

FOCUS FOR OUR FUTURE

Contemplative Intercontinental Assembly – Quito, Ecuador

“If you love and work together, you can see miracles.” SME

We met as Contemplative and Apostolic Sisters in Quito, Ecuador to participate in a historic Intercontinental Assembly. From August 23 to September 4, 2008, we wove together a network of reconciliation, compassion and solidarity in our global reality, keeping before us the spirit of St. Mary Euphrasia and our Essential Elements. Our particular focuses were: to deepen our understanding of the contemplative way of life in the Congregation and to prepare for the 2009 Congregational Chapter. As contemplative women, we wish to be a wellspring of new life and zeal flowing from the Spirit and being outpoured upon all creation.

“Breaking the Flask”

“To be faithful to this moment of grace, religious life has to repeat the gesture of the woman spoken of in the gospel of John 12 and break the flask so the perfume can pour out.” Sr. Gail Worcelo, SGM

Since our Assembly of 2003, we have “dared to make the dream of God a reality in our lives.” At this moment of grace, we desire to create a new vision using the Appreciative Process, which builds upon our strengths. We gave a unanimous response to both moving forward to establish Contemplative Council on the Congregational level and acceptance of the Government Section of the Integrated Constitutions. Our hearts have been expanded to embrace the implications of Article One in an international Apostolic Congregation.

This calls us to:

- Live out of an awareness of our Global Solidarity
- Network for the sake of mission
- Take our place in the Government structures on the Congregational level
- Open ourselves to a greater appreciation of a contemplative life within an Apostolic Congregation
- Promote, celebrate and respond to our Missionary Call

Like a special anointing of God’s Spirit we experienced a shifting of personal views, calling us to conversion. We were enlightened with a new consciousness that we are living in a Universe saturated with the Presence of God. As women religious we take a prophetic stance to be a ‘voice of the earth.’ We claim Social Justice, peace and Care of Creation as integral to our charism.

This challenges us to:

- Explore “The Story of the Universe” and consider Cosmology as the context of Theology
- Research the spirituality of St. John Eudes and St. Mary Euphrasia from a cosmological perspective
- Allow ourselves to be transformed as we discern ways to preserve and heal our earth
- Be respectful in using the resources of Mother Earth – reuse, recycle, renew
- Network with those who are committed to the care of the planet, extending compassion to all who dwell upon it
- Provide initial and on-going formation in eco-spirituality as an expression of social justice

Always finding our center in God, we can say, “It is no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me.” With Christ living in us, we make the leap into deep waters for the future, for our Mission and ourselves. “Every advance requires a loss.” “It makes no sense to cling – to not let go.”

We are open to:

- Become very clear about our identity in the Congregation
- Renew ourselves from the inside out
- Holistic formation and Leadership training for all
- Share our resources, including personnel
- Provide quality care of our elderly and infirm Sisters of the Good Shepherd move out of our comfort zones to promote new life
- Revitalize Vocation Promotion efforts
- Restructure for the sake of Mission
- ‘Cross-over’ – to move beyond borders and boundaries
- Continue our journey with the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity

There is the conviction that the anguish of the world urges us to live our fourth vow, to enhance our contemplative presence, and to extend the limitless mercy of the Good Shepherd to all those who come in contact with us.

We dare to envision (dream) for our future:

- A contemplative lifestyle that balances prayer, work, study and leisure that reflects the Essential Elements
- Flourishing vocations and new foundations
- Contemplative Sisters present in every country where our Apostolic Sisters serve
- Sisters skilled as Spiritual Directors and Retreat Guides
- Communities welcoming the laity to share prayer, icon writing, sacred art, spirituality and the wealth of our charism
- A contemplative website featuring daily Scripture quotes and reflections as well as invitations for prayer requests
- Fully functioning Contemplative Councils on Congregational and Province level
- Regional Councils for units that have a small number of Sisters of the Good Shepherd Developing new and creative forms of prayer and community life
- Fostering and promoting contemplative Lay Associates
- Networking members and prayer partners with the Good Shepherd International Justice Peace Office in New York (GSIJP)

Today we stand in unity on the threshold of another invitation – to “*break the flask so the perfume can pour out.*” Our unique experiences here and the challenges heard throughout this Assembly prompt us to move courageously into the future. “Glory be to Jesus, Master of Wisdom, whose power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine.” Mary of the Cosmos, accompany us on our journey!