in procession to Katuwapitiya Church. Many Sisters of Charity participated, giving strength and courage to the families of the victims, united with them to show our loving concern for them.

Two years later with much investigation the Presidential Commission of inquiry (PCOT) handed over an incomplete report to the Cardinal. His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith said that the Catholic Church will continue the campaign against the culprits of the Easter Attack until justice is meted out.

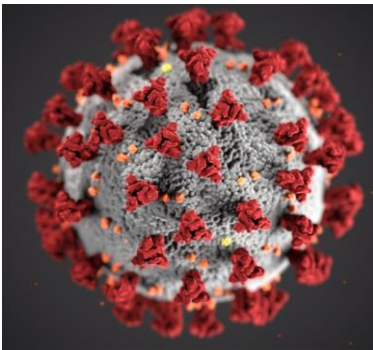
The carnage of Easter Sunday could be an eye opener to the reality of the society that we are promoting and encouraging, the attitudes and behavioral patterns that we project to our young generation through our own example. There are lessons to be learnt. In disasters and unintelligible cruelties of humanity we need a mindset that would make us not **reactive but proactive.**

Sr. Priyani Asanthi
“Shalom” Kadolkele, Negombo

Covid- 19 Pandemic

Introduction

Present pandemic so called Corona virus, also referred to as COVID-19 started from bats but theoretically some believe this crisis started through a lab. Corona virus was first discovered in the city of Wuhan, China. The World Health Organization declared the outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30th January 2020, and a pandemic on 11th March 2020.



Corona virus is a virus which where humans are affected by it and could potentially die from this disease. Many countries like Europe suffered severely during last year (2020). People were affected desperately and still continuing. At present (2021) it is worse in India for an example - where many are left to be cremated on the ground due to the lack of space in hospitals and in cemeteries as well. Meanwhile this pandemic is getting worse in Sri Lanka in the recent past. This crisis is a very important to be alert because it is still going on in history from 2019 - 2021.

Etymology

Pandemic is a word that is originated from Greek. In Greek 'Pan' means 'all' and 'demos' means 'people', which means pandemic (Greek). In English in the mid-17th century, it is called pandemic from the Greek word

pandemic, which gives a meaning of widespread of diseases, 'incident to a whole people or region'.

Definitions

There are several definitions for pandemic. Some of the following definitions may give us a certain understanding about the pandemic.

- A pandemic is an epidemic or a disease.
- A pandemic is defined as "an epidemic happening worldwide, or over a very wide area, crossing international boundaries and usually affecting a large number of people".
- A disease existing in almost all of an area in almost all of people, animals or all over the planet.
- Pandemic is a plague of infectious disease that happens over a wide geographical area and that is of high prevalence, generally affecting a major number of the world's population for a long time.

So, a pandemic is a disease that derives due to a virus which disturb human's life crossing even geographical boundaries for years.

Reasons for Pandemic

Pandemic, outbreak of infectious disease that take place over a wide geographical area and generally affecting a large amount of population. For each epidemic there are different infections. The researchers find out after what the pandemic starts in history in their own laboratories.

For example :

- **Ebola virus:-** Blood of a person infected with the virus. Body fluids such as breast milk, stool, saliva, semen, sweat, urine, or vomit, of a

person infected with the virus. Also objects such as needles or syringes that are contaminated with the virus.

(Thanks to

<https://familydoctor.org/condition/ebola-virus-disease>.)

- **COVID-19** is caused by infection with the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) virus strain.
- **The 1918 influenza pandemic:** was the most severe pandemic in recent past. It was caused by an H1N1 virus with genes of avian origin. Although there is not universal consensus regarding where the virus originated, it spread worldwide during 1918 - 1919.

(Thanks to

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/1918-pandemic-hini>)

Pandemic in Present

The world has come to still due to Covid '19 for more than one and a half years. This present pandemic shows that no one is safe until everyone is safe and how important it is to practice the 'Fratelli Tutti' the insights of the Pope Francis in His recent Encyclical. Since we human are inter connected to each other one's safeties helps another to live safe. Since this pandemic is so dangerous which takes away the life of people in no time, we need to maintain certain **SMS** disciplines such as **S: Social distance, M: Mask wearing, S: Sanitizing often.**

This pandemic has started to destroy the human life without any discriminations. Covid '19 does not know differences between men and women, young or old, rich and poor and developed and undeveloped areas or countries. It does not care about

colour, language, age, race, religion etc.

Covid '19 pandemic's most common symptoms are like fever, dry cough, tiredness, and difficulties in breathing. Less common symptoms are like sore throat, aches and pains, diarrhoea, conjunctivitis, headache, loss of taste or smell also a rash n skin or discolouration of fingers or toes.

HOW CAN WE STOP THIS?

We can prevent this from happening by simply being always sanitised and clean. You should always wash your hands before you are to eat and after you eat and get in physical contact with people (i.e., handshake). Always carry a mask and cover your mouth and practice physical distance between people.



The call of God amidst of Covid '19 in the light of 'Laudato si' and 'Fratelli Tutti'

The vulnerability of human beings were experienced by this virus, irrespective of who we are and what we are - no caste, no creed, no wealthy or poor could it spare. All were affected and brought all the humans to bow before the Almighty who is the author of life and death -which man has forgotten. This dreadful disease made us to realize that we cannot do without God. No more material things, scientific discoveries, powerful weapons and superpowers could safe human kind from this corona

virus. This has made us to realize that the ultimate power rest in Him alone.

It is God who gives everything, life and breath. In flowers the divine beauty blossom forth. In rain the divine sap fertilizes the earth. Through the sun the divine light shine forth. We live and move and have our being in God. (Acts 19:29). Man has become blind to this wisdom and Knowledge. Greediness and selfishness have closed his heart.

Right from the beginning man wanted to become God and pushed God outside of his life. Looking at this dreadful plaque so called Covid '19, it brought us to a realization that God is the author of everything.

Our history is God's history with us. In human love God rejoices with us, within us and all around us. In human sufferings God suffers with us. Through the creative ventures of humanity, God transform the world. A new earth and new heaven is created. Down through the history of salvation, we see how God gave opportunities for human kind to realize their sinfulness and follow the ways of the Lord. Forty years in the wilderness (Duet 1, 2) had they realized their crooked ways and wept for God's intervention. God who is compassion heard their cry, brought them out. God's voice echoed through the prophets for a change of heart. And so He continues to re-create until His will is accomplished.

We as **SCJMs** bent in adoration to the Almighty who is Merciful to save the people. We the Communities of scjms spent time in Adoration to beg God for His Mercy. We spent lot of time caring the mother earth as our Holy Father invite us through the Encyclical of 'Laudato si' and planted vegetables, flowers and fruits and lot of activities that connected us with nature, the gift of God. We also shared our meals and dry rations with the poor in respect of Pope's invitation in 'Fratelli Tutti'. We were able to read and reflect and prayed during this period of uncertainties and

made us to depend on Him alone. It was a time given by God to evaluate our lives.

We need to thank God for the protection we experienced during this period of pandemic and confusion a timely intervention by God came through our Pope Francis' Encyclical called **FRATELLI TUTTI** for our reflection. It was an answer to the suffering we are going through during this Covid '19.

Covid 19 Experience

We have reached one and a half years of experiencing the pandemic of Covid 19 which brought the whole world closer in its, suffering anxiety and of Hope. History has shown us that the world has experienced pandemic of different kinds, in the past and has managed to overcome in spite of the fact that technology was not so developed like today in the 21st century.

Pope Francis says, 'that the wide world tragedy of Covid 19 momentarily revived the sense that we are a global community, all in the same boat, where one's personal problems are problems of all.'

We see that for different people this experience of living this historical time of pandemic brought about different attitudes and ways of expressing this situation.

For scientist it was looking for a remedy or methods of preventing the spreading of the virus.

For some their faith in God was such that they turned to God in prayer and supplication, according to their beliefs.

For the common man, depending on daily wages, this was and is still a difficult time as they have to find ways

and means to support their family, yet for some families it was an experience of deepening of family bonds by staying together.

For school going children, university students and those who are attending different institutes for education and training it is a dilemma trying to keep abreast with their education with so much imposed holidays.

For the government while looking for ways and means to stop the virus from spreading and at the same time trying to safeguard the freedom of the people is still a challenge.

For the police their utmost goal is to enforce law and order for the safety of the people.

For the artists, it became an opportunity to express their talents in song or poems or in art.

Although the world is turned upside-down because of this pandemic there are lot of positive aspects that we can see as an outcome.

So in this situation what do we do as SCJMs, to keep our balance? Personally this pandemic became a time for deeper reflection, on the dependence on God for our very existence, as the scripture says we do not know the time when one is called to leave this world or how. So, we feel this time is given to us to deepen our trust in the Lord. ***‘The Lord is my rock and my salvation I do not fear.’***

Pope Francis says, “The pain and the uncertainty and fear, and the realization of our own limitations, brought on by pandemic have only made it all the more urgent that we rethink our styles of life, our relationships, the organizations of our societies and above all the meaning of our existence.”

Sr. Yogarani Rajaratnam

Pre-Novitiate and Formation

It gives me an immense pleasure to write an article about the Pre-Novitiate and its formation programme on the occasion of the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary's 125 years of completion in Sri Lanka.

For 125 years, the Pre-Novitiate has been in different places, like in the city or in a village in Sri Lanka. At present, it is situated in Galle and attached to the community of Sacred Heart Convent which is the First House in Sri Lanka.

Each stage of formation has got its own purpose. The Pre-Novitiate is a time of continuous Spiritual and Psychological growth in a young girl who is desiring to follow Jesus through the SCJM religious Congregation. To attain the above purpose, from the beginning until now with the same idea but with different approaches, the pre novices are helped and accompanied by the formator with different activities to discern and confirm her choice of why she wants to be a religious.

During their formation, the pre novices are provided with Human and Spiritual formation. Through the human formation they are helped to be mature women who can be responsible for their lives, who have the emotional freedom to make decisions in life and be responsible for their choices, who can adapt themselves to live with differences and respect other cultures and religions, and take leadership. They are helped to adapt to a simple life style, love for the poor and build

better interpersonal relationship in the community. The Spiritual formation helps them to deepen their faith in God and to know the meaning of discipleship to Jesus and it demands especially personal conversion.

Pre novitiate formation is person-oriented. According to each person's culture, family background, standard of emotional growth, and intellectual ability many opportunities and resources are provided to grow in maturity and emotional health. The pre novices are provided with needed opportunities to develop their talents, and skills and gain fluency in the English language. They have access to know the current situation in the country and the world at large.

Different forms of prayer methods and yoga are introduced for them to grow in interior silence and solitude so that they become more reflective and discerning. Even though the formation is a lifelong process, however at the end of the pre - novitiate programme an evaluation is done to see, whether the pre- novices give importance to their personal growth. Therefore, they are encouraged to step into the other stage of formation that is the Novitiate.

Finally, I wish to thank all the sisters, who have accompanied the Pre novices in the past years, for their dedication to the mission of formation and their great service in life of many SCJMs in Sri Lanka Province.

Thank you and May God Bless You!

Sr. Kirutha Gnanaprakasam.

Formation for Transformation

In 1936, the SCJM novitiate began in Galle to have religious formation on native soil. They observed a profound silence and there was a very monastic atmosphere. A greater importance was given to spiritual reading. Instructions were given daily regarding religious formation. They lived in perfect harmony with each other. The holy rule of 1929 was observed until 1964. Thereafter the Second Vatican Council brought many changes. It made to reflect in depth the charism of the congregation and the spirit of the founder and the first sisters. In 1981, the Constitution and Statutes were formulated. The formation in the novitiate turned the focus towards “our vocation in the today’s world”.

In 1990 the novitiate was shifted to Katugastota, Kandy as God pitched His tent among His people. The novices there grew up in a very homely atmosphere. With the intention of providing opportunities for the novices the novitiate was shifted to St. Joseph’s Convent, Kegalle in 2008. Availability of various apostolates such as homes for girls and elders, hostel, Montessori, school and pastoral work with parish and the estates would be a support for their formation.



Formation is the work of God and Formator is a facilitator. Formation is a journey and it depends on the individuals. It starts at where they are and goes at their pace in a non-judgmental atmosphere while respecting the resistance and encouraging honesty. Each one is unique

and a mystery. The freedom provided helps to create, progress, love and choose. One can always outgrow because human beings are created with the ability of transcendence.

The Goal of Formation is to emphasize on the internalization enhancing the formee’s capacity to embrace values in order to become internally free. The primary objective of formation is to prepare the novice for total commitment of oneself to God, in the following of Christ, at the service of the mission. The intense dialogue with God in prayer, the basic maturity and the Charism of the congregation will lead the novice to say a totally free and personal “YES” to God through Evangelical Counsels. As the Christian of 21st Century is called to be a mystic in the market place, the novices learn the mystic rhythm of going from prayer to the world with love and compassion and being back to prayer.



Person is much more than a collection of experiences. The novice is being accompanied to make all the experiences into one, which leads the person to become whole, integrated. Connecting with life is very important. The journey toward God is a lifetime affair. Each stage has the potential of deepening the experience of God bringing God to the center of one’s life.

Sr. Lanka Fernando.

JUNIORATE

“I AM YOUR FATHER AND I LOVE YOU

EVEN AS I LOVE MY SON, JESUS”.

We as young girls, listened to the inner voice of the Lord, calling us to follow Him very closely. We in our own free will chose to be the Sisters of Charity. Today we are proud to be members of our beloved Congregation. From the time of our entry till now we treasure and value all the rich experiences that we have received during our formative stages, which has shown us the way to find our roots wherever we are being planted.

The guidance and knowledge that we received from the history of our Congregation, the beloved Founder and Pioneering sisters of their humble beginning, and their simple lifestyle have challenged us immensely. Our Chrism is the richest gift that God has offered us to experience His unique love.

Happy memories to be with peers and sisters in the community with different age and different characters with God's experience, is the strength of our Province. Daily reflection of life's journey and sharing of faith experiences make us to be deeply rooted in Chrism as juniors to blossom in the religious life.

Our religious life in the future

The religious of the future is a seeker, not remain just a believer. A believer is stuck. She will not talk about an inner journey that is dynamic. The future religious is one who consciously commits herself to search for God in

her life. It is this conscious commitment to seek God that makes her religious. However, as juniors, we begin the journey of search which is an internal journey. The vows will meaningfully fall in line and enhance the journey.

The vows are dynamic in the journey of the seeker. Vows are the means for one's seeking.

Who constantly listens, discerns, and responds – Obedience.

Who empties her life towards the simplicity of life – Poverty

Who loves love beyond human-made barriers, an inclusive and expansive love – Chastity.

As young religious, we are called to live and practise the vows through our simple way of community life. The contemplative spiritual experience will transform us as happy religious in our beloved congregation.

Sr. Roshanthini Mariyathas



SR.ROSHANTHINI



SR.JEYALINI



SR.NILUSHI



SR.RASAMARY



SR.AHALYA



SR.THILINI



SR.MULINI



SR.MALSHA



SR.VIRGINI



SR.QUEENTA



SR.NIPUNI



SR.SURANI



SR.JEMEEMA



SR.JUSTINA

God is Love

SISTERS OF CHARITY OF
JESUS AND MARY.



“Follow me, and
I Will make you fish
For people...”

(Matthew:4)18



Come...

Let us bind our hearts together to
share the love of God with
everyone on earth.

Address:
Sisters of Charity:
No:15,
Don Carolis Road,
Colombo 05.
[Tel:011 2584816](tel:0112584816)

Jubilee Poem 1896 – 2021

1. Love of God, Love of God,
How precious and delightful
To embrace and enjoy my God,
to feel the joy of the Risen Saviour.
2. How wonderful is the call of our Founder
that inspired to live Christ's Compassion for all time.
How wonderful His ways and enlightening
to begin the Congregation of Charity.
3. God's inspiration came through Love,
Christ's inspiration through Father's will.
Founder's inspiration through revolution,
Charism of Compassion inspired the Sisters of Charity.
4. Commitment to destitute, vulnerable and orphans,
Compassion for all and most needy.
Spirit moved forward to our land
that brought five Pioneers to Galle for new foundation.
5. Beginning from South to North,
Spreading one to twenty six houses and more.
Eagerly arrived five energetic missionaries from Belgium,
to earnestly spread God's Love to all.
6. Jubilee invites to look back and ponder,
on the immense blessings of the Lord.
Jubilee calls for thanksgiving, renewal and recommitment
in life and in His service.
7. Oh what a miracle God's blessings to us,
Oh what surprise of His plan for us.
What strength and grace given us
to continue His mission of Love.
8. Thank you Lord for journeying with us,
for the past 125 years of grace.
Thanks and grateful to our Pioneering Sisters
for their untiring missionary spirit and deep love for the Lord.

Praise and Thanks to the Living God for the 125 years of blessings.

Sr. Jacintha Gabriel.



*In Thanksgiving to God.
and to all our Sisters
who have gone before us
for 125 years of mission 1896-2021*

"A Sister of Charity inherits from God
You are the heirs of Christ.

What does Christ bequeath to you?
His love for God his Father,
His love for all people
His love for your sisters,
His love for the poor rejected by the world.

He also leaves you his virtues:
his humility, his Charity with which
to bring consolation to the world's
misery to pay society's debt to the poor

These, you receive from Jesus Christ
as your inheritance, and
you accept them by your sacred vows.

LOVE then is your portion"

(Fr. P.J Triest)

24th November 2021



