



Franciscan Sisters Congregational JPIC Newsletter

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Brazil: Addressing Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children

By Sr. Raimunda Barbosa



May 18th was Brazil's National day to combat sexual abuse and exploitation of children and teens. As part of her pastoral ministry, S. Raimunda spoke with the children to raise awareness and to prevent such abuse. Some of them were victims of this violence, which is prevalent in every country and in all socio-economic groups. This worldwide problem affects children for the rest of their lives. It is up to all of us to protect children and to support them in their healing when they experience violence or abuse.

Between May 9th and 16th, our young vocations and postulants, Cassia, Emily and Isabella, travelled to Itaituba to collaborate with the mission communities. They met with many families, including families from the indigenous communities. In all, they visited over 50 families.



Malawi: Celebrations and Suffering, Both a Part of Life

By Sr. Raynelda Saragih

In May Sisters, teachers and standard 8 students celebrated the completion of the school year. For the 8th grade students, this was a time to be thankful for the foundation which was laid for the rest of their lives at St Francis Elementary School. In the photos, S Raynelda addresses the students, while S Klara, S Veronica, S Flaviana, and other teachers look on. Also pictured, one of the graduating standard 8 students performs a traditional dance as part of the celebration.



Climate change continues to affect Malawi. Last year, flooding was a big problem. This year, the rains stopped in February, just as the corn and other crops were beginning to grow. “Armyworms” have also added to the crop destruction. The photo shows S Raynelda inspecting the corn in the field. The harvest was very, very small—only 6 bags of maize, compared to 70 bags last year. This is sure to result in hunger due to low supplies of food and high prices. The Shire River, which provides 98% of the country’s power via hydroelectric plants, has fallen to critical levels, leaving large parts of the country without power, and causing rolling blackouts that sometimes last more than 24 hours. Please keep the people of Malawi in your prayers.



Romania: Celebrating Earth Day

By S. Mariana Mutiu

I do not see today's Romania as an inheritance from our parents, but as a land we borrowed from our children! (Taken from a speech of the last king of Romania, King Mihai I)

This sentence, a bit changed, I used as a motto to celebrate with children and young people the Earth Day on April 24, 2018. We worked with the help of a Power Point presentation in which our Planet Earth sends each one of us a letter and appeals to everyone personally. We were asked the questions: how do we handle the resources of Mother Earth? How do we behave towards the animals? How often do we use private transport and thereby harm the air and nature? With the theme birthday and the many birthday gifts we often expect, we asked ourselves, "What gift do I give to Earth? What do I give her? How do I care for the Earth?"



Their question stimulated very interesting conversations with children of various groups: adolescents from classes V-VIII, children we teach religion to, and a group of students from our boarding school in Caransebes. They all asked many questions and we all realized how carefully we have to deal with the resources of the earth so that we can keep earth and nature healthy for the next generations. Some aspects were new to us and we worked hard on them.

Practically, we walked through the city on foot, saw how many people use cars, and were very surprised that there are so many cars in Caransebes, a city with only 23,000 inhabitants. Even for short distances, people use cars here and not public transport.

The most important aspect that we have become aware of in this action is that the earth is not an inheritance from our parents, but a bond that we have received from our descendants, our children. How do we return this bond to our children? It's up to us, to me, to you, to all of us how our Earth looks like in the future. Let us use the earth so that it remains a place of life and joy for future generations and our children too.



Young people of Caransebes learn from Earth Day presentation.



S Mariana and a few of the young people on Earth Day.

Germany: Building Ecumenical and International Understanding and Peace

By Sr. Alexandra Völzke

Ecumenical Bible Week in Salzkotten from March 13 - 21, 2018

Usually, the Ecumenical Bible Week is held in the parishes during January, the "Week of Christian Unity." But this time this event was transferred to Lent and for the first time the Motherhouse in Salzkotten was involved. Under the headline "A Song of Praise to Love," we chose a short introduction to the topic of "love" with the help of "love is like- cartoons". Followed by a theological introduction to the "Song of Songs or High Song of Love" given by Dr. Oeldemann. After reading excerpts from this biblical book, the participants were asked to reflect in small groups on the words such as "wine", "mouth", "flames" etc. and to create "love is like" sentences themselves. A diverse and profound collection came out of it. This enriching evening ended with the "Our Father" and a blessing that unites all Christians.





Decorating Easter candles and baking waffles for Malawi on March 18, 2018

The image of the candle showed this time the coat of arms of the city Salzkotten placed in the center of the Sign of the Easter Cross. The intention was to build solidarity between Christians and their city. Christians should show, how to be integrated into the love of God, which became especially visible in the crucifixion of Christ.



A good tradition: Decorating Easter candles and enjoying delicious waffles. All was done in the parish house of St. John. THANK'S to all hard-working preparers, helpers, supporters. It was very beautiful! The proceeds of 1400 Euro will be for our project in Madisi, Malawi. Thank you - Danke – Sikomo!

Moving exhibition "God loves the stranger"

The Archdiocese of Paderborn has purchased this exhibition and made it available free of charge to communities, schools and organizations. It offers biblical challenges to deal with strangers on 12 colored roll-ups. The fates of "prominent" strangers in the Bible from Abraham and Sara to Jesus and the first Christians are traced in the first part of this exhibition. Staying current biblical commandments to protect the stranger formed the 2nd part of the exhibition. Part 3 unfolds the biblical concept of hospitality. The exhibition was bilingual, German and English. From April 19, - May 13, 2018 the exhibition was in the Motherhouse and open every day from 3 to 6 pm.



Impressions of the Katholikentag (An Event of the Catholic Church) in Münster from May 9 – 13, 2018

Several sisters were actively involved in the Katholikentag in Münster with the theme: "Search peace". During the opening celebration, Schw. M. Stefanie sang in the multinational mixed choir "Venu Kanti" from Herten. The 25 members from eight nations presented songs from musicals, gospels and songs about human rights.



Schw. M. Klementina Wada from Indonesia (translated by MaZ'lerin Judith Kramps)

The Katholikentag in Münster was really amazing. It was a completely new experience for me. It was very good, and all events were very controlled and smoothly done. I hope that this event will strengthen the rope of brotherhood and sisterhood between religious people. Hopefully it will grow mutual respect and love for one another. For me personally that was an interesting experience where I could see sanctuaries like churches and other historical places. People could communicate with each other. In every corner of the church, many people had come together to worship and to sing. I was able to get to know German culture, which has really



Sisters and MaZ'ler after the Noon Prayer in front of the church St. Lamberti in Münster (The 2 Indonesian Sisters are S Klementina Wada and S Caroline.)

broadened and enriched my knowledge and experience. I can appreciate better the differences in the culture of other countries. Differences between people, language, culture - everything is very unique.

It was very memorable for me to have fellowship with each other and that the Church was open to all who came to Mass, prayer and spiritual refreshment. I am really proud because they still hold on to belief in God and the desire to meet God and human beings is visible. I hope that this experience will strengthen me to rely on God in every challenge of my vocation.

Everything was very remarkable. I could visit the historical places that are still preserved and maintained today. I visited a magnificent and beautiful church that gave a wonderful opportunity to pray and to thank for God's gifts. In addition, I was happy to share experiences with the MaZ'ler. Unforgettable remains the community and the culture, which truly enrich each other.



Schw. M. Caroline Sinambela (translated by Judith Kramps)

The celebration of the Catholic faith has expressed itself in various interesting programs ranging from the spiritual to the cultural. Everyone helped to create peace in various ways and ensured that this wonderful activity/event went well. This really builds a world of love, because everyone feels like brothers and sisters, who are responsible for the creation of peace.

It was very interesting that the Katholikentag was a global celebration, with cultures outside Germany represented and appreciated. Although many people were there, in good, safe and comfortable atmosphere.

The Day of the Catholic Church culminated in the Eucharist, with the theme of the whole event: "Peace Seeking", which aims to create peace together. For me, however, peace does not have to be sought, but must be built together in the heart. In closeness as brothers and sisters in faith, we were together searching for peace and being active in the realization of peace, through well-prepared activities. Despite the many people, everything was peaceful and orderly.

Ethic of connectedness in schools

A colorful mix of sisters, MaZ-Teamer and MaZ-Reverse-Sisters were invited on June 12, to a High school in Menden in the Sauerland. Curious, the 16 boys and 10 girls of the sixth grade asked us about religious life, MaZ and community life. Followed by community games, we dealt with the questions about trust, cohesion, diversity, consideration. Students and teachers were enthusiastic and other classes saw us in the playground a bit jealous while playing. In the middle of July, the other two 6th grade classes will be our guests in the Motherhouse in Salzkotten. It was a very successful and interesting day for everyone.



Netherlands: Celebrating the Life of Nature and the Life of Mother Clara

By Mirjam Wolthuis

International Earth Day April 22nd 2018

The encyclical Laudato Si became the starting point for great attention to environmental issues from in and outside the Catholic world. The melting ice caps and the increasing need for raw materials to fulfill the wishes of the growing world population urge us to reflect about limits and control of consumption. On many fronts action has been taken. Yet it is by far not enough. Pope Francis recently tweeted: “The poorest of the poor is at this very moment our planet earth. She asks for all our attention and care.”



In America over the years much attention has been paid to these topics during Earth Day. This year Sr Beatrice, as coordinator of the JPIC, motivated all regions and provinces of the Congregation to join this year at Earth Day. In Alverna we decided to participate in a special service on Sunday April 22nd prepared by Pastor Marlies and Mirjam. “The Song of the Waste Land” from the Dutch religious poet Huub Oosterhuis was performed, which included this beautiful sentence ‘may not be vanished by human hands, what Thou has plant.’ And, of course, we sang the Canticle of the Sun as a hymn of praise. In her sermon Mirjam pointed out our shared responsibility to be a good Shepherd, since we all are mutually dependent on each other and on our mother earth. In front of the altar stood three wooden baskets filled with the beauty of the earth as well as the plastic garbage which can be found on the side of the roads--as a warning.

A small poem of the Dutch poet Karel Eijkman was a connecting thread throughout the whole service. It told us that we all arrive every day at crossroads where we have the choice to do something good for the earth, or not. The sisters were very enthusiastic afterwards. We hope the inspiration to do the right thing will be kept alive.

I lost track again
I cycled straight through the woods
I stepped off and looked around at a pond
The sun shone through the leaves

It was so silent that I became silent
And I realized what I actually knew already
I don't stand opposite to this wood
Yet I am part of it, I am standing in the middle
All of this, it isn't mine –
I belong to all of this.

This all I pondered
And then I cycled along and found my track
At the first crossing I met.

Within two weeks after Earth Day we organized a “spring/morning”. Some farmers from the neighborhood were asked to come to Alverna and bring some young animals with them. Much to our surprise they simply said, “of course we will come, because of the sisters!” So, after the usual coffee, some gates were placed in the garden. We didn’t see it happen since we were listening to the female farmer who lives opposite to Alverna on the south side. As a young girl she met the sisters quite often and she shared some nice memories of those days.

Then we heard strange noises from outside. Everyone went outside, where a musician played on his accordion. When we turned around there appeared to be two calves, two sheep, three lambs (born 2 days ago!), and one small horse. One little lamb didn’t mind being handed over to sit on the laps of many sisters. What a surprise! Nature made us very happy. Young life is beautiful. Cows, lambs and other animals need to live outside in the open, and not in factory farming.



Visit Sr. Carola Thomann to Alverna

The first letter of JPIC is for JUSTICE. And that is what Mother Clara longed for. Thanks to the hard work of Sister Carola Thomann we all can read in detail about the injustice that was done to Mother Clara and the congregation. From June 19-24, Sister Carola Thomann visited Alverna on invitation from Sr Auxiline to tell about the history, the charism and rehabilitation of Mother Clara. During two lectures with pictures, Sr Carola made it clear where all the misunderstandings had begun. She explained the atmosphere in which Mother Clara had to operate to find space for this new congregation in those days. It was incredible how many obstacles she had to overcome. We were moved by the hard opposition and conspiracies that she had to tackle. Her strong belief and trust in Divine Providence inspired us so much. At the end of the lectures we almost couldn’t stop clapping from gratitude and admiration for both Mother Clara and Sister Carola. What a work! What a rehabilitation!



USA: Praying and Acting For Justice, Earth and Refugees

By Sr. Beatrice Hernandez



(Left to Right) Sisters Bea (FCJM), Judy (IBVM), Arlene (IBVM) and Sylvia (FCJM)

On March 30, 2018, 8th Day Center for Justice in Chicago held its 38th and last annual Good Friday Walk for Justice. About 300 people gathered in Chicago to prayerfully walk the stations of the cross. Accompanied by a Native American sage blessing, the first several stations were prayed in the shadow of the bronze statue of a Native American Chief astride his horse. We prayed honoring the 4 directions, Mother Earth and Father Sky. Using prayers from past years, we prayed for the care of our environment; respect for all people; care for immigrants and protection and welcome for refugees; a just and living wage for all workers; equal pay for equal work; access to education, food and housing for the poor; an end to gun violence and war; peace in the Middle East based on equal justice and protection of Palestinians and Israelis; criminal justice system reform and an end to the death penalty. These and other justice issues that have been the focus of 8th Day Center for over 43 years were held in our hearts and prayers as we marched from Congress and Michigan Ave, to the Chicago Board of Trade, to the Federal Plaza and finally to the Daley Plaza. It was evident from the diversity of the people who participated in these “modern day” stations of the cross, that 8th Day Center for Justice has successfully built a strong coalition of justice seekers who will continue to pray and work for justice and peace locally and globally. For those of us who have been involved with 8th Day for most of the past 43 years, it was gratifying to see young people stepping up to the challenges that continue to confront us. We are grateful for all that has been accomplished and we realize that if we want lasting peace, we must continue to work for justice.

On Sunday, April 22, 2018, the Wheaton Franciscan community and friends gathered to celebrate World Earth Day. This year’s theme was “End Plastic Pollution-Be the Change”. After the Sunday liturgy we processed out door #7 for a short prayer service and hydrangea planting ceremony near the current Butterfly Garden and the new Cosmic Walk, which will be installed in August and dedicated on September 30, 2018. Participants received wild flower seeds imbedded in plant-able paper butterflies, as well as practical suggestions for reducing plastic pollution.



On Wednesday, June 27, 2018, the Wheaton Franciscan community held a special prayer service in response to the United States government policy of separating children from their parents at our southern border. More than, 50 people attended this special service that included listening to and reflecting on statements that expressed sorrow and dismay about this

heart wrenching policy. The service also included song, silence, and reflective action.



On June 30th, there were protest marches in over 700 cities across the USA calling for an end to the policy of separation of children from their families and demanding that asylum seekers and refugees be treated with respect and just processes, in compliance with US and international law. In Chicago, Sisters Beatrice Hernandez and Sylvia Wehlisch joined with over 50,000 others for the march. We stand in solidarity with those fleeing violence and oppression and seeking safety and hope. We continue to pray in confidence to our compassionate God that our government will respect our own and international laws that govern the treatment of refugees and asylum

seekers, and that all US citizens will hold sacred the words: "...give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free" (from the words at the US Statute of Liberty).

Indonesia: New Life in the Community and Caring for Earth

By S. Klementina Sinaga

Praise the Lord, on May 24, 2018 12 novices made their first vows and 28 junior Sisters renewed their temporary vows.

On 6 June 2018 Sr Magdalene Smits received 18 new novices into the Indonesia Province. We give thanks to God for these FCJM beginners and ask God's blessing for their lives with us in community.



We keep taking care of and protecting nature with nurture. By caring for the environment, we keep it in a beautiful and pristine natural situation. On June 1, 2018 a storm occurred which subvert many trees. The uprooted trees had to be cleared so as not to block users of the road. The photo shows young boys learning from adults how to clear the road through cooperation and team work.

On 07 April 2018 congregation FCJM Province Indonesia held a blessing of the new house construction for the Postulants, named "St. Agnes of Prague". The living room, garage, and the cave are located on Maria Viyata Street Yuhda RPM No. 74. We hope that this House can be a refuge, a place full of peace and joy, especially for the sisters and the candidates who will be staying at home there and those who take shelter there.



Special Feature Article: A Million Valuable Lessons from Little Children

By S Gracella

Two years ago, when I studied in Yogyakarta, I met a beautiful little girl. Her name was Margaret. She was very curious to see me after she heard me sing a song in the Church for communion. After mass she told her mother she would like to meet me. Her mother brought her over and I smiled sweetly at her. She was very happy. Suddenly, she hugged me with great joy. Every Sunday she came to Mass at the Church. I think from what I could see that they were a harmonious family. They came together with her father, mother and her sister who is still in elementary school.

After finishing the Mass, I greeted the people, but the little girl still followed me. When I greeted somebody, she followed to greet them. Her mother said “You are very special for Margaret. Sometimes she dresses up like you in our house. She wore a veil and told her sister to write her name ‘Sr. Margaret.’ Maybe she will become a sister like you.” I was laughing and saying, “I hope so.” Now, she is a child. I think later her wish will be different, but I hope her parents cultivate this desire until she is an adult.

I had another experience with another family in the US. They always came to the Motherhouse chapel for Sunday Mass—father, mother and their three daughters. Three of them every Sunday before Mass would help to distribute the books to everyone who came to the chapel. I believe they are kind and innocent children. I noticed that the family was a harmonious family. Every Sunday I smiled and greeted them. After distributing the books, the three of them sat down with their parents. The innocent child always asked her mother or father if she didn’t understand something in the chapel. I admired their mother because she explained everything with love.

One time, after the mass I joked with the mother of the three children. I told her I wanted to take pictures with the three of them. She agreed and was very happy. I approached the three of them and asked for their names. At first, they were very shy. Later, they began to say hello and to say, “see you next week.” I was impressed by their innocence, kindness and willingness to help others.

I am always learning from young children. I remembered that my childhood was beautiful and that we had fun even though sometimes there was a sad experience to talk about. Everyone has a childhood. Looking back on childhood, maybe we can smile and laugh about old times. Many things can be learned from young children as a motivation for life. Through them we will be reminded how to forgive easily, how to be friends, how to have big dreams, and so on. We may have forgotten some of these things and little children can remind us.

Some things I can reflect on after looking at a young child are:

1. Don’t worry about tomorrow—a little child will never think about what will happen tomorrow. They enjoy today and teach us how to live in the moment.
2. Be honest with your feelings—a little child is the most honest creature ever. Young children will cry if they are sad and will laugh if they feel happy.
3. Quickly forget the problem and forgive—like any adult, a child can have a dispute with a friend. But the dispute generally doesn’t drag on. They were quick to forgive and play again without a grudge.

4. Having big dreams—listening to a little child reminds me that it would not hurt to dream. It is often thought that dreaming is a waste of time. In fact, it is of great value. If it wasn't for our dreams, life wouldn't be what we wanted. By having a dream, we have paved the way for the future.

5. Never feel inferior with themselves—in the lives of a little children there is no word “inferior.” They are always confident to go play with their friends. They don't worry about their body, their face, their appearance or that of others. They seem to instinctively know that a person is much more than just how they look.

6. Having a great curiosity—sometimes I get annoyed with an inquisitive child. They are always actively looking for something that they have never seen and tried before. Curiosity helps develop the child's personality. Curiosity can keep us open and always learning.

7. More smiling and laughing—childhood is a time filled with joy. I seldom saw a sad little child. Most of the time they are using to have fun. A happy heart and laughter are good medicine.

8. A little child is a symbol of God's love—a child is a true little friend because a child is closest to God. We can see heaven in their smiling and tireless laughter. A child is a symbol of God's love. A child is the image of God like the white, cold, and soothing snow. A child bringing happiness and bringing peace to those whom they encounter is like a little angel who is always cheerful and always wants to be happy. When we are with a little child we must be happy because these little wingless angels bring peace to others.

“The good family starts with love,
builds with caring and protects with the faith”

