



RSCW

International Newsletter



Volume 2, November 2023

For St. Madeleine Sophie communication was central to the exercise of her leadership, through letters she maintained the relationships, unity and governance of the Society.

(Phil Kilroy)

With the RSCJ International Newsletter, we wish to encourage communication by sharing some of the events that may be of interest to the whole Society, with the desire to make it not simply a source of information, but a means by which we can know each other, be present to one another, and contact each other to deepen our understanding of topics of interest. It is also a means by which we report on the projects of the Solidarity Fund, the visits of the General Council, the work of the different international commissions and the key processes of initial formation in the Society. We would also like to share some of the initiatives that are emerging during the reorganization process.

Cover photo: Opening of Probation 2023-2024 at the Villa Lante, Rome, Italy

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Visits to **Provinces**

Visit to **PER** (May 2023)

Barbara Dawson, Mónica Esquivel and Marie-Jeanne Elonga traveled to the Province of Peru in May of 2023.

"God is in the people who walk." This was a phrase of the prayer that began our visit. We understood that this is the faith of the Peruvian people, a faith that moves them to continue walking, and we could see that the province is also on its way, with the certainty that God accompanies them.

During the days we spent there, we had the opportunity to get a glimpse of the reality of the country, to experience the poverty in which many of its people live and its great inequalities, as well as its cultural and culinary richness.

We have seen how our sisters try to respond to these realities from our charism and mission, providing education for all, developing skills and abilities for work, implementing projects for entrepreneurship, etc. And we have seen with joy the courage and determination



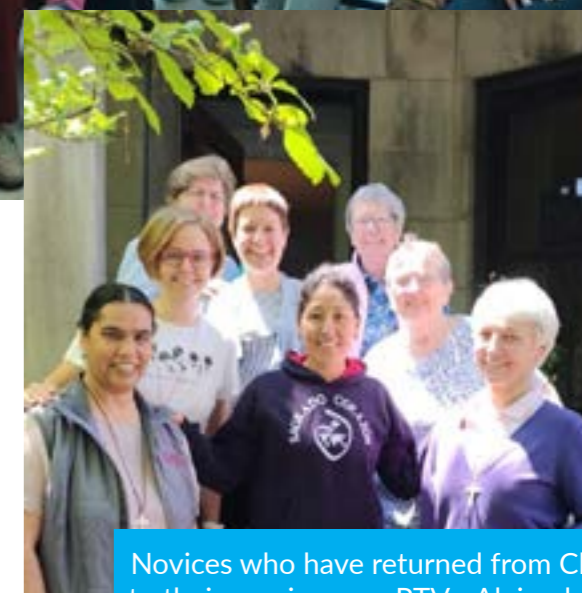
with which the population is responding.

The sense of our educational mission in Peru is exceptionally strong; we are proud to see the contribution that our sisters have made to the country in the field of education. At the same time, they have been attentive to the needs of the most vulnerable, being pioneers in adult education and professional technical education.

They are currently living in a time of transition, in which the face of the province is progressively changing, the laity are taking on a greater role, and our sisters are redefining their apostolic role. Finally, together with the whole Society, they are in a continuous discernment to "fix the house" and to define the apostolic priorities in preparation for the near future.



With the Albany Community



Novices who have returned from Chicago to their provinces as PTVs. Alejandra de la Riva (ESP), Anna Cséri (CEU) and Katalin Simon (CEU). Françoise (BFN) had already returned when the photo was taken.

Visit to **USC** (May 2023)

Anne Corry and Daphne Sequeira visited the Province of United States and Canada from May 15-28, 2023.

Our schedule on our visit to USC Province was full but very exciting. The focus was on future directions and this covered a wide range of the province's activity: initiatives with young people, developments in eldercare, a revitalized JPIC Commission, programs in the Stuart Center for Mission in Washington DC, spirituality outreach and a meeting with the Head of the Schools Conference of Sacred Heart Education and the Executive Director of the Network of Sacred Heart Schools.

We travelled across the country and visited the Euro-

pean novices in Chicago and also enjoyed the hospitality of Encounter Point, a gathering place for all who are engaged in spirituality and pastoral action. We were struck by the strong relationships with committed lay people in every part of the mission of the Society. We learned of existing and new outreach ministries with migrants. We had a very special visit to the shrine of Philippine Duchesne in St Charles, Missouri. We also had the joy of seeing some areas of these beautiful countries by road and train. Along with all this activity, we saw ways in which the province is anticipating its new relationship with Mexico and the Antilles. We were struck by the energy for future directions in the province.

Visit to **ARU** (June 2023)



Marie-Jeanne Elonga traveled to the Province of Argentina and Uruguay at the beginning of June 2023.

The warm welcome of our sisters in ARU was one of the most striking experiences of my visit, as I was able to discover a depth of meaning and commitment that impressed me deeply. Their warm hospitality immediately made me feel at home, and allowed me to immerse myself fully in the experience.

During my visit, I had the opportunity to talk with our sisters and lay collaborators, getting to know their motivations and their dedication to the mission we share. I was struck by their passion and determination to serve local communities, to make a positive difference in the lives of the people they touch. Their close collaboration is a source of inspiration, illustrating how mission can be more effective when we work together in harmony and mutual respect. This goes beyond simple daily tasks; it's about transforming lives, bringing hope and creating stronger, more interdependent communities.

During my visit, I witnessed educational projects that went far beyond the simple transmission of knowledge. Our sisters and lay collaborators work actively to create an inclusive learning environment, where each individual is valued and encouraged to develop their full potential. This has a lasting impact on students' lives, as they acquire not only academic skills, but also values of empathy, solidarity and respect for others.

I've also been impressed by the support programs for the poorest families. Our teams work to provide food assistance, access to healthcare, and educational services to parents and children. This holistic approach helps break the cycle of poverty by strengthening families' resilience and giving them the tools they need to improve their quality of life.

Some older sisters are turning to less physically demanding roles, such as teaching, praying, spirituality and mentoring. They share their wisdom and experience with younger generations, guiding them on their own path of service. Other senior sisters may devote their time to prayer and meditation, offering invaluable spiritual support to the community. Their prayers are an essential pillar of religious life and mission, bringing comfort and inspiration to all those around them. Their ongoing contribution to mission is a reminder that love and service know no age limits, and that religious life is a lifelong commitment that transcends obstacles. The younger and healthier members work hard to support their older sisters, looking after their well-being and ensuring they have all the support they need to pursue their mission.

Visit to **Haiti, ANT** (June 2023)



On the right Sofia, next to her Rosa and Valle the second on the left in Anse-à-Pitres with two religious friends who welcomed them.

Barbara Dawson and Mónica Esquivel went to Santo Domingo to visit the sisters of the Haitian community in the Province of the Antilles in June 2023.

In a previous letter, we shared about our meeting in Santo Domingo with our sisters of the Haitian community and with Soco in early June. As you may recall, we decided to continue our presence in Haiti, knowing that it will involve ongoing discernment.

You may ask, what has happened since then? Broadly speaking, we can share with you that after the meeting in Santo Domingo, Valle Adame (ESP) and Rosa Vásquez (PER), accompanied by Soco Rubio (MEX-provincial ANT), continued on in Santo Domingo, setting up some conditions for the arrival of Sofia Baranda (CHI) and Maricruz Trigueros (MEX) in August.

They were inspecting different places where they could accompany the people of Balan and where, at the same time, they could have a space where they could be included in the culture, where they could

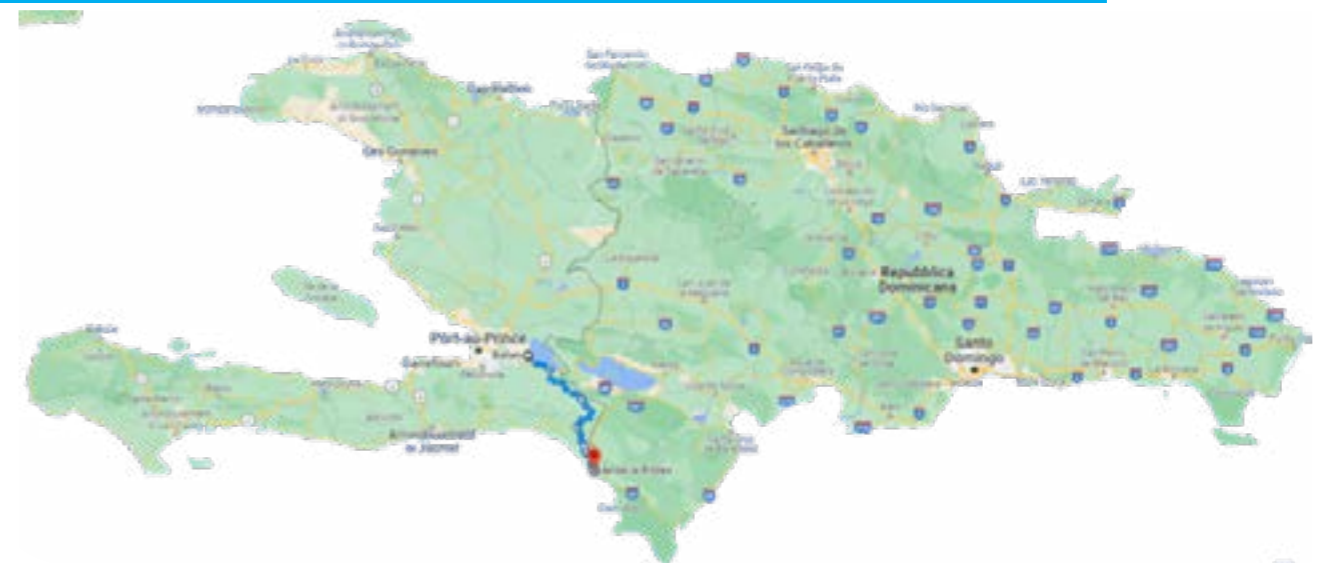
learn Creole.

They were in communication with Sofia Baranda (CHI) and Maricruz Trigueros (MEX) to share the information they were gathering and to make the discernment about the place where they will be. Together they decided to go to Anse-à-Pitres, on the southern border between Haiti and Santo Domingo (see the map below). There is an inter-congregational community there that has welcomed them and offered them a house. From there, they will move to Balan to provide continuity to the Fe y Alegría school and see what can be done with the clinic, which for the time being is closed.

Currently, the community is formed by Valle, Rosa and Sofia Baranda, who arrived on August 20. We hope that by the time you are reading this, Maricruz will already be in Haiti.

We continue to accompany them with our close prayers.

Map of Haiti and the Dominican Republic. It shows the location of Balan and Anse-à-Pitres. As you can see, it is right on the border with the Dominican Republic.





Visit to **ITA** (June 2023)

Barbara Dawson and Marie-Jeanne Elonga visited the Province of Italy in June 2023.

We recently undertook a friendly visit to the sisters in the north of the Italian province, a long-awaited moment since the closure of the Villa Peschiera house and the relocation of our sisters to various institutions in Padua and Bergamo. The Villa Peschiera house was a place of life and mission for many years, and the transition to new residences has been a challenge for our sisters.

During the visit, we had the opportunity to listen to the experiences of our sisters and understand the challenges they have faced. It was a time for listening attentively, sharing stories and praying together for the continued success of our sisters' mission in their new institutions. Despite the challenges of relocation, they persevere in their commitment to our charism and continue to spread the good news by the simple witness of their lives. We also had the chance to visit

our sisters' new homes in Padua and Bergamo, soaking up the atmosphere of these places and the way our sisters continue their mission.

Ultimately, this friendly visit strengthened the bonds between our sisters and showed that, even when circumstances change, the solidarity, fraternity and communion that are at the heart of our mission, and the support of the congregation, remain constant. Our sisters' commitment to serving, loving and educating, even in different circumstances, is proof of the enduring nature of our spiritual heritage. They are a living reflection of our commitment to meet the needs of the most vulnerable and to bring the light of faith into the darkness of the world. In their new communities, our sisters have become catalysts for change, bringing the blessing of their presence and service. They are shining stars in the lives of those around them, inspiring and uplifting those fortunate enough to know them.

Finance Office

Update from the **Finance Office**

The Finance Office worked on the preparation and carrying out of four meetings, organized by languages, with the provincial treasurers and the financial management teams of the provinces. Both the provincials and the International Planning Commission were invited to these meetings. After the presentation of some important topics related to finances, the participants shared how they are managing the payments that have been generated in the process that we are

living as we move towards the new provinces. Afterwards, a space was opened for dialogue in which concerns, comments, recommendations, and questions were expressed and the experiences of some current provinces that have already lived through integration processes with other provinces were shared. We reiterate our desire to continue with these meetings, which enrich us and help us to move forward together.

A Farewell to **Francesca**



On Tuesday, October 19, we had an emotional celebration, thanking and saying good-bye to Francesca Iannilli at the Mother House. She has made the decision to start a new stage in her life in which she will have more time for her three children: Mattia and her twins, Enea and Bianca.

In our celebration there were tears, memories, laugh-

ter and many expressions of gratitude for the availability, dedication, joy, kindness and gentleness with which Francesca has worked for 11 years in the Society of the Sacred Heart at the Mother House.

Our affection, gratitude and prayers will always be with her!

Mother House **Solidarity Fund** Projects

In July 2022, the 2022 MHSF granted a total of € 236,088 for 20 proposals spread over 11 provinces. Grants were allotted in each of the four regions of the Society as follows:

- Africa: 7 proposals, 3 provinces (EGY #1, RDT #2, UGK #4)
- ASIANZ: 3 proposals, 2 provinces (IND #1, PHI #2)
- Europe: 4 proposals, 2 provinces (ESP #2; POL #2)
- Philippine Duchesne: 6 proposals, 4 provinces (ANT #1; ARU #2, BRA #1, MEX #2)

The projects were implemented between mid-2022 and mid-2023. Their evaluation reports were submitted around one year from the grant allocation, at the beginning of September 2023. Below, an overview of the report of a project from each region.

Europe: ***Go on, butterfly*** in Marki, Poland

Go on, butterfly was aimed at a group of youth and adults participating in the Open Heart Foundation that addressed social concerns (dysfunctional families, alcoholism, depression, social anxiety, and suicide attempts). From August to the end of November 2022, it ran therapeutic and skill-building workshops (art therapy, self-development, make-up, and tailoring), organized volunteering activities and concluded with a public event on the catwalk, for eighty guests, to display the fashionable garments that the group designed and customized.

The twelve adults and forty-three young people involved in the project now have a positive image of

themselves, and realize the importance of presenting a well-groomed appearance in society and when they go for employment. They have built interpersonal relationships among the participants as well as externally. Capacity-wise, these young people and adults have acquired new professional and organizational skills. Professionally, they have acquired tailoring skills (understood also as creative skills) and have a better understanding of how the fashion industry works. They have shown that they appreciate the value of work and commitment and are able to meet their responsibilities. The public clapping for them at the final event was the cherry on the cake for the group.



ASIANZ: **Counselling for Students Affected by Covid 19** at the Sophia Polytechnic and SPJ Sadhana School in Mumbai, India

Counselling for Students Affected by Covid 19 addressed two hundred pupils and students with special educational needs (cerebral palsy, epilepsy, speech and/or hearing impairment, and challenges of post-Covid) that were to resume face-to-face schooling after the pandemic. The target group and their families felt overwhelmed by the new routine. The project ran weekly and occasional individual and group sessions of art-based therapy (music, dance, and playing), talk therapy, storytelling, and mindfulness (a practice to bring one's attention to the present moment). Parents attended conferences on cyber safety and cyber bullying, and on the physical development and sexuality of their children. The young participants now show social abilities in regulating their anger and anxiety, display flexibility in their attitudes and enthusiasm in what they do, and can follow routines without individual instructions. In addition, parents express trust and cooperation with the school staff; they show interest in their children's development, and have the skills to engage in creative activities with them. Teachers now



use common strategies to deal with target behavior in a consistent manner across the school, where fun in both learning and teaching prevails.

Africa: **Development of Classes for Handicapped Adults** in Samalout, Egypt



Development of Classes for Handicapped Adults addressed a group of sixteen young people with disabilities aged 10-25 years old. The Samalout Centre, originally set up for small children, needed to reorganize/expand its premises and rework its curriculum to respond to the needs of its hosts. The project engaged in construction and renovation works that offered new spaces for educational activities for its target group. The new kitchen has been central for teaching the target group how to do daily chores, which they are now able to do autonomously in their homes. Thanks to the neat garden and the new outdoor playground, the project participants enjoy more freedom in their movement and have improved their physical capabilities. In addition, the Montessori toys have stimulated their academic skills. Their participation in the centre's activities has made them feel important, as they are responsible enough to attend and people show how much they care for them. The renewed dynamism of the Samalout Centre has shifted its image from that of people with disabilities to one of engagement, creativity and interaction.

Philippine Duchesne: **Book and Stationery Shop** in Balan, Haiti (ANT)



The Book and Stationery Shop project was originally developed for the 192 pupils of the Fe y Alegria school, but it also responded to the local population's needs for stationery. Violence is high in Haiti and this prevents free movement; it is a danger for parents to travel to the nearby town to purchase paper and textbooks for their children's schooling. Those working for the project drove to the Dominican Republic to purchase stationery and managed to travel to Port-au-Prince to buy some of the textbooks. They then opened a book and stationery shop within the school. This way, parents were able to buy the materials their children needed to attend school and learn, at a cheaper price and without having to go on risky trips. In addition, the photocopier has been a great help for the entire local population and this income has contributed towards the teachers' salary.

Ukraine Fund

Poland: **Welcome to Kindergarten**

This project aimed to provide support for five Ukrainian children to attend the kindergarten in Tarnow. This includes the cost of full board, planned outings, stationery and clothing and footwear as necessary. The five children are aged between three and six years old and live in Tarnow with their mothers.



Poland: **Polish course for Ukrainians**

This project provided an intensive Polish language course during the summer holidays in July and August 2022 for 40-50 refugees. The classes took place at the "Fundación Corazón Abierto" and the funding supported the teacher's salary, teaching materials and other running costs for the classes.



Update on the **Villa Lante**



Small oratory for conference participants

The newly renovated Villa Lante is looking marvellous inside and out, thanks to the hard work and extraordinary commitment of the Villa Lante community and work team and the construction workers who have taken on this project with such pride. While it is still not quite complete (the inauguration of the chapel took place on November 21, the garden is only at the stage of ensuring safe walking paths and steps, and the museum areas are yet to be finalised) the Formation Center for Religious and Lay, Villa Lante is creating a lot of interest from those who relate to its mission and vision.

Already the Villa Lante has accommodated Society commission groups such as the International Planning Commission, the International Education Commission, and later in the year, the JPIC International Team. The International Renewal Group was based at the Villa Lante for six weeks in April and May of this year and will do the same in 2024. A large group of young people from the United States, Mexico and Poland stayed at the Villa Lante as part of their engagement with World Youth Day in

Portugal, through the initiative of the USC province's 'Sacred Heart DNA'. Recently the RSCJ community from Naples, several of whom had been in the former Villa Lante community, stayed for two nights at the Villa Lante and were very happy with what they saw. The Villa Lante has also hosted a program organised by the Jesuits called 'Discerning Leadership'. This will be an ongoing commitment at various times of the year. The European Network of Sacred Heart Heads of Schools Conference was held at the Villa Lante in October. The Probation has its own special area in the Casa Betania building.

All of these activities are within the current parameters of the Formation Center for Religious and Lay, Villa Lante. This is important while the renovations on the entire complex are still being completed. Then we can assess the best ways to serve the mission of the Society at the Villa Lante. In the meantime we need to reiterate the following message:

The new Formation Center for Religious and Lay, Villa Lante, for the foreseeable future, is a not-for-profit association whose mission is to serve as a formation center for groups of 10 or more persons engaged in programs and meetings that align with the mission of the Society of the Sacred Heart. The Villa Lante is not a "Casa Per Ferie" and cannot accept individuals, families, or groups who are coming to Rome as tourists or just for a visit. The exception is RSCJ or RSCJ who accompany others when they come and who will take care of all of their needs and meals outside of the Villa Lante. A donation is asked of all, including RSCJ, who use the Center. All requests for rooms should be directed to Stéphane Sgrò at coordinator@villalante.org.



Reception area at Casa Barat

International Commissions and Teams

International Planning Commission

We continue to take steps in our shared search throughout the process of reorganization in the Society.

In our communication last July, the International Planning Commission shared the document on [Apostolic Priorities](#) with the Society. It is a document that came out of the last few months of work of the IPC, our reflection on the dialogues we had with the provincial teams in the months of April and May; the communications received from many of our sisters, as well as our lay collaborators; the ideas and intuitions that have been emerging among us; listening to the International Commissions; and our conversations with the General Council.

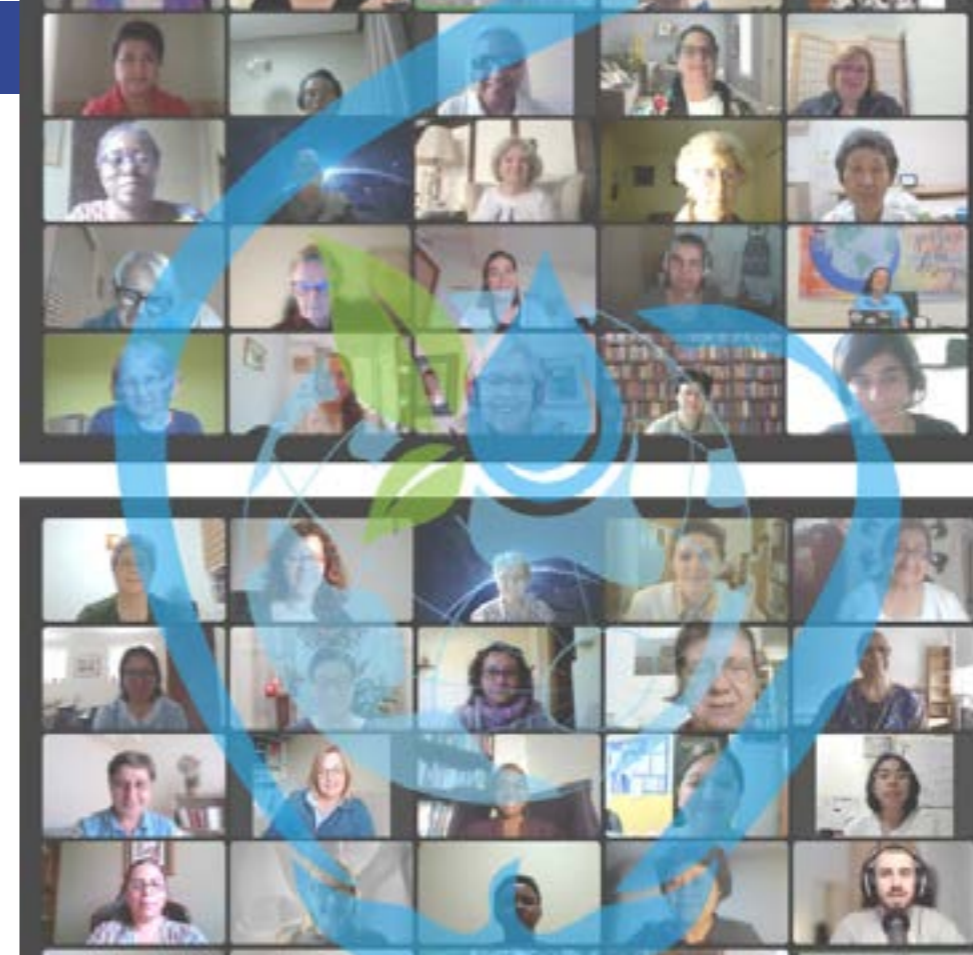
The document on Apostolic Priorities is born out of the fertile soil of the multiple ways and experiences we have, in every context, of discovering and manifesting God's Love; and of the hopes we have of remaining committed to the calls for justice and solidarity in our world. Has it not always been mission that has pushed us forward, to go to other lands and frontiers? Has it not been Jesus's plan for us from the beginning to call us to be a resurrected, revitalized community?

It is a challenge for us to listen, to organize all that we have heard so that it can make its way into the project of being One Body, of our being sisters, and to generate a group discernment among us when we meet every fifteen days via Zoom. For us, generating consistent communication stems from the desire to construct a



shared understanding of the essential questions and the implications of our reorganization.

We would like you to receive the document on Apostolic Priorities as an invitation to continue the dialogue about them as they anchor us in mission. We invite you to read it multiple times in different contexts: personally, in communities, by interest groups...as you reflect and share on the questions we offer at the end of the document. Ask new questions from your context. We each have our part to play in contributing to the revitalization of the Society's mission today and this is one significant opportunity that calls for the insights and perspectives of many.



Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation

Being Artisans of Hope in Our Blessed and Broken World

Justicia, Paz, e Integridad de la Creación

Ser Artesanas de Esperanza en Nuestro Mundo Bendecido y Roto

Justice, Paix, et l'Intégrité de la Création

Être des Artisans d'Espérance dans Notre Monde Béni et Brisé

JPIC International Team

Five years after the JPIC International Meeting held in Manila, we had a meeting of JPIC links via Zoom in early June. Prior to the meeting, reflection questions were sent to the links and the syntheses of their responses were presented during the meeting. The topics covered included the following:

- I. How have we been in these last five years?**
 - Concrete examples of how the province/district or network has responded to the JPIC Imperatives
 - Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, and our learnings and insights
- II. How have we been organizing our JPIC work?**
 - Feedback on our three JPIC services: JPIC International, UN-NGO, JPIC Learning Hub

- Invitations for collaboration, and future plans of the three offices

III. Moving further into the future: How do we envision the Apostolic Priorities?

- How we see JPIC as one of the Apostolic Priorities
- How we envision our collaboration with the three other Apostolic Priorities (Education, Spirituality, Formation), with a special interest in engaging young people

It was an enriching meeting that inspired us anew to work together as "One Body which loves, practices and gives witness to justice, peace and integrity of creation at all levels of our life and mission" (2016 General Chapter).

International **Ongoing Formation** Commission



Kim Hyo Seung (KOC)



Maria Amelia Planas (ARU)

The General Council has asked Kim Hyo Seung (KOC) and Maria Amelia Planas (ARU) to join Kathleen Conan (USC) as the Ongoing Formation Commission to facilitate the Society's Renewal Program. While the overall program remains the same as the previous ones, it will be shaped by the gifts of the new team and this new moment in the life of the Society and the world.

Hyo Seung has been doing ongoing formation with various congregations in Korea and is now on the team at Joigny, offering retreats and workshops in the spirit of Sophie.

Maria comes with her background in social work and her service in initial formation and in the animation of her province. Currently she is also available for personal accompaniment, retreats and contemplative spiritual exercises

Participants for the 2024 Renewal Program for sisters 55 to 75 years of age have been accepted and will be together at the Villa Lante from March 26 to May 6, 2024. Some comments from previous participants (from provincial newsletter of India) give a flavor of the experience:

It made me aware with greater force of the strength of our internationality.....

...the passion for mission, the dynamism and the willingness, even among the oldest sisters, to venture into something new or difficult.

I really appreciated the contemplative spirit of the Society which had drawn (us) closer in (our) relationship with the Lord (even) through times of suffering.

I was amazed and thankful that, without having the same native language, I could both understand and accept what our Society meant to us, expected from us, planned for us in the future.

The sessions on Synodality...gave me a hope for the church at every level.



International **Vocation** Commission

Over the past few months, the International Vocation Commission has been in action, creating pathways for young adults to start experiencing their own discernment journey towards their vocational path, through meaningful engagement and shared experiences. We are very happy to share with you some of our highlights:

Our recent international conference on apostolic priorities, led by the distinguished panelists: Rachel Guillien, rscj, representing the Province of Belgium, France, and the Netherlands, Suzanne Cooke, rscj, representing the Province of United States and Canada, and Gerardette Philips, rscj, representing the District of Indonesia, evoked inspiring conversations among the audience of young adults and RSCJ, and together they explored how these four priorities serve as a guiding light and an invitation to begin the discernment for their own vocational paths.

We are also delighted to share the involvement of RSCJ from a variety of countries over the past few months. Our international community was in constant engagement with our young adults during World Youth Day 2023. RSCJ from Chile, France, Hungary, Poland, Spain, and the USA, joined hands with young adults, fostering dialogue, spiritual growth, and deep connections.

Across the provinces, the spirit of vocation and youth engagement is thriving, with Hungary, Mexico, Peru, and Spain leading initiatives for young adults, providing spaces for reflection, learning, and service. We hope to keep shaping vibrant communities that nurture faith, commitment, and a sense of belonging.

As we navigate these exciting paths, we invite you to join us in this inspiring journey. Together, we can build bridges of inspiration and solidarity with young adults around the world.



International **Education** Commission

The International Education Commission met in Rome this past June to complete drafting both the Philosophy of Sacred Heart Education and the Profile of the Sacred Heart Educator. The days together gave the Commission the necessary time to ensure that the essential concepts of both the philosophy and profile be articulated equally effectively in English, French and Spanish, capturing the nuances of meaning in each language. This work was greatly impacted by the extraordinary technology and space at the Villa Lante.

The Commission was able to meet with both Marie-Jeanne Elonga, RSCJ and Barbara Dawson, RSCJ. The shared dialogue that ensued provided very helpful insights to the Commission. Having discussed and

reflected on this conversation, the commission refined the documents and met with the General Council by Zoom in July. This meeting affirmed the Commission's objective that this contemporary philosophy of Sacred Heart education with its emphasis on humanization be helpful in any setting where the Society and its lay mission partners are engaged in apostolic work.

This October, the Commission met again in person at Villa Lante to complete the documents, to develop a process through which they may be shared across the entire Society, and to refine its proposal of essential elements to the Formation to Mission Program, especially in light of the apostolic priorities.



Commission on International **Volunteers**

The Experience of the International Volunteers' Service: A space for encounters and growth

During the summer vacation time in the Northern Hemisphere, many RSCJ international volunteers crossed borders to experience volunteering and life with the RSCJ in the community. For the past few months, the good will, energy and compassionate hearts of the young people of Europe (France, Spain, and Poland), Latin America (Mexico, Peru, Chile, and Argentina), Africa (Uganda) and Asia (Indonesia, Japan, and the Philippines) have been connected across the continents through this volunteer service in RSCJ community projects, schools, a farm and other ministries. The encounters of the students and professional volunteers with vulnerable, marginalized and differently abled children, youth, women and families brought them closer to Jesus and helped them discover the faces of God. The volunteers' experiences have been a space for many to become more connected with themselves, with others, with nature, and with God. The volunteers shared their profound experiences after returning from the service. They told us that they had learned how to live fully in the present moment, how to relate to others with the quality of presence and how to be happy with

little things. Community prayers, sharing around the Word of God and silent adoration deepened their experiences of service and the knowledge of God. All these led them to a stronger commitment to participate in the transformation of this blessed and broken world.

The new Commission on International Volunteers had its first face-to-face meeting in the last week of September 2023 in Rome to move forward with an even better service for this beautiful program as the Society works on its apostolic priorities.



The new Commission on International Volunteers:
Yuka Arita, Marisol Chiroso y Conny Mateos

International Communications Team

The Beta version of the updated RSCJ International website is ready and has been circulated around the Society for feedback! The new website features a more modern and softer look and feel, as well as more information about the General Council and the Generalate.

Take a look at it here:

<https://rscjinternat.wpengine.com/>

Any feedback or comments on the website should be sent to comms@rscjroma.org.

We are also gearing up for the General Chapter 2024, preparing various materials, including the dedicated website, which will be launched in January 2024.

In the meantime, we held a second meeting of the Sacred Heart Communicators' Network, in which we shared best practices on how to create networks, and how to increase exchanges between schools.

Finally, we are still looking to build our support team for translations of articles and materials from English to Spanish and French. If anyone, RSCJ or layperson, would like to collaborate as part of this team, please contact Margaret at comms@rscjroma.org.



Life in the Society Novitiates

News from the New African Novitiate

The joint novitiate of the new UGK-RDC-TCH province officially began on Saturday, September 9, 2023, welcoming nine novices, including three from UGK and six from RDC-TCH. There will be ten novices, including one in her second year. RSCJ sisters Marie-Pascaline Kalemba and Teresa Aura are in charge of their formation. The ceremony was celebrated in

Kimwenza, surrounded by the Eucharist, and was marked by the joy and emotion on the faces of those present. We pray that the Lord will guide them, choose them, and accompany them individually throughout this period of training, and we wish them all the best for the future.





From left Kim, Ji Hye, Panni (Anna), Zsófia, Fr. Russ Feldmeier, MM, Eugenia, Donna, in front, Mary

News from the **ASIANZ Novitiate**

The **Apostolic Experience** of **Second-Year Novices**



After a novice has spent a year or more in the novitiate, she has an extended experience in another community and apostolic ministry. This extended apostolic experience offers her the opportunity to live the spirit, charism

and values of religious life and the Society that she has studied; to experience living and ministering in a more ordinary apostolic community setting; to broaden her sense of the realities of our world, and to experience herself in ministry, particularly with those who are poor or disadvantaged. She then returns to the novitiate for a number of months for further reflection and to continue her novitiate before taking her first vows.

help with interviews to find out their needs and priorities. Later, she will teach English to hearing-impaired children. Vianny resides with the Baleendah community in Bandung and helps teach at the kindergarten next to the community. Magdalena also lives with the Baleendah community and works in the primary school. Era is assisting in Nur Abadi, a school for special children near our house in Lenteng Agung, Jakarta. Mitch will help with a shelter for children and young girls, the Tahanan Mapagkalinga ni Madre Rita of the Agustinian sisters in Guiguinto, Bulacan, and will spend her weekends with the Sophia House community in Quezon City.

Our six second-year novices are having their extended apostolic experience in their own countries from mid-July to mid-November. Elizabeth is spending part of her time with an indigenous community to



News from the **Chicago Novitiate**

The English-speaking novitiate in Chicago celebrated the opening of its new year in a prayerful ceremony on October 1st. Two novices, Eugenia Yasinska (ESP) and Zsófia Trásy (CEU) were officially welcomed by Anna Csókási RSCJ, Director of Novices in the company of their Chicago RSCJ community, Mary Bernstein, Donna Collins and Kim, Ji Hye. During the ceremony, Eugenia and Zsófia shared their request for entrance into this important stage of religious life.

Blessing prayers were offered from Angela Corsten, CEU Provincial Superior and Rita Szentistványi, Formation Coordinator of CEU and member of the CEU leadership team, Mariola López and Ma José (Chiqui) Domínguez, both provincial council members of ESP, and Lynne Lieux, USC provincial team member (all via Zoom). The ceremony was full of life and joy and was followed later in the day with a community Mass.

The ASIANZ Novitiate Welcomes **Four First-Year Novices**

On November 18, 2023, the Feast of St. Rose Philippine Duchesne, four new novices were welcomed to the Novitiate in an entrance ceremony in Montalban, Philippines. The new first-year novices are Victoria Hapadgara and Kumudini Tirkey (Kumud) from In-

dia; and Klaudiana Bau Rua (Dina) and Maria Odis (Odis) from Indonesia.

During the entrance ceremony, members of the Province of India and the District of Indonesia joined via Zoom. Their Canonical Leaders gave a blessing and summarized the meaning of the Novitiate. Members of the Philippine District were present at the entrance ceremony and afterwards had a liturgy to celebrate the Feast of St. Philippine Duchesne and, in anticipation, our foundation day.



Srs. Ellen Collesano, Novice Director, Ayds Suan, Kathy Conan, and the four new novices at the entrance ceremony

In addition to the new novices, six second-year novices, who are currently on their thirty-day retreat, and four professed sisters live in the Novitiate Community.



New Members in the Society

Celebrating **First Vows** in the **ASIANZ Novitiate**

The ASIANZ Novitiate had its first profession ceremony on the Feast of the Sacred Heart on June 16, 2023, in which Norlissa (PHI) and Theresa (KOC) took their first vows as Religious of the Sacred Heart. The mass was celebrated by Fr. Sammy Canilang, CMF with concelebrants Frs. Kristian Cangkung CMF, San Jose Montalban parish priest Fr. Peejay Pendon, and Mongolian diocesan priest Fr. Paulus Urnud. Srs. Choi Hae Young and Lee Hyun Ok of the KOC leadership team attended as special guests.

Two phrases from Sophie may enlighten us as we send Norlissa and Theresa from this international novitiate

to their community and mission. Sophie says, "In the heart of Jesus, you have no other country than the whole universe." And as Sophie said to Philippine in 1823, "You will find everything in the heart of Jesus. It is open for us. Let us go then to draw from it the strength and courage we need."

Watch a slide presentation of photos taken during the ceremony here: <https://youtu.be/DRZvXnutBik>

The heart of God, the hearts of Sophie and Philippine, and all our hearts are full of joy as we pray for Norlissa and Theresa with gratitude and blessing! Amen.

Celebrating **First Vows** in **BFN**

Françoise, from the BFN province, took her first vows on Saturday September 9 at the Notre Dame du Point du Jour church in Lyon.

Salesian Father Pascal Harmel presided over the celebration and Noëlle Favet, Provincial Superior of BFN, received her vows.

Françoise's family, friends, members of her apostolic experience and BFN sisters came to support her commitment. The international novitiate in Chicago, where Françoise completed her novitiate, was also

present in prayer, represented by Alexandra, a novice from the Spanish province, who was able to come.

Mass was followed by a convivial and festive time.

"Go and bring my joy to the world" was the song that concluded this beautiful celebration, sending us, Françoise, and each of us, to bring the joy of Christ into our world!

We ask that the Society accompany Françoise with their prayers.



Celebrating **First Vows** in **RDC-TCH**

On September 16, 2023, in the parish of Sainte-Marie de Kimwenza, two novices, Parfaite Bakaka and Prisca Mansanga, took their first vows for three years. They were received by Sister Blandine Basosa Madila, the Provincial Superior. The mass was presided over by Father Jean-Christian Ndoki of the Society of Jesus.

The two young people were accompanied to the altar by their parents. After the homily, they received their parents' blessing. The profession ceremony then took place. It was a moment of profound joy and emotion for us, RSCJ, to relive our consecration and see our two young people give concrete form to their "yes" to

the Lord's call.

Following the Eucharistic celebration, a party was organized in the multi-purpose hall of Kimwenza high school. It brought together the families of our new young professed sisters, collaborators and associates, friends and acquaintances, consecrated persons, along with RSCJs, novices, candidates and aspirants.

Watch a video of the first vows ceremony here: <https://youtu.be/51VWXnPPBA0>

May we all accompany Parfaite and Prisca with our prayers as they enter into the Society!



Celebrating **First Vows** in **MEX**

Diana Noemí Martínez took her first vows in León, Mexico on October 7, 2023. The mass was led by Miguel Peón, a Jesuit priest, concelebrating with the vicar of the parish, Father Manuel.

Her mother, her brothers, Humberto and Toño, were present, as well as some of her friends and some close relatives from Querétaro. The province was very much present with 27 RSCJ attending in person, which is half of the province! It was significant that the province of Chile participated via Zoom, as well as the community of Haiti, where Sofia Baranda, who was Noemí's mistress of novices, is living now.

The day before, an evening was offered, prepared by Celia Salinas, in which Noemí's family, close friends and some RSCJ participated. Her father, Don Genaro, was watching over her from heaven.

The celebration took place in an atmosphere of joy, happiness, song and company. It was held in the street

behind the house, and it was a true gathering of neighbors. There was a lot of collaboration so that everything went well: from those who donated the rice and beans, those who offered to cook, those who offered awnings, tables, chairs, the cake, the music and even some cuetes for the night. The day before they came to pave the street and the neighbors even brought cement to "pour" the ramp to the playground for anyone who needed to enter. It was one of those parties where everyone puts in their loaves and fishes. Everyone ate and there were 12 baskets left over.

We give thanks together with Noemí for this celebration that has revitalized hope.

Watch the video of the entire ceremony here: https://www.youtube.com/live/phlUcg2YQlM?si=L-Wj_5tJ-aSA7GNrH

Let us all accompany Noemí with our prayers!



Probation 2023-2024

On September 14, 2023, the General Council officially welcomed the new probanists: Mary (UGK), Ruth (RDC-TCH), Barbara (POL), Uche (USC), Nataly (CHI), Gloria (COL), and Nancy (RDC-TCH), who are staying at the Villa Lante in Rome.

In her opening conference, Superior General Barbara Dawson outlined the context in which our Sisters are living this time of Probation:

“You are here together in probation as the whole Society prepares for the General Chapter of 2024. I am sure that over the past several years you have participated in many conversations and gatherings in your own provinces about the Society’s future – who God is calling us to be and what God is calling us to do? You are privileged to be together at this moment, to live in a cross-cultural, cross-provincial community and to have the space to create something new. Probation will give you the time and the space to share more deeply with your peers from other countries, to explore how to live this moment in the Society and

discover your way to contribute to the future of our mission and our world as woman in the church, as professed religious of the Sacred Heart.”

For this specific Probation group, the directors Christine Mukoko and Gerardette Philips chose a modern-day icon to accompany our sisters during this journey. The icon they chose is the image of the Coronation of Mary.

Speaking about the icon that has been chosen, Sr. Barbara said, “The unique mosaic that has been chosen for this probation shows Mary and Jesus as adults, with a tender and mature relationship. We know that they have walked together the road of life, with all its joys and pains.”

After the conference, a mass was held, followed by dinner with the community.

Let us pray for our sisters and the Probation Community during this special time.





Sharing our Experiences around the Society

Sharing the Experience of **María del Valle Adame RSCJ (ESP) in Haiti**

Eleven years ago I was assigned by the Society to Haiti. At that time I felt a deep joy, the kind of joy that only our Lord knows how to give, and the sisters confirm it. At the beginning, I found myself in a world totally different from my own, where gestures that for me meant something very hurtful, for them meant something as simple as "give me something to eat, I'm starving". Where dirt was everywhere, but didn't smell bad. Where health was for the elite and not for the poor. Where children are happy with few things. Where education is for the wealthy. It hurt me deeply to see our Church be for the moneyed people and not for the poor.

And so I began, with my sisters, to walk the streets of Delmas, of Nason, of Caradeux. Those were moments when we saw that to live in Haiti you have to have patience, patience, patience for many things. Patience to understand what they want to tell you, to enculturate yourself to see why they do not protest, why they do not revolt...there were moments of seeing how they opened their hearts to you, grateful for the medical treatment that some poor white women gave them. Moments of looking at poverty with names and surnames, tinted with stories of pain, but without being torn down inside. Moments of being able to walk through the streets feeling calm, without having to be attentive to anything.

Balan is a poor, deserted place without water, without electricity, where nobody goes. Not even the candidates for the presidency of the country go there. It is a place where we can deploy our skills as educators to a school and a health clinic among the poor of this small country. In this beloved Balan, we feel like one more among them and they feel that we are part of their people. It is a people that has always come to our help when we have needed it. To say Balan is to say MY HOME, OUR HOME.

I can tell you that we have learned many things with them. We have learned the value of the day to day, the value of not being anchored to anything, of being light. We have appreciated the miracles that a lit-

tle medicine can do in people who have received very little medication in their lives, and on the other hand, the strength that a healthy but poor body can have.

Now I can tell you that yes, I am happy in this little piece of the world. It is true that we have had security problems, but God has always been by our sides. To me, the phrase "the Lord writes straight on crooked lines" seems very true in Haiti. When everything seems to be over, a little light appears that illuminates everything in a very special way.

I would like to end by thanking the Province of Spain and the Society for being able to come to Haiti, the place where you meet God very quickly.

Sharing the Experience of **Rosa Vásquez RSCJ (PER) in Haiti**

In a year and a few months of being in this country, Haiti has been in a time of constant movement: movement of feelings, of emotions, of departures. This time has signaled to me that my life is under God's bond; this God who walks with me, sustains me, strengthens



me and makes me live from what is essential. When, in your daily routine, the planning that structures your day does not work, what prevails is to put your life and trust in God, the one who is beside you.

Living in this country, you feel in your skin the

threatened life, the pain of losses, the fear of gangs, kidnappings and living without a government that fights for you. Seeing hunger and misery confronts you with your being a person who needs the essentials for survival. So many times I have experienced indignation, frustration, and powerlessness when I see that the people no longer have the capacity to fight, as if their strength to do something to reverse the situation has been exhausted, that the situation has crushed them. I get the feeling that they have become accustomed to living in this state, to survival.

As a community, what helps us to recover are our long after-dinner meals, which recharge our strength, to keep betting on what we have next to us: our children, teachers, families and all the health care that helps to ease their pain. In other words, just being with them.

It is also gratifying for me to contribute my gifts, putting the best of me at their service, especially given my love for the children who have stolen my heart. It

Do you have a story to tell or an experience you'd like to share?
Send it to comms@rscjroma.org

is a gift that gives you back a hundredfold. Seeing the faces of the children enjoying the little that is given to them, their desire to learn, their desire to take advantage of the minimal opportunities that are given to them; this potential that children give you, it allows me to live every day the name of my probation: "Live and love with deep joy".

I have no doubt, and now I am much more aware of the fact that to remain, to continue betting on Haiti, is not a strength and conviction that springs from me now, but rather is the sum of experiences throughout my life that have prepared me for this: the courage of my parents in their Christian commitment, so many religious who were and continue to be my references, my experiences in the congregation with vulnerable sectors. It is this that makes me live with deep faith and endurance what God wants for me within the Society, as a body.

I value so much the people who have made me feel at

home, their affection, their closeness...like my friend Joé (Professor of Creole); he taught me to see who the Haitian people really are, he taught me to take the pressure off of unnecessary things, which is something I did not really understand. The relationships with the Sunday liturgy group, the group of young women in the embroidery workshop, were spaces that allowed me to enter into the culture, into their desire to welcome what is good for them, as they know how to appreciate what you give to them from the heart.

I am so grateful to have been sent on this mission! It is not easy, for sure, because it is living in constant surrender, with little planning, abandoning yourself to what God is telling you and learning how to listen to Him every day, because that is the life of Haiti. But it is one of the missions where you can touch the deepest heart of God, where you really discover what is essential in life.



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