



# Franciscan Sisters Congregational JPIC Newsletter

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## France: Our Legacy of Care for Creation Continues

By Brigitte

You do not have to watch tv reports to see the damage caused by climate change or to see the harmful effects of pollution. Our park (backyard) here in Metz, which is so pleasant a place to recharge your batteries and enjoy nature, suffers from the effects of climate change. Trees are perishing due to diseases and drought. With heavy hearts, we had to cut down many trees that threatened either to fall or to contaminate the still healthy species with the diseases they were developing. They also threatened the safety of walkers.



Since, in the more or less near future, we will have to leave this place, we could have resigned ourselves doing nothing. But that was without counting on the Franciscan Spirit that animates us. Instead, we were inspired to plant 19 cypresses that represent the last 19 sisters of the French Sector. When our community is no longer present, there will remain "watchmen" for the people who will frequent the park. Our duty is to think about the future and look after the planet. These trees stand as part of our legacy to Metz and to France.

Unfortunately, a tree is already orphaned, since our Sister Egide left us on April 26, 2022. She and all the Sisters who have gone before us are greatly missed and live on in our hearts.



**Sr. Céline, Sr. Elisabeth, Sr. Ferdinande, Sr. Pétronille, Sr. Anselme, Sr. M. Charles, Sr. Timothy, Sr. M. Françoise, Sr. Ambroise and Sr. Magdalena**





**Sr. Loved**

**Sr. Leonard and  
Sr. Yolande**



**Sisters In nursing homes: Sr. Françoise, Sr. Léontine, Sr. Raymonde, Sr. Benign, Sr. Angèle and Sr. Domitille**

## **Indonesia: Human Trafficking, Eco-Enzyme Training, Interfaith Dialogue**

By S. Verena Sianturi

### **Human Trafficking**

Victims of Human Trafficking continue to improve, especially the situation during the COVID pandemic. On February 1, 2022, several women were evacuated at Kualanamu International Airport in Medan. They were recruited by a mother with her husband from Sumba as trafficking agents. There were about seven women gathered together in one place before being taken away. They were lured by a job offer through an unofficial Foundation in Jakarta using social media. However, two of them went home before being taken to Jakarta. One employer who did not run her work in accordance with the previous agreement, employed one of the women, Ella. She asked to go home and her employer required her to wait until her successor arrived. She was then given a payment of Rp. 200,000 and was taken by taxi to the Airport. There she was left alone, terrified because she did not know anyone or how to return home. Finally, after assistance from several communities of



sisters, Ella was rescued with the help of one of the Medan community sisters who asked someone to pick her up at the airport. She was finally safe in the Monastery. Finally, Ella was taken to a Safe House run by Caritas Medan, where she received assistance for approximately three months. She received mentoring as well as health checks. She also received legal help, in

cooperation with many parties, including the police, the Women and Children's Protection Office, Social Services and Thalitakum Indonesia. After working with the local government and the agencies above to notify the family and parish priest, I, as an envoy for Thalitakum Medan, accompanied Ella to Kupang-Atambua to her family home on March 29, 2022. After arriving in Kupang we were immediately picked up by a driver. After reporting to the village chief and the police in Atambua, we returned Ella to her home safe and well. The "Foundation" still threatens Ella because of the lost money. She still does not know the fate of her other friends who are currently scattered to unknown locations. We can only hope and pray that they are safe.

### Interfaith Dialogue

In commemoration of Human Trafficking Day on February 8, 2022, the Medan Thalitakum Network held a Dialogue with the theme: "Building Cooperation in Combatting the Crime of Loss of Cross-Religious People." We involved young people from several universities in Medan, Foundations, NGOs, Parishes, as well as the Women and Children's Protection Office, and the IOM. In this dialogue, we share experiences for those who have been directly involved in accompanying the victims or conducting direct investigations with the victims.



The IOM presented material about Human Trafficking and explained statistics on the increase in the number of victims per year. Representatives from Protection of Women provided explanations about human trafficking. In addition, we also discussed possible solutions so that human trafficking can decrease in the future. In Indonesia, the problem of human trafficking continues to increase, especially among children and women. Currently methods of trafficking include mail order brides and offers of jobs as waiters in cafés.

The rise of digital technology has created additional victims of sexual exploitation. In the last three months, I have received reports of three such cases. WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram and other platforms are used by human trafficking agents to find their targets. In order to address this, we must build the widest network in all walks of life and inform the public about Trafficking in Persons Act. Thus, the public will be more vigilant when unknown person offers them a job. Sometimes, those who become agents of this person are the closest people of the family or even the family themselves— people we trust. We hope that there will be dialogue and further meetings of religious leaders, representatives of civil society organizations and government so that the community increasingly understands and extends awareness of the risks of the Crime of Loss of People.

During this meeting I and friends from other religions formed a work team. We have four people who are beginners in this team. We have joined the Indonesian Interfaith Institute and, today, we formed the Work Team for North Sumatra. Two priests from different churches, one Bhikkhu from Buddhism and myself from Catholicism. The purpose of this work team is to build peace between faiths so that the spirit of tolerance and understanding is increasingly felt by many people.





We are hopeful that we can also lessen the tensions between people of different religions. We build a spirit of community, honoring our difference. For now, we have not created a program and are still in the stage building mutual support and respect. My friends asked me to be the promoter for the team. After our initial conversations, we felt mutually strengthened, affirmed and supported in our work together.

### Eco-Enzyme Training

Preserving nature and trying to restore the integrity of creation requires a lot of work and creativity. One such activity is the manufacture of Eco-Enzyme. We do this continuously for the sake of continued development and reducing carbon emissions. We strive to actively maintain and preserve for the health of our earth by reducing pollution that causes global warming. In addition to reducing waste, eco-enzyme is also very beneficial for the needs of daily life. The Franciscan Sibolga Congregation asked me to provide training in making Eco-Enzyme to its novices. So, on Saturday April 30, 2022, at Pangaribuan Barus Novisiat OSF, I conducted training in making Eco-Enzyme. Before beginning, they were given materials on how to make Eco-Enzyme. Hopefully, through this training more people can participate in preserving and restoring the damaged earth. Not only did I explain how to



make eco-enzymes, but also explained how the current world situation is on the verge of collapse because of human actions. Self-righteousness and the existence of greed leading to massive exploitation of natural resources have led to climate change, disturbing the natural balance of life on our planet. As part of our Franciscans charism of loving, nurturing and preserving all creation as our sisters and brothers, I also shared a little content about Laudato Si' which became the church's call to realize ecological repentance and conversion of heart. As Laudato Si' states: *"Evil against nature is a sin against oneself and a sin against God"*. May we, as sons and daughters of Francis, be more aware and embrace ecological conversion as an act of love for God, the Creator of the Universe.



### Suriname Mission: Sisters Listening, Learning and Responding with Love

By S. Verena Sianturi (Indonesia) in conversation with S. Klarensia Hasugian

Service and mission are not easy. It takes a lot of sacrifice, restraint, adjusting to culture, demographics, seasons, language, eating habits, and laws that apply in the area. One must be able to accept everything with patience and



heart. A person who is sent to serve and work in missions must be prepared in many ways to face unexpected situations. The responsibility of handling challenges, intelligence in facing every situation, and wisdom in behaving and acting responsively to the needs of the people being served, is the challenge missionaries face. This pastoral spirit is very much needed in Suriname, which is very different from our sisters' home country of Indonesia. The mission is in an area that requires animation, especially in faith. The area where our sisters serve also still experiences poverty in many ways. Although they are rich in both human and natural resources, the people long for spiritual, physical, and intellectual development. The presence of FCJM is urgently needed and brings new air to our people. Church leaders, especially Mgr. Karel Choennie and the parish priest, Father Augustine, are deeply grateful for our pastoral work in Suriname. They have been very supportive of our efforts to grow the faith of the people, often even taking part in these activities as an expression of acceptance for our presence there. The sisters are proud and happy for this support.



Nature and the fertile land in this region are not much different from Indonesia. Unfortunately, the people have not always been able to manage their resources properly because of limitations of human power. A large plot of fertile land can sustain a family with food and bring an income if managed well. At the present time, many people rely on food from neighboring countries to meet their daily needs. Seeing this as part of her pastoral ministry, S. Klarensia, decided to provide education on how to grow crops on their own land. Thus, family finances were greatly improved, making

families and the community more prosperous.

When viewed from the preservation of nature, Surinamese people maintain the cleanliness and beauty of their surroundings. Unfortunately, there are often floods because the drainage around their homes is not properly managed. Improving this will enhance their quality of life. Suriname society still experiences order in many aspects of life, both aspects of faith and awareness of the value of life. Respecting one's own body as holy and part of creation leads to respect for others. Strengthening of relationships with one another grows as the people cultivate their faith. The scars of colonization still linger in the body and heart of the people, which still make it difficult to rise from slumber. It takes a model or guide who is trustworthy, a mover and motivator, to lift them up, and to escape from the lethargy.



Like a bright light breaking through the dark, faith and dedication are able to illuminate the future and allow each person to see the surrounding beauty and move towards sustainable development. It is like giving new oxygen that stings the throat of life and fresh water that cools the complaining tongue.



On May 14, 2022 a visit to Cupido was carried out by the Father Augustine, S. Klarensia, and their entourage. It had been quite a long time since a Catholic priest had visited the people there. There is also limited transportation to this small village which can only be reached by small canoes through deep river waters. Cupido's people seem to have experienced alienation during this time of absence, and it certainly makes their faith fade. The touch of love and spiritual energy was greatly missed. During this time the people were in the dry wilderness and waited long enough for the rain to water the fields of the heart that had been in drought. Thus, the presence of Father Augustine and S. Klarensia and their entourage brought spiritual freshness to the people in Cupido who found a new oasis of life. Even though the



journey to get there was difficult and dangerous, their pastoral ministry of proclaiming the good news of joy and bringing love to the people gave them strength. God's mission helped them overcome all anxiety and fear. They were able to see the face of God in the faces of the people of Cupido.

The first missionaries to Suriname had built a Church in Cupido. When missionaries left the area the building deteriorated and eventually collapsed. However, the absence of a beautiful, luxurious building did not prevent the people from joining in praising God, with the Earth as His footstool and the sky as His throne. Nature became the cathedral where the people could express their pride, holiness and love for God. May the presence of FCJM sisters, in cooperation with church leaders, be able to cultivate faith and build people's lives towards well-being and experiencing joy in their community of faith.



## **Malawi: The Paschal Mystery Lived Out in Our Lives**

By S. Raynelda Saragih

In Malawi, the remembrance of Good Friday was very solemn, with all the Catholics coming together from 8AM to 4PM. It began with the way of the cross at one of the outstations of our Madisi parish and ended near the center of the zone. The day culminated with the liturgical prayers for Good Friday.





On Easter Sunday we celebrated solemn mass in the church together with all the parishioners. The ritual included festive singing, dancing and joyful Alleluias. The celebrations continued on Easter Monday when we had a communal meal together with the priests' community at the Sisters' House.



In  
a

period of one month we lost two of our relatives: Sr. Paula Lu'wer (Sister to Sister Klara) and Mrs. Nduru (the Mother of S. Flaviana Nduru). We had two funeral Masses praying for their souls to rest in eternal peace. Mass for Sister Paula was led by Fr. Alphonso Kaphira while Mass for Mrs. Nduru was led by Fr. Geoffrey Chikapa. We held our sisters in love and prayer in a special way during this time of mourning and loss.



On 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2022, the Ministry of Health declared a cholera outbreak in Malawi following laboratory confirmation of a case in the country. The World Health Organization (WHO) in coordination with partners, is supporting the implementation of the National Cholera Response Plan in Malawi. In addition, the health authorities in Malawi recently have declared an outbreak of wild polio virus type 1 after a case was detected in a young child in the capital, Lilongwe. The WHO is supporting the Malawi health authorities to conduct a risk assessment and to plan an outbreak response, including supplemental immunizations. In response to the first discovered wild polio case in Africa in several years, a large-scale vaccination campaign for 2.9 million children is planned in Malawi. The U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF) announced the procurement of 6.9 million vaccine doses and plans to upgrade the existing logistical infrastructure in the landlocked country for transport and storage. The vaccination campaign, in which four doses each are administered to children under five, is considered challenging because Malawi is also struggling in parallel with the consequences of the Corona

pandemic. We ask everyone for prayers that these outbreaks will be contained, and that the people affected will be able to regain their health.

Laudato Si' week celebrating the seventh anniversary of the encyclical's publication was a busy time for all of us. To show that we love and care for our mother earth we celebrated "Laudato Si' " through different activities. We did this in a festive way, helping all the people enjoy their right to life and right to education. The activities included caring for children, working in the school garden (watering and harvesting), and cleaning and beautifying the surrounding school environment. Also, during this time, standard 8 learners were writing their mock examinations to prepare them for taking their national exam in the near future. Their most important lesson learned during their time in our school, however, is the knowledge that we and all creation are one. All are to be treasured, cared for, and respected.



### **Brazil: Responding to the Educational Reality with Faith**

By Sr. Ivone Barbosa



"To promote dialogue on the educational reality in Brazil, in the light of the Christian faith"—this is one of the objectives of the Fraternity 2022 (CF) Campaign, which will have as its theme "Fraternity and Education." The motto for CF 2022 is "Speak wisely, teach with love" (cf. Pr 31, 26). The proposal was presented, on the afternoon of 13/04/2021, to the bishops who continue to meet during the 58th General Assembly of the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil (CNBB).

The Gospels promote human dignity, the experience of the transcendent, the culture of encounter and care for Earth our common home. This message animates the organization of pastoral services within schools, universities, community centers and other educational spaces. It promotes an education committed to new forms of economy, politics and progress truly at the service of human life, especially for the poorest.

Listening, proposing, and discerning—annually, the themes proposed by the CF are developed from the "See, Judge and Act" method. In 2022 the "Seeing" will be accomplished in an ongoing way by listening with open hearts. "Judging" will require deep discernment. "Acting" will follow the path proposed by engaging everyone in the effort. "The desire of the executive team and what has been proposed by the bishops is in view of what Pope Francis proposes in the Global Educational Pact," Father Patriky said. Educating is an eminently human act. We are renewed when we learn more about life and its meaning, when we acquire new knowledge, and when we realize that in us there is a deep place where we long to learn and teach.



"The witness of a missionary Church is the principle that qualifies the proclamation of the Gospel and makes it capable of proposing to men and women willingly a new learning. Educating is an act of hope in the human being. It is to contribute so that every person, every missionary disciple of Jesus Christ, offers the best of himself/herself to God, to others, to the Church and to society. To educate with wisdom and love is to stimulate care for life, from conception through the natural end, to eternity. Convinced of the transforming power of education, we ask: Lord, help us create a new world!" (Base Text CF 2022, no. 222).

The congregation of the Franciscan Sisters FCJM began a new mission in the diocese of Óbidos in the city of Curuá. Where they are developing activities in various areas of mission through pastoral services such as visits to the sick, home visits, liturgical formation, celebrations of the word in riverside communities and carrying out various activities according to the needs of the parish. The sisters work in partnership with the Verbitas Priests (SVD) who took over the parish. The sisters are waiting for funds to start two projects to strengthen the women and children in the Amazon and to create a culture of peace. In the archdiocese of Santarém the sisters carry out various pastoral and professional work.







## Timor Leste: Legacy of Empowerment

By S. Blandina Mahulae

### Disability wheelchair rugby match between Indonesia and Timor Teste

The envoy from PRHB Hidup Baru Atambua, which is managed by the FCJM sisters, was held on May 21, 2022 at the Don Bosco Salesian Hall in East Timor. This activity is carried out in order to increase creativity, self-confidence and establish good friendships among those with disabilities in East Timor. Our children with disabilities from Atambua won first place. Thank you to the coaches and to S. Yoanesia, S. Clarentina and S. Petra who participated in bringing the children to this match.



### Special visitors bring joy to children



In January 2022, American Soldiers visited the children of St. Clara Orphanage and held several games. The children were very excited because they had not had visitors for a long time as a result of covid 19. In addition to playing, the children also received prizes in



the form of books, games and daily necessities. Thank you to the American soldiers who work in the American embassy of East Timor.



## **Netherlands: Shining Light into the Darkness**

By Mirjam Wolthuis

### **Commemoration of Mother M. Clara Pfänder February 18th**

Just like last year, we gathered on this special day to listen to excerpts from Sister Carola's book about our Foundress. First, a passage was read about why Sister Clara, as a young woman, chose the Catholic faith. This was followed by an excerpt about the desire to establish a congregation of her own, and finally a passage about the power of attorney and the lack of understanding about it. Then Sister Engeline, who is a great fan of Mother M. Clara, made a toast to her. We ended with the following prayer:

Good God,  
On this day in honor of our Foundress  
We thank you for this powerful woman.

She has had to endure much  
But it has only strengthened her faith in God.

We thank you for all the people who have done justice to her,  
Who have put her back in the light.  
She has become one of our leading women.

Good God,  
Give everyone who has an ideal  
The strength to keep working at it  
To persevere in the face of adversity and resistance,  
And to inspire others.

For our fellow sisters we pray,  
Here in Alverna and elsewhere in the world,  
That we know ourselves connected with each other,  
That we carry each other in our care for others and each other,  
That we trust in your faithfulness, as Mother Clara taught us.

Amen

"Our paths are the secret of divine providence; we are led in life according to his will, even if we don't understand it ourselves. We must persevere and duck when stones are thrown at us. The sun keeps shining above us and will bring light again into the darkness."

### **Lent and Easter in solidarity with all those who suffer in war and imprisonment**

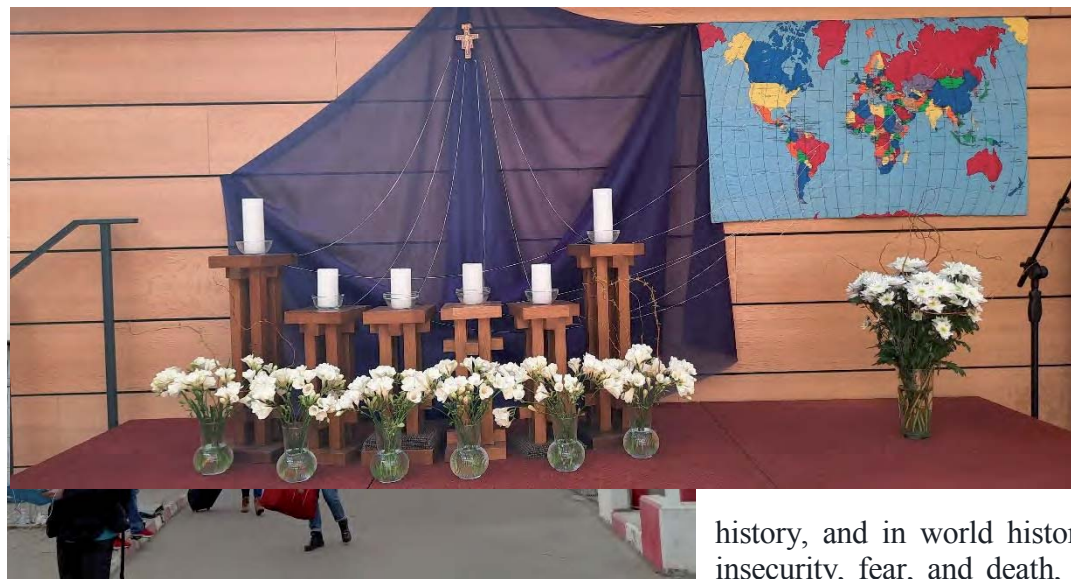
The war over Ukraine is of great concern to all of us. We are deeply shocked by Russia's aggression. We deeply regret the fact that so much violence is being used and that heavier and heavier weapons are being used instead of diplomacy. Every day we pray for peace and compassion for those who are losing people in this struggle.

During Lent, Sister José created the following tableau in our large common room: on the purple cloth hangs the San Damiano cross. From there, silver threads run to white candles. The love and mercy of Christ take shape in the light of the peace candles. Each Sunday in Lent, a candle was lit for one of the many hot spots in the world: Ukraine, Malawi, Yemen, etc.



At Easter, the Resurrection icon was placed on the Ukrainian flag in the chapel. Especially for Easter, Sister Antoine had borrowed this flag from an acquaintance. Let us continue to stand in solidarity and prayer with those suffering from violence and war around the world. May we be bearers of Easter Light, shining forth in our world and filling it with peace, compassion, hope and love.

## **Romania: Offering Welcome, Assistance and Hope**



S. M. Lydia Fechetă

*Peace is possible, peace is a duty, peace is the main responsibility of all of us!*  
(Pope Francis)

These words are needed now more than ever. Peace is necessary in our world, in our continent, in our country, in our lives. 24 February 2022 will remain in our history, in European

history, and in world history. It was a day that brought insecurity, fear, and death, directly in our neighborhood.

For us, Romanians, the tragedy in Ukraine, mean that we immediately saw thousands of women with their children, alone in a foreign country, far away from their homes and families, carrying their lives in a suitcase.



We also spoke in our community, about the needs of these refugees. We decided that we could offer our guest rooms for persons who have nobody and need our hospitality. So, on the 9<sup>th</sup> April 2022 Natasha, Viola with her daughter Milana (9), and Lena with her children Margarita (7) and Artiom (2) arrived in Caransebes from Harkov through Suceava, the north border and Bukarest. Their husbands and parents remain in Ukraine. Their wish is to go back home, when the situation is better, and the war stops. Until then, we offered our house, our hearts, and our support so that they could feel secure here. In the meantime, their houses were destroyed.



With the support of the sisters in Salzkotten and other people in Germany, we can help our guests and offer them, what they need to feel good here, to feel at home here. We made contact here with the Ukrainian union and the people there helped us to talk to our guests in person, not just with google translate. Sometimes it is difficult and funny when we rely on what google says. We helped them with the documentation to live here officially. We assisted in locating doctors for them. Natasha wanted to look for a job, where she would not need to speak the language. So, at the moment she works in a hotel. Viola is a teacher, and she is learning online from here. She needed a laptop for her classes. The sponsors from Michelstadt, Germany bought her a laptop, to help her in her work.

We invited the refugees many times to dinner, to get to know each other and so that they would not feel alone here. The children are happy to come and play in our kindergarten and enjoy the yard. Together we took a trip to the mountains to see the landscape and to know our country. On orthodox Easter, we were invited to drink coffee together, and they cooked a special Ukrainian cake. It was a nice afternoon together!



With the help from Germany, we were able to buy medicines for the people in Ukraine for first aid—more than 100 bags. We also sent sleeping bags, food, clothes, and blankets. Sr. Mariana traveled more than 500 km to bring these items to

the Capuchin friars who have a community 4 km from the Ukrainian border. The friars distributed these to the people in Ukraine who sleep in the fields, and they were



very happy to get all these things.



Bus arrives at the Border bringing supplies.



Toys for children, on a bridge to Ukraine



With this entire new situation, we also thought about our poor children in kindergarten and the elderly people in need receiving assistance from our Homecare Station. Through our partnership with Bank of Food, and the donations from Germany we were able to give them a gift for Easter. The joy was great, and all were happy for this great help.



On the 26 and 27 May, after 4 years of activity, our Kindergarten St. Ursula, was evaluated. The 2 evaluators, in the name of Ministry of Education in Bukarest were very delighted about this project for children in need. After the 2 days, we received news of our qualifying as “Very Good”, and soon we will get the official document of our recognition/ acknowledgement. A special thanks to our director Mr. Neagu Ioan, who coordinated the whole activity in our kindergarten and prepared the documentation.

We are grateful for all the prayers, love and help we get in our mission, and in our work, to be the signs of God’s love here in Caransebeş and Romania, disciples of Christ and followers of St.

Francis and Mother Clara.

Pace e bene!



## **USA: Living and Acting in Solidarity with Earth and Each Other**

By Sr. Beatrice Hernandez

As the war in Ukraine brought destruction and suffering to millions of people, thousands of people marched in downtown Chicago urging the US and NATO to do more to protect the people of Ukraine from the violence. Although none of the Sisters were



able to attend the march, 2 members of our Sunday worship community, Casey and John Plunkitt, were present to bring our community's support. The Ukrainian Cultural Center in Chicago had collected more than 14,000 pounds of donations – non-perishable food, clothes, and medical supplies. These were sent to Warsaw Poland and then on to people in need in Ukraine. We continue to pray for a just end to this unjust war.

During Lent 2022, the Wheaton Franciscan Sunday worship community, along with the sisters and covenant companions, collected donations of non-perishable food, household items and money in our "Hear the Cry of the Poor Lenten Food and Pantry Drive". Donations benefited the Northern Illinois Food Bank, the Feed My Starving Children Campaign, and Neighborhood Food Pantries. Children were also able to participate by donating coins in their "rice bowl" donation containers. This effort kept the Laudato Si' Action Platform Goal of Listening to the Cry of the Poor uppermost in our hearts and minds throughout Lent. The generosity was overwhelming:



- More than **283 pounds of packaged goods**, which equate to 6 grocery carts and multiple trips to carrying warehouse-sized packages of paper products to the **Neighborhood Food Pantry** located at Immanuel Presbyterian Church in Warrenville.

- More than **\$600 to the Northern Illinois Food Bank**, exceeding our goal by 20%
- Every \$1 donated helped provide \$8 worth of groceries.

- A total of **\$785 to the Feed My Starving Children Campaign**.
- Contributions were added to the \$2,000 donation from the Wheaton Franciscan JPIC office.



On the

evening of March 15<sup>th</sup>, about 60 people gathered at the Motherhouse to pray for peace in Ukraine. One of our employees whose family still lives in western Ukraine spoke to those gathered about what she had heard from family members. Her sharing brought the reality of this war very close to all of us. After a few words, participants walked our Cosmic Walk path in silent prayer for peace.

On March 18, the Laudato Si' Action Platform (LSAP) planning group introduced the first in a series of 7 monthly reflections on each of the 7 LSAP goals on our website at [Laudato Si' Action Platform - Wheaton Franciscans](#). Each reflection includes practical steps that each of us can take to do our "little bit of good" for the sake of Earth, our common home. Please see the LSAP page of our [wheatonfranciscan.org](#) website for more information. Also beginning in March, our Wheaton Franciscan Weekly News featured a brief reflection throughout Lent on one statement from our Regional LSAP commitment statement. For more information see our website and click on News, and then select "Archived News" from the drop-down menu. These brief reflections began on March 4<sup>th</sup>.



Our celebration of Earth Day was a special time to pause, reflect, and honor the gift of Mother Earth, our common home. About 50 Sisters, Covenant Companions, employees and friends gathered to pray for the healing of Earth. We also planted a tree near what is soon to be the St. Clare Garden. This beautiful garden will be a place of quiet for reflection, prayer and communing with nature. In addition to blessing the newly planted tree, our Earth Day prayer also included a blessing of the ground on which this garden will be created.



On May 23, a very special gathering was held to bless a small plot of land that will be used to grow native American red flint corn for the Indigenous people of the Kickapoo Nation. They lived for hundreds of years in a large area just south of Wheaton, including southern Illinois, Indiana and Ohio. When Indigenous peoples were forced off their lands and moved further and further west in the mid to late 1800's, they took their sacred corn seeds with them. Unable to grow these seeds in their new locations, their tribal "seed keepers" have cared for and guarded these seeds, hoping that someday they would return to their lands and again grow their corn. Now, aware that regaining their lands is not likely, they have sought good hearted people living near their former lands willing to try to grow their sacred corn and return it to them at harvest. After some dialogue, the Kickapoo have agreed to allow the Wheaton Franciscans to plant 100 corn seeds on a small patch of our motherhouse





grounds. The blessing in May included prayer and ritual from both the Wheaton Franciscan and the native American traditions—blessing with incense and water; honoring the 4 directions and the 4 elements of earth, wind, fire and water; music from a native American flute and drum; and, symbolic planting of the first corn seed mound. We thank Covenant Companion Paige Samdal, who has agreed to plant and nurture the seeds on our behalf. We are looking forward to caring for the plants and returning the entire harvest to our Kickapoo sisters and brothers.



## **Germany: Spirituality Sustains Our Work for Earth and Peace and Justice**

By Sr. Alexandra Völzke

### **Everyone can help in this war situation – March 2022**



What was unimaginable for all of us has now happened: war in the heart of Europe! Through the local parish, "starter packages" were to be collected for the refugees at the Polish-Ukrainian border. We had many good woolen blankets. In addition, we bought disinfectants, diapers, baby food, hygiene articles for women and children, water bottles, something sweet and wet wipes. Quickly ten bags of ours were packed, which were brought with many other bags by a bus company in Salzkotten to the Polish border.

In addition, from May 2022, we have added the chamber of food of the city of Salzkotten, which provides food to up to 140 families every week, including many Ukrainians with children.



### **Prayers for Peace in St. Clara and the Motherhouse – March 2022**

In addition to the daily prayer for peace before every Vespers, in March we also had a prayer for peace in the Motherhouse Garden for sisters, residents and residents of the St. Clara retirement home. Especially in the older generation, bad memories are awakened by the war! In addition, a prayer for peace in Ukraine took place at the end of March on an evening with Taizé songs and illumination of the dark Motherhouse Church. The commemoration of the Passion of Jesus in the Holy Days was also marked by war. With St. Francis, we prayed to the Prince of Peace at Easter: "Pace e bene, peace and salvation! For all people! "



### **Bee campaigns for families – April 2022**

With about 30 children and adults we were able to do a bee action on three dates. The second day was about wild bees.





A beekeeper explained to us at the beginning why wild bees are so important for us humans and gave us much information. We can support many of the almost 400 wild bee species in Germany through wild bee hotels and thus promote the preservation of this great biodiversity. These contain breeding opportunities for the wild bees, which have otherwise become scarce in many places. For example, adults and children built wild bee hotels together from old cans. Finally, Sr. M. Angela shared how support for wild bees in a creation-oriented way of thinking, reflects how St. Francis lived in harmony with nature.

The third bee campaign dealt with the topic of "health and nutrition". At the beginning we went looking for bees in the motherhouse garden. In a short session, Sr. M. Angela told us about St. Francis' view of creation. He referred to all fellow creatures as brothers and sisters. As a result, the protection of creation plays a very important role. Afterwards we learned interesting facts about the rhythm of life for bees and about the use of bee products in medicine and for our own house pharmacy. A sample of different types of honey from varied pollen sources showed the variety of bee products. Then it was time to bake. Together with the children and adults, dough was kneaded and shaped. The resulting pan bread was then baked without fat in the pan. So, we quickly had a delicious base for the good honey. In a final round we ate the fresh bread with the delicious honeys together.

### **Opening of the Francis Spiritual Center – April 2022**

"When it comes to a center, many people think of a house, but that's not what is meant here," explained Sr. M. Angela in her opening remarks. Rather, it is about opening up spaces to get something off the ground with other people. "We are currently experiencing a lot of resignation in the Church, but in our lives a deep joy of faith," she explained, "and for this the Francis Spiritual Center in the Motherhouse should be a welcoming place." The open concept is that everyone can contribute to the Francis Spiritual Center with their talents. What has developed in the meantime, the visitors were able to experience, and



*Elements from the special procession of gifts & encounters and presentation of the offers in the Motherhouse Garden*



were able to get to know one another during the open house at several stands in the garden of the motherhouse. The Open Lunch Table and the Open Meeting were presented there as well as logotherapy and mourning work, in cooperation with the hospice association, with schools, with the project Missionary on Time, as well as other offerings for young people and much more. At the end there was a worship café with the singing of worship songs together. It was a very successful celebration with happy togetherness and a very beautiful, fraternal atmosphere.

More information and photos: [www.geistliches-zentrum-franziskus.de](http://www.geistliches-zentrum-franziskus.de).

### **World Day of Prayer for Spiritual Vocations & Religious Anniversaries – May 2022**

The World Day of Prayer for Spiritual Vocations at the beginning of May was opened by the diocesan Vocations Pastoral Ministry with a celebration of the Word of God. In addition to two other young witnesses of the faith, our novice Sr. M Lucia also gave a testimonial about religious vocation in an interview. There was also a 24-hour prayer for spiritual vocations, in which we participated as sisters throughout the night and during the day. At the end of May, 14 of our sisters were able to celebrate their jubilees. These included celebrations of 40, 60, 65, 70 and even 75 years in our congregation. Congratulations!



**Did you know...?** – under this title, Sr. M. Gabriele now writes regularly in our internal magazine "T-Information":

"Dear sisters, for some time now I have been dealing with the topics of creation, environment and environmental protection, one-world, climate change. In doing so, I always come across information that is new to me or appeals to me very much right now. And not infrequently I also invite you to think, rethink, change habits.

**DID YOU KNOW...?** - under this heading I would like to share some of these thoughts with you in the tau information of the near future...



Today, I have some learnings to share with you about plastic: Plastic takes up to 2,000 years to completely degrade in the environment. Each of us (in Germany) consumes 176 kilograms of plastic per year – that's 340 million tons of plastic worldwide every year.



Can I change this? Not on a large scale, of course, but on a small scale? That's what I asked myself. Because if everyone says, I can't change anything about it anyway, nothing will change. So, I want to start with myself...

- Soap instead of shower gel, as far as possible
- Fruit instead of yogurt
- no plastic bags, plastic packaging etc.

And I have decided to pay more attention and mindfulness to avoid plastic waste... "



### **Exhibition "Global Justice" – May 2022**

The One World Circle Salzkotten and we Franciscan Sisters were invited to the exhibition "Global Justice" in the Motherhouse Garden. The occasion: from May 18 to 20, the meeting of the finance ministers and central bank governors of the most important industrial nations in the Western world, G7, was held. The debt relief alliance calls for fair treatment of indebted states in international insolvency proceedings. Eleven posters depict the complex issue of the unresolved debt crisis of impoverished countries and the associated obstacles to their development. The G7 had already largely understood that debt relief had to be granted, but unfortunately this is not acknowledged by private creditors such as banks and funds. A fair arbitration procedure, comparable to insolvency, must therefore be created for states. Working on this is the opportunity at the G7 summit.

### **Theme evenings "Politics & Bible" – May/June 2022**

On May 10, there was an exciting prelude to our series of topics "Politics & Bible" with the former district administrator of Paderborn. How can the Beatitudes from the Gospel of Matthew come into play in politics? In addition to the themes on poverty and justice, the topic of "violence" in particular was an explosive domestic and foreign policy topic. Should we supply weapons to Ukraine or not? A lively discussion ensued.

Two more evenings will follow, on the topics of "Gender Equality in the Church and World" and on the "Healing Power of the Holy Spirit".