



Together in Mission

INTRODUCTION

Let Us Be Strengthened for Love
by the Bonds that Unite Us!

- Kathleen McCluskey, CSJ/Boston

Welcome to the second issue of Together in Mission! An initiative of the Global Coordinating Group's subgroup on Shared Mission, this publication hopes to connect and inspire Sisters of St. Joseph and Associates all around the world and to help us realize more and more deeply that we are ONE in the charism and mission we share.

Wherever we are in the world, we are part of the great gospel effort to bring about the Reign of God. Wherever we are, we participate in the special way that is inspired by our charism. We reach out to embrace all in the inclusive love of God, and we work to facilitate unity and reconciliation among dear neighbors of every kind.

In this issue, you will read about compassionate ministry in a high security prison in Corfu, Greece, creative and effective education of young Christian and Muslim women in Pakistan, and efforts to foster cooperation among those who serve the people of Concordia, Kansas, USA.

Let the stories of these women inspire us serve our dear neighbors in ways that recognize their dignity and bring them to fullness of life. Whether we are in active ministry of prayer, may our lives witness to the huge and unconditional love of God. ✨

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You are invited to study this image of our world. The countries shaded in blue indicate where our spirit and mission is alive and active through the presence of Sisters of St. Joseph and Associates who live and minister in these countries. ➤



Graphic designed by Baya Claire, CSJ/Carondelet-St. Paul

Unity and Reconciliation in Prison Ministry

- Catherine Maidiotou CSJ/Lyon, Greece

The Sisters of Saint Joseph arrived on the island of Samos on March 19, 1901. Because there were no Catholic priests available, the community left the island for Corfu in 1971. We are Greeks of the Latin rite and live out our charism of unity in a largely orthodox milieu where we make contacts through teaching French, catechesis, accompanying adolescents, CARITAS, choir work, and visiting the sick, the aged and prisoners.

Sister Marie-Reine (88 years old) devotes her energies to visiting prisoners. With the authorization of the Ministry of Justice, she penetrates this very difficult and marginal milieu of high security and draconian measures in the transfer of detainees, of permanent control and buildings enclosed by electrical barbed wire. Promiscuity is a constant trial, escapes are severely punished, and riots result in considerable damage.



Sister Marie-Reine tries to alleviate the suffering and isolation of prisoners who have no family on the island by offering them the necessities of life: clothing, shoes, phone cards, correspondence, etc.

Thanks to her, the Catholic bishop and priests are able to enter this inhuman milieu where conditions often cause protests. Isolated and even abandoned Catholics, be they Greek or foreign, need a little human warmth and reconciliation within themselves as well as with their families.

*"I was in prison
and you
visited me..."*

Limited to a small space without any chance of communication with the outside world causes one to become aggressive and hard, but the loving presence of Sister Marie-Reine and her acts of humanity and friendship bring calm and prepare the heart to forgive. From time to time the Eucharist is celebrated and the visit of a Catholic priest is welcomed with joy and gratitude.



These prisons, built in 1840 under the British, are the worst in all of Greece: they house men who have brought suffering to others and have no meaning in life. Some are condemned to a life sentence without any hope of freedom.

The Director and Staff welcome visitors who are mindful of the words of Christ: "I was in prison and you visited me" (Matt. 25/36). ✨

Brilliant Sparks light up the eyes of Pakistan Women

- Sadaf Patras CSJ/Chambéry, Pakistan

Our 2003 General Chapter option to empower women so all may have full dignity burns deep in our hearts. Our area consists of very poor Christians and wealthy Muslims. Many young Christian women work as poorly-paid domestics. Sometimes they work 24 hours without a morsel to eat. Often, they are sexually abused but maintain silence because they are in the minority.

It was a great challenge for us to motivate Christian parents and we were amazed to receive a positive response both from them and the young women.

We began St. Joseph's Sewing Center and Adult Literacy for young women - Christians and Muslims alike. Over these three years, several young women have completed their training. Now, they earn their daily bread by sewing, knitting, crochet, and embroidery. Some sewed their own wedding dresses! At the end of the program, each receives a sewing machine.

In the Adult Literacy program, we began with those who had never held a pencil. Their continued zeal and interest motivated them to read and write Urdu, our national language. Now they are able to read and write a little English as well!! Many read in Church and feel proud of themselves! Some brides sign the marriage register while the groom stamps his thumb! They also learn math, which they find very useful. The women really feel dignified and proud to move in society.

During the year, especially at festivals, we organize activities to help women live a healthy and wholesome life. Mothers feel proud to see their daughters' development and are very grateful to the CSJ family for making a difference in their lives. Muslims trust us, so they permit their daughters to attend. They comment:

"We send them because you love them and provide them with a good and safe atmosphere."

"We send them because you love them and provide them with a good and safe atmosphere." This motivates us to be even more dynamic and creative and to concretize our charism of all-inclusive love. We are very grateful to God for making us effective instruments in the lives of Christian and Muslim women. Indeed we do make a difference! We inspire them to live in peace and grow in reconciliation. ✨



UNITED STATES

'Working Lunches' Feed a Spirit of Cooperation and Collaboration

- Jean Rosemarynoski, CSJ and Sarah Jenkins – CSJ/Concordia, KS, USA

The sisters in Concordia, Kansas began with the adage “if you want to bring people together, use food.” So they offered lunch to representatives of local nonprofit groups and organizations and asked them to talk about unmet needs in Concordia, a town of 5,300 in the wheat country of north central Kansas.

The sisters combined the participants' views with available research and invited them all back for a presentation that ended with this question: Where do we go from here?

The information focused on the greatest needs in Concordia —

more mental health services, ways to reduce poverty and create jobs, and violence prevention. The sisters also discovered that people were eager to talk to each other without bureaucratic barriers — often for the first time — and to work on solutions together.

According to participants, the role of the Sisters of St. Joseph was pivotal in creating that opportunity.

“There could not be a better organization spearheading this effort,” one participant said early in the process. “You are unbiased, you are fair, you have no ulterior motives.”

“We have one ulterior motive,” Congregational President Sister Marcia Allen answered with a laugh. “We want to help make this an even better place for all of us to live.”

That first meeting led to a series of “working lunches,” involving more than 70 individuals and 35 agencies. Working groups evolved to explore solutions: proclaiming the “Concordia Year of Peace,” publishing an updated community resource guide, creating a public transportation task force, and planning for an emergency health clinic.

This ongoing process has proved educational for a city that often did not understand the convent in its midst and for the sisters who sometimes felt isolated from their closest neighbors.

“We discovered that we could not only consult, we could collaborate,” Sister Marcia said. “It allows our community (of sisters) to give back to the broader community of Concordia.”

“You are unbiased, you are fair, you have no ulterior motives”

