Please send your articles on or before 5th of January, March, May, July, September and November.

**JANUARY- FEBRUARY**
- Central South US
  - Peru
- Eastern Central Africa
  - (Kenya, Congo, South Sudan, Uganda)
- Italy-Malta
- North Mexico
- Indonesia

**MARCH- APRIL**
- West Africa (Senegal, Burkina Faso)
- New York-Toronto
- Europe-BFMN
  - (Belgium, France, Hungary, Netherlands)
- Southeast Latin America (Brazil, Paraguay)
- Great Britain
- Egypt-Sudan
- Ecuador
- Colombia-Venezuela and Cuba

**MAY- JUNE**
- Montreal, Canada
- Philippines-Japan
- Angola-Mozambique
- Central America
  - (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Puerto Rico)
- Argentina-Uruguay
- South Africa

**JULY- AUGUST**
- Mid-North America
- Lebanon-Syria
- West Mexico
- Australia/Aotearoa-NZ
- Eudist Family
- East Asia
  - (Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam)

**SEPTEMBER- OCTOBER**
- Bolivia-Chile
- Northeast Asia
  - (China, Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, South Korea)
- Germany-Albania
- The Isles (Madagascar, Mauritius, Reunion)
- Portugal
- Austria-Switzerland-Czech Republic
- Singapore-Malaysia
- Spain

**NOVEMBER- DECEMBER**
- South West India
- Central East India-Nepal
- Ireland
- Sri Lanka-Pakistan
The four virtues of hospitality, oneness, love, and diversity are essential if we are going to engage with a complex and challenging world. Transformative Communities recognize through their lived experience that society is unearthing a range of emotions, identity issues, and a changing paradigm. With this, these timeless values become a dynamic and insightful presence to those wounded by the scars of discrimination or loss of identity. The integration of these qualities establishes a spiritual depth that produces the courage to risk seeking the common good.

Contemplative presence is imperative in this historical time of transformation. Every institution, mental framework, and spiritual belief is being redefined. Many people feel that nothing is stable or permanent. This instability often leaves communities feeling lonely and isolated rather than connected. Collective contemplative presence animates the truth expressed by Harriet Tubman, “Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world,” Harriet Tubman.[3] Collective contemplative presence, along with the “HOLD” virtues, allow Transformative Communities to be receptive to the dream they hold both for themselves and the larger society.

Transformative Communities by their nature are called to be a prophetic witness of the gospel. As they mature in their ability to provide warm hospitality, oneness, love, and diversity, they become instruments of peace, healers, and reconcilers for an anxious culture. In Luke’s gospel, it states, “The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery sight to the blind, to set free those oppressed.”[4] When the collective exemplify hospitality, oneness, love, and diversity, it opens the door to walk with others in a time seeking authentic transformation. These “HOLD” virtues offer optimism in a time when many feel bewildered in a transitory world. …

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The Good Shepherd Congregation has a twofold reason to celebrate. This year is the 165th anniversary of St. Mary Euphrasia’s purchase of St. Nicholas Abbey. We are also in the midst of preparing for the millennium celebration of the Abbey. The remembrance of these two historic events invites us to revisit the beautiful pages of the congregation’s history and to have a foretaste of the coming celebration in August 2020.

St. Nicholas Abbey, founded in 1020 by Foulques III or Foulques Nerra, Count of Anjou, housed a monastery of Benedictine monks until the French Revolution. The monks were expelled in 1791 when the national government seized the abbey. Having been declared the property of the department, the abbey served different purposes: military hospital, barracks, jail, etc. The abbey was abandoned in the early 1850s and the owners of Royal Manufacturers of Sailcloth of Angers, Mr. Joubert and Mr. Bonnaire, attempted to buy it. The department finally decided to sell the abbey and put it up for auction on August 21, 1854 for one hundred thousand francs. Subsequently, the Congregation of our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd of Angers acquired the abbey on November 30, 1854 for one hundred six thousand francs.

Nazareth, a farm located two kilometers from the Mother House, was transformed into an agricultural colony in 1852 to accommodate young prisoners from various French prisons. An increasing number of young girls came and Nazareth quickly became insufficient to welcome them. It is said that St. Mary Euphrasia saw St. Nicholas Abbey from her office window and knew the property was up for sale. She was hesitant to purchase the abbey because of its deplorable condition and the prohibitive cost. Mr. Vallon, Prefect of Maine-et-Loire, encouraged and reassured her, saying, “Buy, Madam! God will pay!”

In spite of the expenditure of the earlier acquisition of Nazareth in 1846, significant endowments and the unfailing support of benefactors made possible the purchase of St. Nicholas Abbey. Furthermore, the dowries of Sister Marie of St. Therese de Jacoby (Dutch) and Sister Marie of St. Peter de Coudenhove (Austrian) contributed greatly to the acquisition of the abbey….

To continue the reading Click here
In a book I read: Nothing is Impossible to Love about SME I came across this quote by SME:

"This life of combat explains itself, it has its reason in the nature of our vocation. If you want to remove from the devil his victims, do not be surprised if he becomes furious and he will throw himself at you. You can measure the level of your conquest by the level of rage that he will throw at you."

I experienced this in full force on 3 May 2019, when I accompanied a lawyer of one of our residents, 26 years old who wanted to get a release letter, from her very arrogant and corrupt lawyer. At the Shelter, we learned from well-informed sources that he was being paid by her perpetrator to make her Court hearings fruitless and difficult.

On our way we over to this lawyer’s office we prayed to SME and SJE.

The lawyer at first was polite, but trouble started when we asked for a 500 euros receipt. He had a 100 euros one ready which, according to him this was enough. He felt offended to the point that, he turned against me while I sat quietly at his desk in his office. I ignored his rude advances and left the office thanking him for his service.

On our way out, the resident I accompanied, felt the need to ask for more receipts, that she had paid him for the times he represented her in Court: 50 euros each time. By this time, I was waiting for her in the lawyer’s office hall, and it was here that hell broke loose. The lawyer started referring to me as a prostitute! Questioning why I was accompanying the resident. If I was going to make a report about him. The foul language coming out from his mouth was out of this world.

The resident all shaken up came to tell me that he wants to talk to me in his office. Something told me not to go. At my refusal, the lawyer got even more enraged. The offenses and insults he was hurling at me, where unimaginable. At that moment, I heard a voice within me, telling me: "Give your back to evil." Which I did. At that time, I had the resident's 3 years old son with me.

This experience really shook me to my core. I could not reconcile the fact that a lawyer can turn himself into a perpetrator, once his dishonesty was challenged.

I felt the need to pray for this lawyer’s conversion. I could sense what a lost soul he must be. I prayed for his liberation from the evil one.

I am thankful for the protection that both SME and SJE gave us.

How true are the above words I quoted!
‘Just Love.’ The first time I recall really capturing the magnitude of this quote was in 2004 when I attended the Angers Good Shepherd Pilgrimage. I thought, “Wow, what an amazing concept.” At that time I had already been working as a Good Shepherd for over 6 years. Up until that time, I thought I knew my purpose at the agency and considered myself a good staff member who was there to ‘direct’ our girls. While I cared about the girls and wanted to see them thrive and do better, I realized something was missing. What I figured out was that up until that point, my Good Shepherd career had been only a job to me. It wasn’t until after that pilgrimage when those two words, just love, really spoke to me. That is when I started to understand I wasn’t there to ‘direct’ the girls, I was there to love and shepherd them. From that point on, I knew my Good Shepherd purpose was not just a job, but it was a passion, a calling; a mission to love for the salvation of souls.

About six months after my pilgrimage to Angers, the door opened for me to share my newfound love and understanding for the Good Shepherd Mission campus-wide. I left the comforts of working in the residential setting and moved into my current position as Values Educator. This position allows me the honor of working with our residents and staff across campus in many ways. More importantly, I get to talk to staff about their Good Shepherd Journey and how it is a calling and a passion, not just a job. One of my favorite tasks is to talk with the new staff during on-boarding about our Good Shepherd Mission and how our Foundress lived out the concept of ‘Just Love’. We have conversations about how Mary Euphrasia taught her sisters to love in all that they did and as Good Shepherd People that is what we need to do. I love seeing the expression on the faces of the new staff when I bring up our final slide that says, At the end of Mary Euphrasia’s life, someone spoke to her about the many things she had accomplished in her lifetime – and she did accomplish a lot! But Mary Euphrasia replied, “I had no great talents or special abilities. I only loved, but I loved with all the strength of my soul.”

It has been 15 years since attending the pilgrimage and having my “aha” moment, when I really felt I understood those two words: “just love”. Recently I stumbled across a webinar entitled, ‘How to Motivate Yourself with Kindness.’ The webinar talked about self-compassion and loving ourselves. This concept of self-compassion intrigued me so I began to read more about it. As I did, the word love kept surfacing and my thoughts kept going back to our Good Shepherd mission. Up to this point, I would talk about the need to love our youth, our families, our Good Shepherd Mission, our passion and a general attitude to all. Then I realized that the concept of self-compassion calls for me to also love myself; giving myself permission to make mistakes and be imperfect without being hard on myself.

This idea of self-compassion and loving ourselves can be challenging. One common theme that keeps coming up in this journey of understanding and applying self-compassion to loving oneself is our Good Shepherd Values; Individual Worth, Reconciliation, Mercy, and Zeal. I have always spoken to those values in terms of loving others, but I don’t recall ever thinking about the values in terms of loving oneself.

Individual Worth - realizing that I am worthy of self-love and I am of more value than the world.
Reconciliation - it's a call to action to have courageous communication with oneself, not just others. To find that inner peace that comes with reconciliation and will allow us to just love who we are.

Mercy - having self-compassion means that you offer understanding and kindness to yourself when you fail or make mistakes rather than judging yourself harshly. In order to show oneself mercy, we need to learn to sit with our emotions and mistakes and be able to forgive ourselves so we can love who we are.
Zeal - zeal for myself (oneself). Allowing oneself to feel the same love and passion we give to others and the Good Shepherd Mission.
While writing this article I had many opportunities to reflect back on my almost 22 years as a Good Shepherd and there have been countless experiences that I can say by just showing love to our clients (our girls) I have been able to help guide them. This love might have meant sitting with them for a while until they felt safe or offering them a smile when they stepped out of their rooms to start the afternoon. Loving them even when I had to call on my zeal to get me through a situation.

This journey of love and exploring what it means has come full circle for me. I have realized that whether I am loving others or myself, love is the basis of all we do and say. Love is at the root of our Good Shepherd Mission and existence. I feel a person can have many skills, talents and gifts that you bring with you when you are working for the Good Shepherd, but none of that matters if you don’t love what you do, those you serve, and who you are.

You can accomplish many tasks, start many programs, win many awards, but none of it holds the real glory. The real glory is when you can say I did it for love and leave it at that. It is amazing how those two words have shaped and motived my personal and professional journey. Just love; just love our youth and their families, our coworkers, those around us and ourselves.

As I conclude I want to refer back to something I shared earlier about our foundress. These words are a true inspiration to me and speaks volumes to me.

“I had no great talents or special abilities. I only loved, but I loved with all the strength of my soul.”

"Love never says, 'It is enough.'"
~ St. Mary Euphrasia

Reflection Questions-

1. What does the words ‘Just Love’ mean to you?
2. How does love look to you when you are working with a client? Co-worker? Others? Yourself?
3. When was a time in your Good Shepherd Mission or life that you saw a difference in what you did by just simply letting love be your guide? How did it feel?
4. Where are you at on your Good Shepherd Journey?

“How happy are we, who are co-workers with the Good Shepherd in his Mission of love and friendship for each person.”

St. Mary Euphrasia
What does the testimony of Aguchita mean for the Church today and especially for us? For those of us who know Jesus the Good Shepherd, it is easy to know and marvel at the testimony of Aguchita. She said: "I am a religious of the Good Shepherd and I will be in the place of my work until I give my life, if God wants it. The martyrdom of religious life is every day."

“The people of La Florida are waiting for us and as religious we have to be with them, until we empty ourselves totally, we are not going to abandon them, we are responsible for these people, even if it is only one person.”

She preceded us in being a faithful witness to mercy and justice. She had to be and work in a place of conflict and great injustice. In the little things of each day, she lived compassion, tenderness, mercy, with a big heart, loving everyone without distinction and taking care of life. "To love the poor is to love life. It is to love the God of Life," she said.

Jesus offers us life in abundance (cf. Jn 10:10), a life full of God, a life of redemption. Let us celebrate this abundant life in this Eucharist and may God, through the intercession of Aguchita, grant each and every one of us graces and blessings for our lives.
This year we are celebrating a double anniversary: 120 years since the death of Blessed Maria Droste and the consecration of the human race to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

1899.06.08 - Death of Blessed Maria Droste

1899.06.11 - Consecration of the human race to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

On the anniversary of the consecration of the human race to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the project so desired by Blessed Maria Droste and requested by Jesus himself came to mind: the construction of a Church dedicated to his Heart: "I want you, he said, to consecrate the Church to my Heart. You must give me a place of reparation here and I will give it as a place of grace. I will give thanks in abundance to all those who belong to this house, to all those who enter it and have something to do with it. "Then he told me that he wanted this Church to be above all a place of reparation for sacrileges and of attraction of blessings and graces for the clergy. (1)

With the help of an engineer, Sister Maria was able to draw up the much-desired project for the Church, as well as the authorization of the Superior General for its construction. However, she could not carry out the work so desired, because the Lord had other plans for her, leaving this desire and wish of the Sisters of her community. "In his testimony, Monsignor Teotonio added that he had told Sister Maria that if she died before the Church began or ended, her Sisters would have to remember this desire and satisfy it out of love for the Sacred Heart. (2)

Thus, in 1904, five years after her death, the sisters were able to begin construction work on the land owned by the Sisters, as desired by Blessed Maria Droste. In 1910, the church was almost finished, but due to the revolution, followed by the First World War, the works were suspended.

With the revolution, the Portuguese government took over the entire property and the Sisters and users were dispersed. However, they could not carry out their entire plan because, after the death of Blessed Maria Droste, because of the revolutionary unrest at the beginning of the century, they had placed on the front of the house a sign with the inscription: GERMAN PROPERTY. With this, the Sisters managed, at least, to postpone the confiscation of the building. This happened later when Germany lost the war and the house, considered German property, was finally confiscated and put at the service of the State. In order to create the desired conditions for the establishment of a branch of the Armed Forces, the Church was completely destroyed.

How, then, was the wish and vow of Sister Maria of the Divine Heart and the request that Jesus had made to her got fulfilled?

On June 9, 1972, the Portuguese Province decided to consecrate to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, a church built in our house in Ermesinde, which also had four choirs, like the plan prepared by Blessed Maria Droste. Today it is a Diocesan Center of Spirituality of the Heart of Jesus and there are the mortal remains of Blessed Maria of the Divine Heart, as it is known in our country.

(1) Sister Maria of the Divine Heart - Father CHASLE
(2) The noblest for charity - A. RICCIARDI
Casa de Sant’Ana opened in September 1980 as a response to social problems affecting women, including prostitution, alcoholism, incarceration, poverty, pregnancy, and addiction. At present, Casa de Sant’Ana provides a temporary, safe, family-oriented environment to women, with or without children, who are victims or at risk of domestic violence. The women receive the accompaniment and support they need to gain a sense of autonomy and self-esteem. They develop competencies and skills that help prepare them for subsequent social and professional integration.

Throughout its thirty-nine years of existence, Casa de Sant’Ana has welcomed many women and children with remarkable life stories. Each story begins with the weaving of threads in the construction of a new life. It may involve mending what has been torn or broken. Sometimes it is a matter of undoing knots and creating new connections. By sharing their stories they begin to develop positive bonds and grow a strong collective web. There are many stories that could be told and many more could be forgotten, if it were possible. I wish to share the stories of some of the women and children who have been part of Casa de Sant’Ana.

**Maria:** A nineteen-year-old Romanian woman came to Casa de Sant'Ana with her five-year-old son, Jorge. At age twelve, Maria's mother forced her to go to work in a sausage factory to support the family. Maria lost part of a finger that was stuck in one of the machines. At age thirteen, her mother gave Maria to a man who brought her to Portugal and they lived in Alentejo at a farmhouse. Maria gave birth to a son a year later. Her son’s father began abusing Maria from the time they were together, beating her every day, sometimes kicking her and dragging her by the hair. It was a constant nightmare. After six years of suffering abuse, Maria managed to escape with the help of the farm owners and she and her son came to their new home, the House of Sant’Ana.

**RAQUEL:** An eighteen-year-old Portuguese woman came to Casa de Sant'Ana with her 23-month-old son, Duarte. From early childhood, Raquel had been the victim of severe physical and psychological maltreatment by her mother and her stepfather. When Raquel was fourteen years old, her stepfather began raping her; she became pregnant at age sixteen. Two years later, Raquel was violently assaulted by her mother. A neighbor took Raquel to a hospital for treatment. While hospitalized, Raquel sought help for herself and her son and they were received at Casa de Sant’Ana. The police had to intervene in order for Raquel’s mother and stepfather to release the child.

**ANA:** A 23-year-old woman from Caboverdeana came to Casa de Sant'Ana with three-year-old Rui and 18-month-old Anabela. Ana had been abused by a violent husband who eventually abandoned her and the children in a house without electricity, water, and food. Ana’s stay was initially complicated by her non-compliance with the guidelines and the rules of the program. She was a very angry person. As the months went by, Ana began to experience Casa de Sant’Ana as her home. She began to dream again; this time, without "enchanted princes.” She began to dream of having her own home, of having a car, of creating a new life. Ana began to believe that she was capable of achieving her dreams. Ana found employment, eventually left Casa de Sant’Ana, and rented a house. Having a secure job enabled her to buy a house and a car. She learned to dream and to fight for her dreams. She decided to take a risk and emigrate to England to seek an even better life for her children. Today Ana continues to visit us to thank us for everything we have done for her and her children. She speaks with the other mothers at Casa de Sant’Ana and encourages them to persevere in their efforts to become self-reliant and independent. At Casa de Sant’Ana, we try to strengthen our bonds of love, respect, solidarity, and understanding. We are convinced that, together, we can be the “hands” that transform the stories of the mothers and children, like Maria and Jorge, Raquel and Duarte, Ana, Rui, and Anabela.
Excerpts from a letter of a former resident:

"... a simple thanks to the Casa de Sant'Ana (the Sisters, the Technical Team, the employees and colleagues) for the way they welcomed me, supported me and made me feel part of this great family. I admit that at this moment I feel a mixture of emotions: On the one hand ... I feel happy because my eyes can see light at the end of the tunnel and I can see that this is for me.

On the other hand ... impossible not to feel sadness in leaving you ... we have created very strong bonds of friendship that I sincerely hope to maintain and I promise that I will do everything to make it happen.” (Since leaving, she has travelled from afar each year to spend a day at Casa de Sant’Ana.)

To each one of you ... a sincere thank you for having opened your hearts to me and allowed me to enter. Thank you for making me smile when I just wanted to cry. Thank you for the advice, for the praise, for the support and for the strength which you have always given me ... I have always defended the idea that no one appears in our lives without reason ... so I thank God for your presence in my life ... knowing you made possible so much learning…. As a consequence,

I became a much better person. Thank you to all!! "

Mothers at the Casa de Sant'Ana learn that they are wise weavers of stories, artisans of good relationships, and builders of better spaces. They continue to create meaningful, happy lives free of dark clouds and cold winds.
A Long and Winding Road in the Presence of God

Marycove 50th Anniversary

By Ms. Celina Chan – Mission Partner in Hong Kong

It was ten years ago when I first met Sister Deborah during an event dealing with the trafficking of women. At the same time, I learned about Marycove and the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. After being introduced to Sister Bernadette Yuen, the Supervisor of Marycove School, I thought of doing some volunteer work and ended up teaching English to girls who wanted to improve themselves. Later I became a Lay Associate and eventually joined the school management committee as a manager.

Through the years I have seen my students reach their goals of entering university, finding a proper job and then getting married to start their family. I have also seen them struggling to overcome their own weaknesses and eventually giving up. But they did try their best with the support of the sisters, the teachers, and the hostel residential staff. They sang and danced and learned to serve others with a grateful heart. There I have witnessed the work of God. Indeed, one person is of more value than the whole world.

The theme of the 50th Anniversary celebration is Flying Free. “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” John 8:32(ESV). All the girls long to be free from rules and regulations. But eventually they also learn that they have the responsibilities for their own life and freedom is not just being able to do what you want. They learn step by step to say “Thank you,” and not to take things for granted. They learn that they must work hard before they can have a choice. They learn that they must respect and think of others before themselves. They begin to believe in themselves and their self-worth and realize that it is all right to make mistakes. We just need to give them some time.

Every year we have the Good Shepherd Run. As a marathon runner, I joined for several years. Although it is just a 10k run, the route involves running up a very steep slope in the Aberdeen Reservoir to the Wanchai Gap and then running further before turning back and running down the slope again. Running up requires a lot of energy. Many participants simply walk instead. Running down should be easier but by then you have used up most of your energy and your knees could be hurting from running down too fast. Our girls are facing the same journey in their life with all the ups and downs. But the sisters, teachers, volunteers and residential staff are all there to cheer them on along the way. We also celebrate with them when they cross the finish line. Yes, it is a long and winding road. But the shepherds are there, waiting for their sheep. Surely they will not leave until every single one has crossed the finish line.
On August 1-10, 2019, about one hundred Asian youths, activists, clergy, religious and theologians from twelve different countries were gathered in Thailand. It was the annual Asian Lay Leaders (ALL) Forum’s youth training program called “Asian Youth Academy (AYA)/Asian Theology Forum (ATF).” The venue of the program changes every year; this year it took place at CLUMP (Communal Life of Love and the Unity of Mountain People Foundation) Center in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

Two Korean Good Shepherd sisters participated, Sr. Regina Lee and Sr. Philia Kwon. The theme was “Wisdom of Religious/Cultural Traditions in Asia Responding to Ecological Crisis and Human Security.” The program included three days of exposure-immersion and a week of workshops, lectures and open discussions. It covered in depth the issues of the hierarchy, global warming, the construction of large dams in the Mekong basin, the UN declaration on the rights of farmers and beyond, the Pan-Amazonian Synod and reform of the church. Bishop David from Philippines was a guest speaker.

“Breaking the Culture of Silence in Asia” was the title of his presentation.

In light of Laudato Si’ and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the program emphasized the interconnectedness of all of life and how the slightest action can affect the life next to you.

When your family members are in danger or in crisis, we all pray and ask for help. You don’t wait until the situation becomes worse. Our mother earth is in danger and our brothers and sisters are in crisis. There is an urgent need to increase our capacity for empathy to motivate our actions to heal one another and all of creation.

“Let us sing as we go. May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope” (Laudato Si’ 244).
It is my privilege to share with you some reflections relative to what is meant by "commissioning" and why it is so appropriate a term to use for this event. Today, our volunteers officially join us in a formal relationship to walk with us in mission to all served in Good Shepherd. They share not only in what we do, but who we are. Their words and the reception of their GSV symbols now give them the authority, you might say, to officially represent us as co-missioners, to act and speak in our name, and most especially to witness to our core values, those values now passed on to them by our founders, St. John Eudes and St. Mary Euphrasia, passed down through the centuries to all in Good Shepherd (Sisters and partners in mission) who have lived and served God's lost and forgotten ones to this very day, thousands of us in over 72 countries. Think about it—what a privilege, what a responsibility, what a grace, and what a joy!

For our Good Shepherd Volunteers, there are very specific core values they embrace — we call them the four tenets of GSV — simplicity, community, spirituality, and social justice. These tenets are very specific and intentionally chosen with great care, and they are more needed today than ever before. Our GSV’s recognize that doing the restorative work of social justice requires a deep spiritual life, a life that extends and involves community on every level, a simple life style that calls them to live in solidarity with those they serve (especially the poor and those on the margins) and one which calls them to make hard choices about allocating resources. Basically, for them, the shorthand term they use for this is "Just Love". What gives us joy is less about who loves us or we think does not love us, but who we have loved as an expression of
that divine love because of the realization of the immense love God has given to us first. SME has said it "I only loved, but I loved with all the strength of my soul." She gave her joy to others, and kept the difficult parts of her struggles more to herself and a few close confidants. This is why we need all these "tenets" we are talking about and which they have all been introduced to during this past week. God knows we have enough anxiety, depression, divisiveness and joy-less people we see every day. But how counter-cultural, and how refreshing it is to meet people of joy, people who have received the good, people who have heard the proclamation of God's love and believe it and live it out and want to proclaim it and celebrate it. It's all free gift (it goes beyond what we may achieve professionally.) given to people who'just love.'"

Right now, receiving this responsibility and charge to be co-missioners may seem scary, and we may feel we may not be "holy" enough. But Thomas Merton has said that to be holy is to be yourself. To be the best self you have been called to be.

I'd like to share a story told by a Jesuit, Fr. Michael Nimes, SJ. For years, he ministered at Notre Dame and was known as one of the most influential professors there. For the last 30 years, he has been at B.C., and he tells this story about his mother, who began suffering very severe dementia. She had always lived with or near him, and when he could no longer have her cared for at home, she went to a very fine nursing facility near the college. Every night for 6 years, he went to see her, talk to her, feed her...and she did not know who he was, just a nice man who visited...One night, shortly before she passed away, she spoke to him and in response to his question about who he was she said, she didn't know who he was but that she knew 'he was someone she had loved very much.' He then called his brother, Kenneth, (A Franciscan theologian) He told his brother and family that his mom had it right. She was the theologian par excellence in the family. It is less about who loves us then whom we have loved and how we have loved. It is all about the loving, it is all about the grace, the good, the great sign of the work of God.

Fr. Nimes' mom had it right, and Mary Euphrasia had it right. "I only loved, but I loved with all the strength of my soul." Hopefully, we can have it right, too, if we too "just love" and see what JOY that commitment can bring to all we meet.
“It was enlightening, coming to know the difference between child protection and safeguarding. That clarity helps with alignment with mission. It’s very clear and has given me a real push in my work with children.”

In preparing this article, I asked some of the participants at the Good Shepherd Asia Pacific workshop on Child Safeguarding for their comments and reflections. Above is one of the comments shared with me. Organised by the GSAPJP (Asia Pacific Justice and Peace Core Team), the workshop has been in the planning for almost three years. So it was exciting for the planning team to see 43 participants from all the units of Asia Pacific gathered at the Redemptorist Centre in Minburi, Bangkok, to learn, share and plan together. Our presenter and facilitator was Ms Maryam Ehsani, who is the consultant to the Congregation on Child Safeguarding, and has helped to structure and write the Congregation’s Safeguarding of Children policy, which will soon be released. Maryam was an engaging, energetic and passionate facilitator. She has many years working in the area of safeguarding and has her own consultancy based in Dubai called Child Safe ME. She is also an International Child Rights Advisor. Maryam’s enthusiasm was infectious and she invited all of us along for the journey of learning and discovery.

“This is the first time I have been involved in something as Asia Pacific level. I gained a lot of knowledge and now understand well the difference between Child safeguarding and protection of children. The group sharing was an important part of my learning.”

Identifying the difference between Child Protection and Child Safeguarding was crucial – for most people understood child “protection” as “safeguarding”, but we were led to see the clear difference between the two, and come to understand why the Congregation has developed a policy on child safeguarding.
At the beginning of the workshop we spent time reflecting on our own childhood and some participants courageously shared personal stories of their childhood. We worked in groups to identify assumptions that we and our society/community holds regarding child safeguarding. This exercise led us to explore the barriers to effective safeguarding of children. In unit groups we worked to assess the programs and ministries we have for children. We learned the importance of children having a voice and being at the centre of what we do. We learned how to “map” our programs and identify gaps in existing policies and procedures. We were introduced to eight different “case studies” or scenarios which helped to clarify what needed to be done in each case. We prepared an outline for a Safeguarding policy so we could effectively develop one or review the policies currently in place. We identified the “what” and “how” of implementing our policies and learned the importance of building ownership of the process within our units or programs. Again and again we were reminded that child safeguarding is everyone’s business!

“The workshop was well planned and very good. Almost all units had their own policy but were unsure how to implement this. The workshop gave us the tools and clarity on how to begin and how to move forward.”

Although not officially released at the time of the workshop, we were grateful to be able to work with Maryam to better understand the Congregation’s DRAFT Child Safeguarding Policy Guidelines. Our last session gave us the opportunity to explore this and align our own policy outline with the Congregation’s policy.

Planning Team From left:
Ms Theresa Symons, Sr Joan Lopez, Sr Taskila Nicholas, Ms Arlene Manoharan, Sr Caroline Price, Sr Virginia Kim, Ms Maryam Ehsani, Sr Sabina Pathrose, Sr Niluka Perera
“The Congregation’s policy has given us a ‘push’!”

“This was a golden opportunity to meet with so many sisters and partners from the units. It was a very engaging workshop. We are serious about our mission and this is the most serious topic.”

As we return to our units we know we have a lot of work to do but it is not as overwhelming as it felt at the beginning, and now we have templates and a network of people across Asia Pacific to assist in developing good policies and procedures. We know we can contact each other and we plan to link up on a video link in a few weeks to “check in” and share how we are going!

During the Workshop, all the Units agreed to participate in a regional action plan to promote Child Safeguarding with each country taking a day during the 16 Days of Activism in Nov/Dec.

Nov 25 Macau - Nov 26 Hong Kong - Nov 27 Philippines - Japan - Nov 28 Indonesia - Nov 29 Thailand - Nov 30 Myanmar - Dec 1 Singapore - Dec 2 Australia - Dec 3 Vietnam - Dec 4 Sri Lanka - Dec 5 Pakistan & Korea - Dec 6 Malaysia - Dec 7 Central East India - Dec 8 South West India - Dec 9 Taiwan - Dec 10 Nepal

“The workshop was very professional and well planned and I liked the process. I am more confident and clear, and it is very helpful as we start the process in our unit now. Every single person is responsible for safeguarding of children.”

We were very much welcomed by the sisters in Thailand, who looked after our needs, and on the last afternoon arranged for us to attend a Thai cultural event. Our thanks to the sisters who made our stay such a success!

Some suggested Links to Resources/Information on Child Safeguarding:
http://www.buonpastoreint.org/en
https://www.childsafeme.com/
http://www.vatican.va/resources/index_en.htm#PONTIFICAL_COMMISSION_FOR_THE_PROTECTION_OF_MINORS
The new Bon Pasteur Center inaugurated in Kolwezi, DR Congo.

A safe and supportive space where children can learn, grow and thrive.

In a joyful and emotional ceremony, the new Bon Pasteur Centre was officially inaugurated on September 20th in the presence of representatives of the entire community, local authorities, CSOs, business community and funding partners. The center comprises 14 newly equipped classrooms to instruct roughly 1,000 children hailing from the artisanal cobalt mining community of Kanina – Domain Marial, Kolwezi, DR Congo.

The Centre will host the activities of the Child Protection Project, one of the pillars of the Bon Pasteur Kolwezi community-based development program to eradicate child labor in ASM (Artisanal and Small Mining) communities. Moreover, it will become a learning-and-sharing point for the Kanina community where the message of children's rights will be promoted and spread. Providing the children such a safe and supportive social environment can help them to develop their full potential and thrive.

“We started this program in 2013, with the support of the Good Shepherd International Foundation, to first save and protect the children,” says Sr. Catherine Mutindi, Program Director of Bon Pasteur Kolwezi. “We started listening to the children, to learn what were their needs and their wishes, their desire to be a child, not a miner. We learned that children have the right to grow in healthy and safe families, to be educated and empowered, to develop in communities that protect and enable them to grow as responsible individuals. It was the children who guided us, and now the program has grown to involve the families and the entire community. The new Bon Pasteur Centre inaugurated last week provides a safe and constructive environment where more children will grow in joy and health together with their families, to lead us all towards a better future.”

The Centre will also facilitate and strengthen parents’ and the community’s capacity to better protect and care for the children, in an integrated approach to social protection that provides families with education on children's rights, training on positive parenting and prevention of domestic violence and other abuses against children.

In a speech delivered during the inauguration event, Cristina Duranti, Director of the Good Shepherd International Foundation, highlighted the importance of the new Bon Pasteur Center as a pivotal space that will contribute to integrate child protection and empowerment into community development, improving the impact of the program.

“We celebrate a key achievement of Bon Pasteur as a unique, holistic program that among incredible challenges, has been able to create such a space,” Duranti said. “The Bon Pasteur Kolwezi team has developed this program with and for the community. And from a small project, they now provide training for hundreds of girls and women. They also provide innovative agribusiness initiatives engaging hundreds of women in farming and community development projects promoting healthcare, literacy and microfinance. Today we are celebrating not just the inauguration of a roof over the heads of 1,000 pupils, we are celebrating the foundation of a structure where all children know that they are safe and allowed to be children in a community that loves them and wants to see them thrive.”
Good Shepherd Newsletter

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