

SOCIETY OF THE SACRED HEART PROVINCE OF INDIA NEWSLETTER



10th August 2022

NEWS FROM THE PRERANA COMMUNITY

Today, we are called again to create something new

We as a community decided to celebrate the feast of the Sacred Heart by inviting a few of our friends along with the three priests and the two Dominican sisters from our parish. We were altogether eighteen of us. Our Candidates and Seekers had beautifully decorated the chapel as well as the dining room on the second floor of Prerana. The Liturgy and leaflets were creatively and meaningfully prepared by Sr. Marie and Kumudini. We had prepared the pulao, salad and fryums; the Pork Vindaloo and a beautiful creamy cake were



made earlier by Sr. Fatima. We had ordered tasty Mangalorean chicken curry, Sannas and croquets from Johnny Barretto. As a result, we had enough time for other preparations and could interact with our guests in a relaxed manner. While the cake was being cut, our Candidates and Seekers surprised us by singing a song for us Professed and they included our priests, the other Sisters and the families present in the song too. Our community effort together made the day an enjoyable one.

With our goal in mind, we decided on a new way of organizing ourselves in community. We three



professed member decided that we would work as a team – without a named coordinator – hoping it will work well. The two questions asked of us by our community goal, “Who is God calling us to be?” and “What is God asking us to do?” will remind us that we are called to be sisters in Christ, to be vulnerable, compassionate, to let go and let God in our daily life; thus trying to create an atmosphere where the little ones in our

nursery school and our formees can grow in an atmosphere of trust and safety.

We hope to create something new in our compound too, as Sr. Marie is planning to redo the garden with the help of a relative of Sr. Cecilia, Babu Anna, and Prakash Gaikwad a relative of Sr. Poonam.

Also we have arranged a person named Rameshwar Pisal, a six-seater auto driver, to take us to and fro to the Church on Mondays and Tuesdays, and on **Sundays** on a one way trip only so that we can stay on and talk to people. On the second and fourth Sundays the Candidates, Seekers and I go to De Nobili College to attend the Hindi mass. Our formees enjoy participating in the lively mass singing of hymns in Hindi and in their own native language. After mass and praying before the grotto of our Mother Mary, a circle is formed as each one greets the others – priests, sisters and the lay people – ‘Jai Yesu’ and there is a good interaction among all. This gives an opportunity for our formees to get the sense of being a part of a wider family. Besides these three days of Mass in the Church, we have Mass in the community once a week when a priest from the SFS parish comes to us. On the other days we attend Mass online. The eagerness and willingness of various people to help us, really invites us to experience how God is providing us with the right persons and at the right time to do something beautiful.

Venizia Fernandes rscj

Could there be something new?

This is what I wondered as I returned to the Candidate community in Prerana once more to teach English. Looking back on a career of over sixty years as an English teacher I needed to explore if there still could be something new in this skill, in the radically changed context of our life in the Society today. I had begun this career sixty years ago with teaching Shakespeare and Dickens at the Cambridge exam level and then rose to the challenge of teaching English to beginners in Std. 5 in Nirmal (Vasai) and in Haregaon. It has been a joy and a very fulfilling experience to open the pathway to English speaking over the years especially in Haregaon where I accompanied a few classes from Std. 5 to Std. 10 and today hear these former students speaking fluent English when I meet them here in Pune.



I remember how I chose Haregaon as the place for the Novitiate twenty years later. The Chapters of 1970 and 1976 had called us to steep ourselves in the lives, the hopes and aspirations of our people and in that very process to empower them. Our apostolic involvement in the mission and the growing understanding of our role as educators in the context of a school like Haregaon, shaped our thinking and laid the foundation of many fundamental options in our lives. We had lost many possible vocations because of our demand for English and the standard of English we expected in the Society. We now had mature, professional women entering the Society, whose strength and expertise were linked to the Marathi language. Could they not with their maturity, their language and culture explore life in our Society and find their home there and in that very process be empowered as rscj?

How different is the situation in the Society today, forty years later and with our membership reduced drastically from the number we were in the seventies! The Society document, “Life Unfolding”, the fruit of reflection in the Society, gathered together by the novice mistresses in 2012, expresses at the very beginning:

“**The union of the Society** was a central value for Sophie and for us too, as we shared our charism and spirituality. On various levels we became convinced that ‘we were one heart and one soul’ in

the provinces, in the reality of our countries, and within ourselves.....global situations affect us all,.... **Beyond language differences**, there is a real desire to listen to one another We see the importance of recognizing and valuing the considerable amount we have in common. **Internationality** brings us hope and allows us to keep on dreaming.”

We see this hope and dreaming in the invitation of Chapter 2016 – ‘to do something new’ from which the formation processes in the Society have been developed. The Special Chapter and the new ways of organizing ourselves have had further impact on the Society’s planning and organization of the four Regional Novitiates. Here in Prerana with the Seekers and Candidates we are guided by the **‘Plan for the Candidate Stage in the Society of the Sacred Heart, ASIANZ Region.’**

English is one of the languages of the Society and the language of our ASIANZ Region. It has been chosen because of ‘our desire to listen to one another beyond language differences’ and to ‘enable us to recognize and value the considerable amount we have in common’. So the challenge of spending 3-4 years at this first stage, giving learning English a priority, must be to make the very process of learning of the language, embody the various goals of this stage of formation. I share just a few that are challenging my planning and teaching of English at this moment.

To provide sufficient opportunity for growth in:

- the human and spiritual dimension of the candidates,
- the ability to make good decisions and judgements and to assume responsibility for them,
- the capacity for reflection and an openness to learning, and for self-study and research,
- the freedom to express and share one’s life experiences,
- deepening the awareness of one’s own culture and ability to share with others,
- understanding people of different cultures and relating with them,
- openness to establishing stable, healthy relationships with each other and in community.

All this calls for going beyond teaching the basics of the language and requires giving opportunities for using language, both spoken and written, for self-growth, study reflection and expressing oneself. One needs to have significant matter and not just the usual text books of the standard of English they can work with or even the different exercises provided in the language teaching manuals. We could in our province make a collection of such material. Here is an invitation for anyone who has short studies or reflections on Society history, our two Saints, inspiring narratives, current issues, cultural exchange, Church and current history or other simple reflections that could be edited and collected to be used for English teaching in this context, at the Candidate stage, to prepare them for a real Asian/international sharing and exchange experience in the ASIANZ Novitiate.

Marie Noronha rscj

Aftermath of the Pandemic – Effects on Children

Two years of Pandemic – lots to learn, lots to remember, lots to improve on.

As we all know that during the Pandemic both the parents and children logged in to their respective work/jobs and school, but parents had to log in for hours thus leaving them with lesser time with their children. To substitute for the time parents could give their children, they gave them access to internet/social media. Children learnt to log in due to online schooling. Children were provided with whatever they asked for irrespective of the consequences.

After Effect – School beginning offline for the academic year 2022-23. This year we saw lots of behavioural changes in the children, especially in the age group of 3-4 years, such as stubbornness, mood swings, fear, staying aloof etc. Teachers are having to face such behavioural changes and it is difficult at times as the parents too turn to the teacher/school for help – help to get the child back on track, help to counsel the child, help to improve the child’s behaviour at home. There are cases where parents have said ‘My child does not listen, does not communicate with us, throws tantrums when asked to study, doesn’t keep things properly in their place and moreover throws things all around and even outside the window when things don’t go his/her way’. At times the child is not afraid of his/her parents, rather the parents are afraid of their children; it is shocking to hear such things. Where is this generation heading to? Who should be blamed? – The pandemic, parents or the situation.

I try to talk to the parents, to help them and keep the parents updated as how to help the child. The activities we do in Prerana Nursery School or the events we observe are chosen so that we together with the parents can help the child grow in the right way. It’s a challenge for me and the teachers to get our little ones back on track and at the same time preserve their innocence.

Fatima Azavedo rscj

My Community experience

I went with Victoria to the Santa Cruz community for my community experience. I was very happy to go there but also a little frightened; but I am so grateful to God and the Santa Cruz community. They accepted us as community members. They are all at different ages and have different characters. But how they love and understand each other, how they forgive each other and come together. I too learnt to love, to understand, and forgive, to accept and to communicate with the other and clear matters.

Victoria and I had classes in English with Sr. Marie and read about our great St. Philippine Duchesne with Sr. Irene. Reading St. Philippine’s life inspired me to be patient and wait, to believe that failure brings success, that we should never give up hope and be ready to take risks. It left me with a strong desire for prayer and to obey in daily life. We also attended music class and gardening with Sr. Jokina and had some computer classes with Sr. Sophie who also took us around Santa Cruz and to visit our communities in Mumbai. The Sisters were so ready to teach us and shared God’s love through teaching and sharing their own experiences. I learnt through each sister to work hard, to take an interest to learn, to value punctuality....



Just before Easter I left Santa Cruz to go home for my cousin’s wedding. I was very happy to attend it because it was the first wedding in our family. I was so excited that I didn’t realize how tired I was. I took some responsibilities in the house and helped my parents and my sister who took the main responsibility. While going to the church for mass from the bride’s house we lost the way to the church which was quite in the interior; however, in spite of that everything went well. I am grateful to my formation community for this opportunity to take responsibility and realize that I can do it. I thank *God for his*

blessings too. He gave us strength and energy. We all enjoyed the event and are thankful for the prayer and love of the community.

During our stay in Santa Cruz, Victoria and I went with Sr. Sophie to Sophia Campus. A special visit to Sadhana School was planned for us and we could see how the mentally challenged children are studying different subjects and doing various activities. We remembered how Mother Barat loved all the children – the young ones, the older ones, the quiet ones, the noisy ones and cared especially for the difficult ones. I felt that each child is unique and special. I saw that they learn from each other, by looking at others and by helping each other. The teachers need to have a lot of patience. I was surprised to see all the activities that these children can do with help and guidance!

We also visited the College and the Polytechnic and met our sisters who work there. I was impressed especially by Srs. Joanna and Teresa who in spite of their age are so hard working and attentive.

In our last week in Santa Cruz, Victoria and I went with Sr. Marie to visit Mother Teresa's convent in the parish. For me it was the first time that I visited this convent and I was touched by the hospitality of the Sisters. I was also touched by one small young girl who couldn't talk but who was very happy and she expressed her happiness by kissing our hands and making us dance with her to the music that was being played for them. I was surprised to see how clean, neat and tidy the children's rooms were!

At the end of this community experience we had the opportunity of meeting the sisters of the province as they arrived for the Provincial Assembly which was held at Sophia Campus. We participated in the daily Liturgy, and during the day different programmes were arranged for us. We even presented a play – “Jesus or Judas” for the entertainment evening. We spent two more days on the Campus during which Srs. Kiran and Josephine took us on a guided tour of the Gateway of India, the Taj Hotel and the Chowpathy beach. For the newly arrived Seekers it was their first view of the sea. We all enjoyed walking along the beach. We returned to Pune on 1st of June after a very fruitful two and a half months away from Prerana.

Kumudini Tirkey

Victoria shares

In mid-March we went to the Santa Cruz community for two and half months for our community experience. I am grateful to God and the community members who welcomed us. I was touched by their acceptance and readiness to take responsibility for us, though they are of a certain age, and by the unity in community and their humility to ask advice of each other. As Madeline Sophie Barat said, for one soul I will go to the end of the world, so when I was alone too, they continued classes with me.

Sr. Marie taught English and shared on the End and Mission of the Society which I am now still trying to understand by looking at our sisters – what they



are, what they say, what they do and what they live.

I was very happy to know about St. Philippine Duchene as Sr. Irene shared her long study and deep understanding of her. Philippine had a strong desire and longing for prayer which helped her to face many difficulties throughout her life. This encouraged me immensely to grow spiritually in my daily life and inspired me to live in the present and never give hope. Whether it was English, Society reading or gardening with Sr. Jokina, I enjoyed everything and every activity in the community.

On 30th May Sr. Marie, Sr. Sophie and I went to Agashi, Vasai, for Sr. Jokina's nephew's wedding. I was very happy to get this opportunity to see a wedding celebration in the Vasai culture, so different from my own. After the Mass we went with the bridal couple to the grave of Sr. Jokina's parents and her brother who had recently passed away, and we prayed there. Then the band accompanied the



bride and groom through the village to the bridegroom's house with music and dancing. I really enjoyed sharing in the wedding celebrations in the home and family as well as in the grand reception on the open grounds.

Later after Kumudini returned, we visited the Malwani community. I was touched by our sisters' life-style. I was surprised to see our sisters adjust to so many things in the small flat: the chapel in one corner, the dining room and even a bedroom, arranged in the sitting room. When I saw the small flat I recognized the Society's option for simplicity and poverty. I found the people living just like our sisters. We visited three families, they too live in small houses but which are well-kept and tidy, always welcoming people and very happy and satisfied.

Victoria Hapadgara