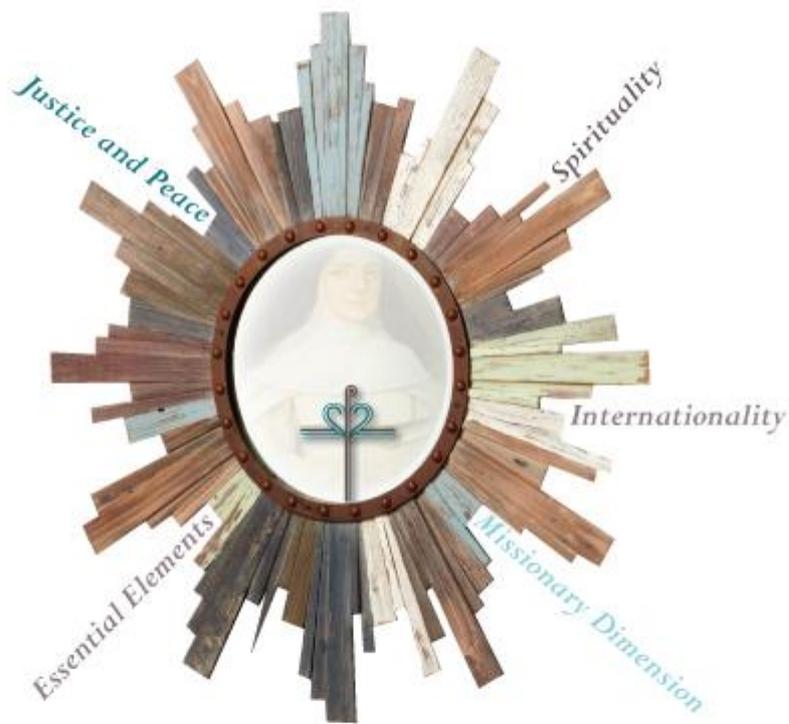


# FOCUS

## FOR OUR FUTURE



*Congregational Assembly of Contemplative Sisters  
Congregational Contemplative Leadership Team Report*

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*August 8-21, 2014*

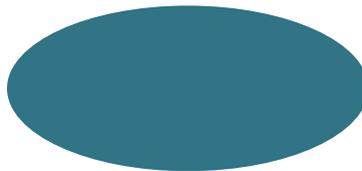
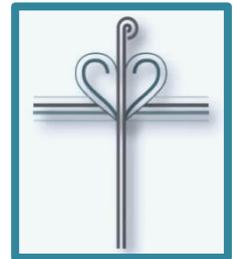


## EXPLANATION OF THE LOGO



**The mirror:** St. Mary Euphrasia modeled for us her vision of how to be contemplative in an apostolic congregation. When we look in the mirror, we see her hope for our future in our own eyes and on those of our sisters whose reflection inspires us as well.

We want to see also with the eyes of the Good Shepherd as represented in our symbol.



**Turquoise color:** Turquoise helps to open the lines of communication between the heart and the spoken word. It is a friendly and happy color representing enjoyment of life. It helps with clear thinking and decision-making.

The words: The key concepts in this document are: Essential Elements, Spirituality, Justice and Peace, Internationality. They are woven through the various topics.



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## INTRODUCTION

Dear Sisters,

As we prepare for our 2014 Contemplative Congregational Assembly, we rejoice with you in advance over the developments that have taken place within our contemplative way of life since the 2008 Assembly. We have focused on our future while living in our present moments!

We begin by thanking all of you for your participation in our many activities.

In this booklet we weave those aspects which stood out as exceptional during our work over the past six years. The Essential Elements of our life - which include Spirituality, Justice and Peace, and Internationality. We further reflect on our mandate from the document “*Focus for Our Future*” in order to find ways to deepen these elements in our lives and make them practical and concrete. Thus, we will report on:

- ✓ The Theological Reflections we participated in over the years particularly:
  - What it means to be Contemplative in an Apostolic Congregation
  - The Use of Appreciative Inquiry
  - *Break the Flask* Committee
- ✓ Our Visits
- ✓ The Sessions on Contemplative Life
- ✓ Spirituality including Committee Work and Communications
- ✓ Internationality by looking at the “missionary spirit” and the international experience of the temporary professed sisters.

We have ended each section with a question for reflection that might serve as a basis for dialogue as we prepare to gather in 2014.

Brigid      Ma. Teresa

Jude Ellen      Reina E.





## THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS AND THE USE OF APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY TO IMPLEMENT “*FOCUS FOR OUR FUTURE*” DIRECTIVES

### INTRODUCTION

During the discussion of our action plan, we, Sr. Brigid and the Contemplative Council, tried to find a creative way to implement the document “*Focus for Our Future*”, which was written at our 2008 Congregational Contemplative Assembly. We used theological reflections and the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) Process. This appreciative process has been incorporated as a reference method in our questionnaires and reflections, so that our communities could become familiar with it in their daily community life.



Sr. Janice Rushman, our facilitator for the 2008 Congregational Contemplative Assembly, gave all of the participants an introduction to the AI Process. She will also be facilitating our 2014 Assembly and will continue to develop the AI method with us.

### APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY (AI):

Sisters Brigid, Maria Teresa, Reina, along with Srimathie Peiris (Europe-BFMN), participated in the Introduction to Appreciative Inquiry Session in Amsterdam in September 2011. Sister Jude Ellen had already completed this requirement. In January 2012, the entire CLT (apostolic and contemplative) participated in Leadership Training using the Appreciative Inquiry style.



## THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS



### **First Theological Reflection to determine priorities (2010)**

Our first task as a team was to seek for creative ways to implement *“Focus for Our Future”*. We prepared a "Theological Reflection" which enabled us to better know and listen to the concerns of our communities and to decide how to continue our work. We found out that there were many similarities in the responses we received on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2010.

### ***Break the Flask Committee***

From the suggestions of our sisters, we also realized that there was a need to create a committee that would give continuity to the task that we were implementing. The *“Break the Flask”* Committee was then formed. The members are: Srs. Anita Mammottil (South West India), Agnès Baron (Europe-BFMN), Enith Pangul (Ecuador), Fe de Paz (Congo/Kenya) and Edith Justeau (Europe-BFMN).

The task of this Committee was to assist the Congregational Contemplative Council in the implementation of the document *“Focus for Our Future”*. This Committee began its work by considering the responses to the first theological reflection which pointed out, among other things, our desire to:

1. Open ourselves to a greater appreciation of contemplative life within the Congregation and in the Church by entering into a deeper relationship with God, who transforms all aspects of our lives and helps us to live out the Essential Elements. This would help us to continue to clarify our identity.
2. Promote, celebrate and respond to our missionary call by:
  - a) Strengthening and supporting our sisters who desire to respond to their missionary call by ensuring adequate preparation;
  - b) Recognizing that missionaries can bring new life to other communities that are in need;
  - c) This missionary call is our heritage from St. Mary Euphrasia.
3. Research the Spirituality of St John Eudes and St. Mary Euphrasia from the perspective of creation theology.
  - a) With our new consciousness of cosmology, we recognize a need to reread the writings of St John Eudes and St Mary Euphrasia from this point of view. This is a new concept and we wish to know how we can relate it to our spirituality, our prayer life and, in particular, to our vow of zeal;
  - b) Explore our spirituality on a deep level, so that we can be clear and pass it on to the next generation.



## **Second Theological Reflection on Contemplative Life in an Apostolic Congregation (2011)**

The second Theological Reflection focused on our identity. During the Theological Reflection, there was time to talk with the apostolic sisters on what it means to them to have contemplative sisters in the congregation. And what does it mean to us to have apostolic sisters. We considered:

- ♥ The meaning of our contemplative life in the Congregation; and
- ♥ The implications of being mystic and prophetic today.

The responses that we received deepened our understanding of living our contemplative lifestyle in our Congregation. The replies included:

- ✓ The vow of zeal opens up to other paths leading to a new consciousness that is expressed by crossing borders, networking and global solidarity;
- ✓ For all seasons of our life, liturgy is central. The Eucharist, the Hours, everything is an instrument for contemplation;
- ✓ Being mystic and prophetic for the future, means for us nurturing the inner silence in the midst of the chaos around us, being flexible and available for the sake of the mission. We need to bring Justice to those around us, those who come to us and our staff, by practicing what is right and just for ourselves.



## **Third Theological Reflection: Our Contemplative Life in an Apostolic Congregation (2012)**

Having reviewed the outcome of the second Theological Reflection, it became clear to us that we needed to deepen our understanding of Article One and what it means to be a contemplative in an apostolic Congregation. The Committee prepared another Theological Reflection on this topic. The outcome of this reflection was:

- To be mystic and prophetic in today's reality, with a better understanding of our call to live reconciliation and mercy through the apostolate of prayer for the Congregation, the Church and the world in general;
- To reaffirm our contemplative Good Shepherd vocation by creating a good environment that helps us live in depth the "essential elements", and encourages new vocations to join us and be the successors who will carry on our mission in the Church;
- To have a good understanding and deepening of Article One, in conformity with our lifestyle, in order to joyously accept all the implications of belonging to an Apostolic Congregation.

As part of the Theological Reflection, there was time for conversations with the apostolic sisters. This time together was very rich and fraternal. The following summarizes these discussions:



- There are moments when we share our experiences and when we offer our prayerful support; this encourages us to live out our vocation and gives us greater dynamism and a new vision to live our fourth vow.
- We carry out the dialogue with our apostolic sisters in a peaceful and loving atmosphere. Respect, openness, joy, mutual energy, as well as: healing, listening, sharing our spirituality, with the opportunity to always have clarification and explanation, characterize our times together. This dialogue helps us build deep relationships and strengthens our bonds.

We were very happy that all the communities responded in whole (100%) with seriousness and commitment.



### **Continued use of the Appreciative Inquiry and the Theological Reflection Models in Preparation for the 2014 Congregational Assembly of Contemplative Sisters**

In preparation for the 2014 Congregational Assembly Contemplative Sisters, the Planning Committee has sent Theological Reflections on “**Apostolic Incarnational Prayer**”, “**Enclosure of the Heart**” and “**Our Mission of Reconciliation**”. The Appreciative Inquiry process will be used to facilitate our dialogue on these topics. The feedback from these reflections will be part of the Agenda for our Assembly.

### **Reflection Questions**

We invite you to reflect upon your own experience of the call “*To be mystic and prophetic in today’s reality, with a better understanding of our call to live reconciliation and mercy through the apostolate of prayer for the Congregation, the Church and the world in general...*”

- ♥ How does our apostolate of prayer (especially Eucharist, Liturgy of the Hours and nurturing the inner silence) bring about a deepening in your ability to live reconciliation and mercy in the specific realities of daily life? Give examples.
- ♥ What are the areas of your own growth that give you hope for the future and reason to celebrate?

“*With our new consciousness of cosmology, we recognize a need to reread the writings of St. John Eudes and St. Mary Euphrasia from this point of view... how we can relate this to our spirituality, our prayer life and, in particular, to our vow of zeal*”.

- ♥ Reflecting on the creative Spirit working in you these past five years, what new awareness do you have of your own connection to a “*universe saturated with the presence of God*”?
- ♥ How does this influence your attitudes and actions?



## VISITS TO THE UNITS



Over the years, we have visited the Units. The visits were opportunities to build relationships with the sisters and Unit Leaders.

Prior to a visit, we would prepare ourselves by reviewing information about the country including culture, political and justice concerns. Some of us attended language schools in order to learn the local language. Meeting and getting to know the sisters have been very enriching experiences. As a result, we have formed deeper relationships and established communion among ourselves. We have developed a mutual understanding of different cultures.

Our visits were an opportune time to have conversations with the sisters about our way of life, our dreams and hopes for the future. Continued clarification about the meaning of Article One which was passed in 2003 - over 10 years ago - was a regular topic! We found that most of the sisters wanted to reflect about community life, since this is central to our lifestyle. Meeting together offered an occasion for co-learning and discovering how the sisters have been doing and serving in their communities and in their Council/s. Regional Councils were often a topic on the Agenda and the sisters continue to reflect on this. Moreover, our visits were an opportunity to share with the Unit Leaders about Contemplative Life and the concerns relating to it. We usually had a meeting with the Unit Contemplative Council and, if there was a Congregational Apostolic Councilor with us, we also had a gathering with the Unit Leadership Team.

Our experience of the visits to the Units has been a clarification and an affirmation of our role in leadership. We see ourselves as assisting the Congregational Leader in animating the Congregation, in strengthening the bonds of unity within the Congregation, and in providing the Unit Leaders and their Contemplative Councils with support.

In addition, each of us worked with different Circles of Unit Leaders. These meetings proved to be a forum in which we could respond to the questions of the Unit Leaders regarding our way of life and how we could offer clarification. They, in turn, helped us to understand their responsibilities more fully.

### Reflection Questions

- ♥ Reflect upon the Congregational Contemplative Councilor's visits to your Unit. What do you most value and appreciate about these visits?
- ♥ Moving into the future, what do you think would help to deepen the mutual partnership between you (Unit Leader and Contemplative Sisters of the Unit) and your Congregational Contemplative Councilor?



## SESSIONS RELATED TO CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE

### Regional Sessions on Contemplative Life in an Apostolic Congregation



Using *“Focus for Our Future”* as a guide, Sr. Brigid and the Contemplative Councillors gave Sessions on “Contemplative Life in an Apostolic Congregation”. The Contemplative Sisters and their Unit leaders participated. The sessions were conducted in Colombia, India, Costa Rica, and Chile. Topics included: the history of the Contemplative Sisters’ evolution in the governmental structure of the Congregation, and a thorough explanation of Article One. Using the Appreciative Process, community life was explored. At the conclusion, each sister made a special commitment to help strengthen community life. There was a discussion on the Essential Elements and the sisters wrote their own experience about how they personally live one of these elements. In addition, each sister brought quotes of St. Mary Euphrasia and St. John Eudes with them to the meeting. These quotes focused on how valuing creation was an integral part of their lives.

Regional Councils were studied and some Units expressed a desire to investigate the possibility of establishing one. The purpose of the Regional Council is:

- ✓ To broaden and deepen the living of the Essential Elements;
- ✓ To provide a forum for reflection, dialogue and response to documents as well as for processes planned on a congregational level, and
- ✓ To provide links among communities, especially those that are isolated.



The dialogue continues!



A special moment occurred when Sr. Hedwig Jöhl, our NGO representative in Geneva, led us through a contemplative process of understanding Justice in our lives. Her tranquil presentation resonated in our hearts. We experienced a desire to deepen our understanding of the contemplative aspect of Justice. We learned that Justice is incorporated into the very essence of what it means to be a contemplative. It influences our day from the beginning to the end. It enables us to hear the voice of God in all situations. Thus, Justice challenges our fidelity in all aspects of our contemplative life.





### **Sessions for New Leadership Teams**

Along with the Apostolic Councillors, we were present at the Sessions of New Leadership Teams held in language groups. Our task was to share about the role of the Contemplative Council, particularly about those aspects which are important for decision-making, as it relates to our specific way of life in the Congregation, and to reflect on the implications of Article One.



### **Sessions for North American Contemplative Sisters**

We also attended a meeting with the Contemplative Sisters of North America, in which they discussed restructuring and networking among themselves as they planned for their future.



### **Workshops on Contemplative Life in Our Congregation Today**

Sisters Brigid and Jude Ellen gave a workshop in two different locations in the Province of Austria/Swiss/Czech on *“Contemplative Life in our Congregation Today: Its Evolution and Development over the Years and our Vision for the Future”*.

Sisters Brigid and Reina provided the same workshop in the Sector of Congo/Kenya as part of their preparation to welcome the RIMOA Community of contemplative missionaries who had been missioned to Angola for a period of four years.



Sister Jude Ellen gave a session on the *“History of Contemplative Life”* and held a *“Question and Answer”* session with the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity at their meeting on St. Mary Euphrasia, which was held in Angers in August 2011. At the invitation of the OLC Mexican Province, she also provided input on contemplative life for the sisters there. This session was held in Mexico City in April 2011.



### **Other Sessions**

Contemplative formators joined the apostolic formators for a series of regional sessions (the first was for six weeks and the second was for four weeks). These sessions provided us with an opportunity to look more holistically at our personal lives and to prepare formation programs which meet the needs of the candidate today. Twenty-seven contemplative sisters participated in the sessions. Additionally, Sr. Teresa joined the sessions in the Philippines and Chile and Sr. Reina joined the sessions in Chile and Kenya.

## **Reflection Questions**

- ♥ Take a few moments to reflect back on the richness of these various sessions..., on the new awareness and insights you have received..., on the fresh perspectives you now have. What is the HOPE that springs forth in you moving forward into the future?



*“We learned that justice is incorporated into the very essence of what it means to be a contemplative. It influences our day from the beginning to the end. It enables us to hear the voice of God in all situations.”*

- ♥ While deepening this new understanding of Justice, how has your life been influenced at personal and/or community level? In what way do you feel changed or different?

## SPIRITUALITY



### Creation Spirituality

In *“Focus for Our Future”*, we claimed that care of creation is integral to our charism. This challenged us to explore the Story of the Universe and consider cosmology in the context of theology. During the Regional Sessions on Contemplative Life, we spent a day of reflection on this topic. At our 2014 Contemplative Congregational Assembly, we will have time to deepen our awareness during a presentation and guided discussion with Mary Teresa McCormack.



We asked the Congregational Spirituality Centre Staff in Angers and the Spirituality Committee if they were willing to focus some of their time on this topic. They had a meeting in Argentina, in which Sister Gail Worcelo gave presentations. She had been our 2008 Contemplative Congregational Assembly presenter. The Committee then prepared reflections for the Congregation.

### Contemplative Sisters working at the Spirituality Centre

Sister Yen Loc Tran (Mid-North America) worked at the Spirituality Centre in Angers. She continued her mission there until her health failed and she needed to return to her Province. She died in St Louis on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2012.

Sister María de los Ángeles Morales (Central America) was missioned to the contemplative community in the Garenne, Angers. She has been doing excellent research on our contemplative life, in the archives, at the Spirituality Centre. Because of her research, we now know the names of the sisters who went to Tripoli and how they managed while being there. She also discovered correspondence between Saint Mary Euphrasia in Angers and the sisters in Tripoli.



### Contemplative Participation at Sessions in Angers related to Spirituality

#### Journey of Enrichment

Many contemplative sisters participated in the session on History held in Angers as part of the Journey of Enrichment. It was held in July 2010. There were reflections given by Sister Odile Laugier (Europe-BFMN) regarding the history of the contemplative sisters.



## COMMITTEES

As Contemplative Sisters, we are privileged to serve on many Committees at the congregational level. In addition to the tasks of the Committee, we have a special role of keeping in mind the directives of *“Focus for Our Future”*, Article One and its implications for the work of the Committee. Additionally, we have the opportunity to clarify “what it means to be a Contemplative Sister in an apostolic Congregation”, and to make suggestions. Committee work has been a possibility for us to deepen our awareness of our internationality, expand our knowledge of the Congregation and grow in the area in which the Committee is working. We see our role as being able to communicate what we learn to the members of our communities and Units.

### **Blessed Maria Droste Committee**

Sister Sadhani Walmillage (Sri Lanka/Pakistan) is a member of the Blessed Maria Droste Spirituality Committee.

### **Congregational Assembly of Contemplative Sisters**

Sister Luz María Chacón (Central America) and the committee members, Sisters Annette Perera (Italy/Malta), Margarita Rodríguez (Mexico), M. Socorro Galvez (Philippines), and Luz Marina Bolívar (Colombo-Venezolana) prepared the Congregational Assembly of Contemplative Sisters that is being held in Ecuador.

### **Congregational Chapter Planning Committee**

Sisters Luz María Chacón (Central America) and Bridget Kanjirakattu (South West India) are members of the Congregational Chapter Planning Committee.

### **Process Planning Committee**

Sister Elena Jalop (Philippines) served on the Process Planning Committee for the Journey of Enrichment.

### **Spirituality Committee**

Sisters Raquel Toledo (Canada) and Vivienne Fernando (Ireland) are members of the Spirituality Committee.

### **CLT Committee Work**

With our Apostolic Team Members, we, the Contemplative CLT Members, serve on various Committees:

- **Chapter Planning Committee** - Sister Jude Ellen
- **Formation Committee** - Sister Teresa
- **Province Administration Manual Committee** - Sister Jude Ellen
- **Missionary Committee** - Sister Reina



## COMMUNICATIONS



### Communications

One of the recommendations from the first Theological Reflection sent to the contemplative sisters was to develop a Website devoted to contemplative life.

Sr. Edith Olaguer (New York) designed the website and is responsible for maintaining it. She is collaborating with a subcommittee of contemplative sisters to continue to refine and provide space for contemplative issues, reflections and prayer requests. She also works with Sr. Marie Françoise Mestry at the Communications Office in Rome. The Contemplative Website links with our Congregational Website. Go to: [www.buonpastoreint.org](http://www.buonpastoreint.org) and then to the Contemplative link!



### Reflection Questions

*“Turquoise helps to open the lines of communication between the heart and the spoken word. It is a friendly and happy color representing the enjoyment of life. It helps with clear thinking and decision-making.”*

- ♥ The Contemplative Sisters have invested considerable time and energy by participating in sessions and implementing resources offered by the Spirituality Centre. How have these offerings been “turquoise” to your spirit ..., for instance in opening communication between your heart and the spoken or written word..., or in bringing new joy and color to your life?
- ♥ For those who have participated in committee and/or other planning work, how do you experience greater clarity in your thinking and decision-making?
- ♥ Have you used our contemplative website? What more can we do to improve our communication?



## INTERNATIONALITY



*“Focus for Our Future”* brought us today to a greater consciousness and deeper appreciation of who we are as an International Congregation. During the five years of living out our Internationality, our hearts have expanded in embracing the call to “cross-over” beyond personal, and communal needs of the Units for the sake of the Mission. In addition to reporting on the missionaries and their international experiences, we have included in this section of the report the probationary period from the apostolic to the contemplative way of life. The reason for doing so is that all of these sisters had experiences in Units other than their Unit of origin.

As of today, we have sent missionaries to five Units. They are in Canada, Europe-BFMN, Ireland, Italy/Malta and Mid-North America. In addition, our mission for RIMOA was relocated from the Sector of Angola/Mozambique to the Sector of Congo/Kenya. Many Units have responded generously by sending missionaries to the Missions. Others have welcomed students, and/or temporary professed sisters during their international experiences, and have served as receiving Units for missionaries.

Moreover, some Units have provided transition experiences for sisters seeking to transfer from the apostolic to the contemplative way of life in the Congregation.

The Province of Portugal has made a request for a contemplative foundation. What a joy it would be to have a contemplative community in the place where Blessed Maria Droste Zu Vischering lived! Are we ready to respond to their dream?

All of these opportunities have enriched us and we have discovered our unity in diversity!

We are ever grateful to the following sisters who zealously responded to the call of Mission.

- Ireland  
Sr. Vivienne Fernando (Sr. Lanka/Pakistan)  
Sr. Regina Fernando (Sri Lanka/Pakistan)
- Angers, France  
Sr. Lilly Kunnanattu (South West India)  
Sr. Srimathie Peiris (Sri Lanka/Pakistan)  
Sr. María de los Ángeles Morales Rodas (Central America)

Missionary experience completed:

- Sr. Yen Loc Tran (Mid-North America)
- Sr. Leonor Mantuano Manzaba (Ecuador)

Several sisters have spent some time in this community for an international experience; among them are: Sr. Seraphina Park (Northeast Asia) and Sr. LeeAnn Mackeprang (Mid-North America).



This community has also been a place for transition from the apostolic to the contemplative way of life for Sr. Edith Justeau (Europe-BFMN) and Sr. Marguerite Doyle (Ireland). In addition, Sr. Henriette Misry (Egypt/Sudan) had an experience of the contemplative way of life in the community of St. Yrieix, France.

- Canada Region

Sr. Juana de la Cruz Suazo (Peru)

Sr. Raquel Toledo Puebla (Ecuador)

Sr. Mercedes Acevedo Gutiérrez (Peru)

Sr. Anabel Barahona Funes (Central America) - preparing to go to Kenya

Sr. Jacqueline Mendes (SE Latin America)

Sr. Henriette Misry (Egypt/Sudan) is completing her probationary period from the apostolic to the contemplative way of life.

- Italy/Malta

Sr. Annette Perera (Sri Lanka/Pakistan)

Missionary experience completed: Sr. Frances Ellul (Mid-North America)

- Kenya, Africa

Sr. Manel Liyanaarachchi (Sri Lanka/Pakistan)

Sr. Fe de Paz (Philippines)

Sr. Cassia Maria Cordeiro (SE Latin America)

Sr. Ae Sun Hyun (Northeast Asia)

One sister in formation: Odette Cishesa Marhegeko (Congo/Kenya)

Missionary experience completed:

Sr. Tresina Padigarakkara (South West India)

- Mid-North America

Sr. Lalani Ekanayake (Sri Lanka/Pakistan)

Sr. Magdalena Oliva (Philippines)

Sr. Elizabeth Garciano (Philippines)

Sr. Agnes Yamamoto (Japan) is completing her probationary period from the apostolic to the contemplative way of life in the Florissant community. Sister Marguerite Doyle is also in transition from the apostolic to the contemplative way of life and has spent some time in the contemplative community in Ireland, her home Province; she is now having an international experience in the Province of Mid-North America.

Sr. Rose Mary Ha (Northeast Asia) has spent time in the Florissant and Cheltenham Communities as part of her international experience.

Our temporary professed sisters or recently perpetual professed sisters have been enriched by their experience of internationality in the following countries:

Sr. Anna Maria Steinkamp (from Austria/Swiss/Czech and now in Europe-BFMN, to Sri Lanka)



Sr. LeeAnn Mackeprang (from Mid-North America to Angers)  
Sr. Maureen Johnson (from Mid-North America to Sri Lanka)  
Sr. Cristina Rodríguez de la Cruz (from Peru to Mid-North America)  
Sr. Josefa Sibelle Pereira Batinga (from SE Latin America to Ecuador)  
Sr. Jaqueline Maria Anthony Raj (from South West India to Kenya)

These are the sisters who have had an experience as of April 2014. By the time of the Congregational Assembly for Contemplative Sisters, there will be more. Let us rejoice! Please let us know if we forgot to mention any other sisters and accept our apology!

In addition, as preparation for the refounding of contemplative life in Korea (Province of Northeast Asia), the Korean contemplative sisters are spending time in other Units. The purpose of this time apart is to experience ways in which other cultures are living contemplative life today. Likewise, it has been a time to deepen their prayer lives and their understanding of contemplative life. Sister Seraphina Park is in Angers, Sr. Rose Mary Ha and Sr. Michaella Kim are continuing their experience in Mid-North America.

Sr. Theresa Song (Northeast Asia) had an experience of contemplative life in the Philippines and in Sri Lanka. She will begin her three-year probationary period in the near future.

Today, as we continue to deepen and integrate Internationality in the Congregation through networking and by living out Global Solidarity for the sake of Mission, we are challenged to become more effective through a personal and communal vision of our understanding of Internationality, Mission and their relationship with justice, compassion and prayer.

### **Reflection Question**

Within the past five years, many Contemplative Sisters have responded to a missionary call, and/or have had the opportunity for an international experience, or English language studies in another Unit. Others have received missionaries and/or have supported those who have been sent on mission.

- ♥ As you look into the mirror of our internationality and diversity, how does this experience enhance, change or deepen your appreciation of contemplative life within the Congregation and the Church?



## CONCLUSION

*I thank my God, each time I remember you,  
and when I pray for you, I pray with joy.*

Philippians 1:3-4.

It has been a joy and a privilege to serve you as the first Congregational Contemplative Council. Together we have explored the “Essential Elements” of our life. We have searched for the deeper meaning of being contemplatives in an apostolic congregation. Our interactions with you have been inspiring as well as a blessing. We can say with much appreciation that the charism of our Foundress, St Mary Euphrasia, is alive and active among our sisters. We have looked beyond our boundaries and, now, we can journey together with faith and confidence.

We thank God each time we think of you. We extend our special gratitude to the Congregational Apostolic Council for their support and for our journey together as members of the Congregational Leadership Team. We are grateful to the Unit Leaders and their Councils for their gracious welcome and collaboration. And, of course, to all our Contemplative Sisters who responded so willingly to our requests. We pray for all of you with joy!

The future waits for us and God is there calling us. What response can we give other than fidelity and love?



*“The Glory of God, the salvation of souls, this is our life.”*

St. Mary Euphrasia



**2008 CONTEMPLATIVE INTERCONTINENTAL ASSEMBLY  
QUITO, ECUADOR**

***“FOCUS FOR OUR FUTURE”***

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

St. M. Euphrasia

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 a 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 ourselves and our Mission. “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
- 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 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
- 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!

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