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>>> NEWSLETTER <<<
SOCIETY OF THE SACRED
HEART
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**NEWS FROM THE HAREGAON
COMMUNITY**

A Year of Grace: Sophie's impact on my life and Mission

To celebrate the centenary year of the canonisation of St. Madeleine Sophie, we organised a variety of spiritual, social, and educational activities at *St. Theresa Girls' High School*. These included simple, yet meaningful, acts such as performing 100 good deeds, making quiet sacrifices, collecting paper for recycling, and creating her portrait. The sisters, students, and teachers all began these activities with great enthusiasm.

One of our sixth-grade students, *Ekara*, who is partially blind, chose to sacrifice her new dress and gifted a uniform to her classmate. Her act spoke louder than any speech or celebration. In that moment, I felt that our centenary was truly lived. Her compassion reflected Madeleine Sophie's spirit of educating the heart - of seeing with love beyond limits. I felt humbled and grateful, realising that our mission is alive in our students. *Ekara* taught me that the true celebration of Madeleine Sophie's legacy is found in small, selfless acts that reveal a great heart.

Through the many activities, reflections, and acts of service, I was gently invited to pause and look inward. Sophie's life reminded me that true education and leadership begin in the heart ... with humility, courage, and trust in God.

These experiences awakened in me a renewed sense of mission. I became more conscious of my call to love generously, to educate with compassion, and to respond to the needs of the world with simplicity.

For me, this centenary was a sacred encounter. It renewed my spirit and rekindled my desire to live more simply, to serve more selflessly, and to remain rooted in the love of the Sacred Heart.

Jyoti Gajbhiv rscj



Lessons Beyond Borders

(Perspectives of Paola Niccolaion, Volunteer from Germany)

I have always believed that stepping out of one's "comfort zone" and opening oneself to new experiences is the best way to view life from a different perspective, and grow. This was one of the reasons that brought me to *St. Theresa Girls' High School* in Haregaon. I travelled all the way from Germany, where I have been teaching for more than 30 years. I was also particularly interested in observing a school dedicated solely to the education of girls, as I have always worked in institutions open to both genders.

At *St. Theresa's High School*, I found girls who were taught to believe in themselves and who were determined to seize the opportunities that a good education can offer. I was deeply impressed. This trust in education is something that, sadly, some of my students in Germany have lost.

Another difference that gave me much to reflect upon was the absence of cellular phones on the school premises. In Germany, young people are increasingly becoming addicted to such devices. They delegate learning – *and even thinking itself* – to them, while at the same time losing their ability to socialise with other human beings. At *St. Theresa's*, I found students who truly value the time they share with one another.



Indeed, another reason that brought me to Haregaon was my desire to experience community life. At a time when the terrible political situation in the world casts a dark shadow over so many lives, mine included, depriving me of hope for justice and a better future, living together with the sisters at Haregaon has shown me the possibility of an alternative. There are still people who remain unaffected by greed and who stand in solidarity with one another. Their selflessness and commitment to others have restored my trust in human nature and renewed my sense of purpose.

All of this is something I will carry back with me to Germany, and I am deeply thankful for it.

(Paola Niccolaion, a Volunteer from Germany)

My First Survey with Teachers and Nursery Children

On February 21st, 2026, we visited a village called *Undirgaon*. My first experience of conducting a children's survey with teachers in the village was both surprising and full of learning. It was surprising because I had never heard of, or experienced, anything like this before. For the first time, I went from house to house with the teachers, to talk to parents about enrolling their children in school. The teachers explained very gently and patiently about the school fees and classroom activities, using pamphlets that displayed pictures of previous events. I was very happy to see that some parents were kind and listened carefully. They showed genuine interest in their children's future and asked questions about the school and the fees. Some even submitted their child's name and phone number, expressing interest in enrolling their children in our school.

However, I was also saddened by the difficulties many families face. Some parents explained that both mother and father go to work either in the fields or other jobs, leaving no one at home to take the child to school, bring them back, or care for them while they are away. This made it hard for them to send their children, even though they wanted to. I realised that their problem was not a lack of interest, but a lack of support and time. This experience revealed the realities of village life and helped me understand that every family faces different struggles.

Working for one and a half months with *Nursery* and *Balwadi* children has been a joyful and eye-opening experience. Every day brings new discoveries - not just for the children, but for me as well. One of my biggest realisations from this time is how curious children naturally are, at this early stage, to learn through different activities.

Another very important learning: *Early Childhood Education* is not just about teaching numbers and letters, but about nurturing the whole child - socially, emotionally, physically, and intellectually.

Overall, this experience has been enriching and meaningful. It helped me understand the importance of early childhood education and the vital role teachers play in shaping young minds. Going to the village and meeting people is not only about education - it is also about building relationships.

Victoria Hadapgada rscj

Celebrating the Birthday of St. Madeleine Sophie

As we were in the centenary year of the canonisation of St. Madeleine Sophie, the school staff decided to celebrate her birthday in a special way. Every year, we normally present a drama on her life, but this time the teachers and children prepared it with greater diligence. They added background songs and music, which made the story more vivid and alive.

The play beautifully depicted little Sophie playing in the vineyard, her conversations with her elder brother Louis, her moments of helping her mother and father, her consecration before the picture of Mother Mary

and Jesus, and finally her peaceful death. The entire life story was presented within half an hour. It was mesmerising to witness such wonderful acting by our children.

After the drama, we inaugurated the *Anand Mela*, a celebratory festival of stalls, for which each class had prepared sweets, food, snacks, and games. Some teachers were appointed to sell tickets for buying food items or participating in games. My class, 7B, decided to serve three items: *Misal Pav*, *Pasta*, and *Jeera Water*. I was amazed to see the students take responsibility—some were calling out to attract customers to our stall, some were collecting tickets, and others were serving snacks. Parents joined in too, and the boys' school as well as the junior college also participated in the celebration. A fun-day for everyone!



What touched me most was to witness the spirit of the Society, clearly visible in all the activities - the drama, the funfair to raise funds, the participation of teachers and students, the sense of belonging, and the joyful atmosphere across the school campus. Truly, *A Birthday Celebration worthy of our Holy Mother!*

Albina Guria rscj

“Shaping Lives, Building Futures:”

The Spirit of Sacred Heart Education

St. Theresa Girls' High School, Haregaon, has always been more than just an institution - it is a place where gradual changes are shaping lives for the better. Since its humble beginnings in 1961, the school has steadily grown into a *Centre of Education and Empowerment*. The addition of a modern gym and a basketball court have brought new energy to the campus, encouraging students to embrace fitness, teamwork, and discipline alongside their studies.

The celebration of the centenary year of St. Madeleine Sophie Barat was a blessing that renewed the spirit of the community. Her words - “*For the sake of one child, I would go to the ends of the world*” - continue to resonate deeply within the school. They are more than just words; they are a guiding light, a source of hope,

and a reminder of the mission that drives the institution forward. This spirit of selfless dedication inspires teachers, students, and the entire school team to embrace progress with courage and compassion.

For me, being on this campus is a precious privilege. I see myself changing for the better each day - becoming more disciplined, more confident, and more aware of my potential. The environment here nurtures growth not only in academics but also in character and spirit.

Step by step, *St. Theresa Girls' High School* is proving that education is about more than books and exams. It is about shaping lives, building futures, and inspiring each student to become the best version of herself. The gradual changes taking place here are building a brighter tomorrow.



This year has been especially blessed as we celebrate the 100th anniversary of St. Madeleine Sophie Barat's canonisation. Through a government project, and thanks to the

dedicated efforts of *Mr. Lawrence Balraj*, our Sports Master, we received the wonderful gift of an open gym and volleyball court.

The presence of St. Madeleine Sophie is felt strongly on our campus, especially after the challenges of the post-COVID years. Where once we had only 80 to 90 boarders, this year we are grateful to welcome more than 100 boarders - a sign of renewed growth and vitality within our campus.

Anita Nazareth rscj

Living the Call: **Reflections on My Mission in India** *(Sr. Netris, from Indonesia)*

My visit to the Haregaon community on January 25th, when, *(accompanied by Sr. Anita, I enjoyed my journey on an Indian train)*, and, thereafter, to the Bhokar community on February 10th, have become a deeply grace-filled experience on my vocational journey. At every step, I felt God's presence very clearly.

In Haregaon, I was warmly welcomed by Sisters Jyoti, Shalini, Albina, Anita, and Victoria. Life in the community taught me the meaning of being present for one another through support, communication, and sincere love. I witnessed how the sisters serve wholeheartedly in the school, the boarding house, and the church. Meeting Sr. Shalini, a senior sister, touched my heart deeply. From her life and experiences, I learned that fidelity in vocation is built on a love that is continually renewed in God.

The *Republic Day* celebration on January 26th, at *St Theresa Girls' High School* was a meaningful experience. I saw how education goes beyond knowledge; it shapes character, nurtures love for one's country, and cultivates gratitude for one's identity. My ministry in the *Nursery School* brought me joy. Even though I did not understand Marathi, the smiles and laughter became a language of love that connected us.

I am also grateful for the time spent with children in the boarding. Sometimes, I joined them in gardening activities, and every day at 5:30pm, I taught traditional Indonesian dance to the fifth-grade children. Through these moments together, I was happy to share culture and build friendship. These simple experiences reminded me that God is present in the small moments lived with love and sincerity.

Visiting '*Christ the King*' Church, *Velankanni Mata, Ghogargaon*, with Sr. Jyoti and Miss Paola was a profound spiritual experience. At this pilgrimage site, I entrusted my entire journey and vocation to God, praying that my heart would be strengthened in fidelity.

The journey continued to Bhokar, where I witnessed a deeply moving social ministry. Together with Sr. Prisca, Sr. Agnes, and Miss Rita, I observed the sisters and staff faithfully accompanying children from families of sugarcane workers. Every day, from 3.00–5.00pm, children who had helped their parents in the fields all day, attended small classes organised by the sisters. In these simple spaces, I saw hope growing.

In addition to classes for children of sugarcane workers, there were regular classes and sewing courses for women as part of their *empowerment (women's development)*. I also had the opportunity to join Sr. Prisca in the afternoon, when she visited peoples' homes. From these experiences, I learned that ministry is not only about teaching, but also about listening, encouraging, and building relationships with care and attention.



Vinsensia G. Netris rscj, INS