

SOCIETY OF THE SACRED HEART

PROVINCE OF INDIA

NEWSLETTER



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NEWSLETTER FROM THE COLLEGE COMMUNITY

There is More That I Can Become

Cancer was for me a spiritual gift and an enjoyable journey. I used seven steps to heal myself - Acceptance, Outside Helps, the Treasure Trove Within, Tools from Outside, Tools Within that Heal, Finances and Integration. On 25th April 2019, I was declared a cancer survivor. I am a workaholic by temperament. Soon my *old self* began hounding me; *Get back to normal life in the fast mode*. However, my body was not co-operating with my galloping mind. I struggled, ranted and raved. I finally went to the doctor. His answer was, *Be patient. Your body needs time to recover*. I sat myself down and pondered. Wasn't my 7th step on Integration all about slowing down, changing my lifestyle and being grateful to God? How quickly one forgets!

Life is to be celebrated. Graced with new life, God's mission for me is to be an ambassador of hope and well being. *I wish you well and not woe*, says God in Jeremiah. Slowly I realized that I have to let God be God in my life. What's more! I don't have to earn God. I have to grow into the consciousness that God is already within me and in each of us. I became conscious that I have to be obedient to the will of God. Obedience which comes from Latin means *Listen*. It has spiritual dimensions and is the launch pad of personal growth and public accountability.

I slowly learned that it's all right for me not to know everything. Instead, I can depend on the insights of others to carry me through life and at the same time I can also try to carry them through life as well. By being willing to learn from the experiences of others, I came to respect the value of those whose insights stretch, prove and extend my own. In the end, as a result, I am smarter and more effective than I could ever be alone. It frees me to experiment with new ways of thinking and doing things newly myself.

I also learned that society profits from the power of patience. I can't rush life. The ancients laid out another way to go through life, equally effective, and certainly more happily. They believed in the policy of *Endure, Hang on, and don't give up*. What is meant to happen will happen when the fullness of time comes and when one is ready. It is a simple lesson, but I know it will change all of life, if I allow it. There is something that must change in me first. I slowly began to comprehend that life is whittled one sliver at a time. I discovered that success lies in learning to stay at a thing so that generations to come are not left to begin again what I failed to pursue with patience. Philippine taught me to inscribe the motto of the snail on my heart or in life-changing challenges to pray, *If not for me, then because of me*.

Truth made me new. Honesty made me free. Self revelation liberated me from the pitiful posturing that turned me inside out. It was humility like Philippine that enabled me to be my true self and at my best, to start to live newly again. The opportunity to be content with life is one of life's greatest gifts. I am content. I can simply be who I am and where I am-nothing more, nothing less! Then all the agitation drains away. I'm not waiting for anything, except more life to learn from and give to, and be thankful for. This helps me to say with great good will and certain faith, ***THERE IS MORE THAT I CAN BECOME.***

I slipped and fell on 20th September 2019; fractured my right hand; was operated on 23rd Sept. Because of my cancer edema a closed surgery was done. On 1st October a new lighter cast was put. I had to go to Patna for the FOIM meeting and then to Torpa. I was very diffident to travel alone by train to Patna for two nights and one day. But the Lord said to me, "Go I am sending you." My doctor and my brother Bryan too encouraged me to go. I reflected, "There is more that I can become." I finally decided to take up the challenge. I suddenly experienced extra ordinary power within. Relying on God's power alone, I will be embarking on this journey. I know God will sustain me with his presence and power. This experience of being handicapped will help me to become more humble and depend totally on God. Pray the same for me dear sisters.

Mudita Sodder rscj

Relationships – the Sacredness and the Mystery:

Connecting with people that are not necessarily close friends.

When I heard that Sr. Elizabeth Paulose had expired, I felt I wanted to go for the funeral but I could not face that journey to Pune the next morning, due to sheer exhaustion. By one o'clock in the morning, I woke up and knew I would regret it if I did not go. In Elizabeth I touched 'goodness' in a tangible way. Some relationships cannot be explained!

For the past year in the Nursery School a small group of mothers, a grandmother and I sit together for over two hours, twice a week from 4pm – 6pm, waiting for these special classes to get over.

It was only when the grandmother was suddenly hospitalized with a brain clot that I realized we had bonded as a group. Her absence in the group mattered much to us. In my morning prayer, I found myself reflecting on human relationships. I realized that reminiscing together on our life experiences can connect us even to acquaintances. I also feel reminiscing about the past in a positive way is therapeutic, and can help us feel better about the present and hopeful about the future. In communities, we have already begun sharing our life stories which will result in greater connectedness and the sense of 'Cor Unum' which every rscj aspires to.

Charlotte Bastion rscj

The Experience of God Existence at My Desk

While I was sitting at my desk, the question came to my mind - where does God live? Only in living things or also in the non-living? I remember I have read and heard that God is in everything. Since I came to work in Sophia College as the Science Warden I have experienced strongly that God is not only in living creatures but in everything. My desk is not a living thing but it has made me aware of the power it holds, the essence of Godliness it has. And God has taught me so much through my

desk. It has kept alive the spirit of Sr. Mary Mathew who was the last warden here and who showed the staff and students the love of the Sacred Heart. She blessed each one she met with her simple love and simple deeds. Many times, as I sat there, I thought I don't have any work here, but my desk made me aware of my responsibility and taught me that my presence itself is my work.

Many staff and students come to me to talk or to ask some question. Sometimes they are gentle and sometimes they speak with anger or with anxiety. My desk has taught me that, even though I may get hurt, I have to be kind and loving. I felt the device I was given at the time of my final vows was true in my life: "Pierced by the heart of Jesus to love." Even if I am humiliated or hurt, I have to listen to them and love them. It is not always easy but my desk (I mean my responsibility) and the spirit of the place push me to be more human and to go beyond my feelings. When I listen to staff and students it makes me more human as I learn how to be one with them in their joy and pain. Sometimes when I tell the girls about rules, they get angry but my desk reminds me again that God lives in them and I have to be kind and loving to them. When I meet staff on the way to work, as I go past every department, I say good morning and smile at them to make them feel they are precious to us and to God.

My work gives me a wonderful opportunity to spread this message. It is my desk, which carries within it the RSCJ spirit; that inspires me. My desk as you see is a wooden, non-living thing, but it has become for me a holy place because of the spirit it holds. People teach us by their words and action but my desk has taught me by its presence and the memories imprinted in this place. I learn through my experience that non-living things also carry in them the message of God, the existence of God. This is what my desk made me realize: work is not only doing physical work but also keeping alive the spirit of our Society. My desk has made me aware and reminds me of the work that St. Madeleine Sophie entrusted to us so that we may become true RSCJ. It calls me to continue to keep alive Sacred Heart spirituality wherever I may be.

Josephine Pereira rscj

Asian Professed Young Meeting in Sydney

From 2nd August 2019 to 9th August 2019 I attended the Asian Professed Young meeting in Sydney. We were altogether 11 professed Young from the ASIANZ region: 8 from the KOC province, 1 Filipina, 1 Japanese and myself. I was meeting these RSCJs after about 10 years since we had last met in India for a PTV meeting in 2009. It was a happy reunion. All of us are professed now.

The Australian province was very generous in their hospitality. We stayed at a Spirituality Centre. The whole program was very well planned and organized. We were warmly welcomed by Sr. Lynette and her council, Srs. Diana Hayes and Kathleen Muirhead. Srs. Lynette Toohey and Diana Hayes stayed with us right through the program.

The eight-day program included: 'Weaving the RSCJ dream across the cultures – challenge and blessing' by Geraldine Kearney SGS for the first two days. Sr. Lynette then took us for 'Accompaniment – Sharing the journey' on the third day. We then had the joy of having Jane Chivers, a lay person, who conducted sessions on 'Relational Leadership' with us. Jane's sessions included a lot of interactive activities and sharing which we all enjoyed.

The following day we had a break. Sr. Esmey and Ms Deasy Hartanto, the candidate – who is an Indonesian – accompanied us to Sydney Harbour. We also visited Manly Beach and, later in the afternoon, we were taken to Rosebay School and Claremont Cottage community. We had an amazing tour of the school and its premises, guided by Mr. John Mooney. I could actually feel the RSCJ essence all around me, even though there are no RSCJs teaching in the school now. The chapel is very beautiful; it reminded me of the Villa Lante chapel in Rome. The peak moment of this visit was at sunset when we went down to the burial ground where most of the RSCJs from the Australian province are buried. As the beautiful sun was setting on the picturesque background of Sydney Harbour we all sang ‘Ubi Caritas’ together and prayed to our Sisters who have gone before us. It was a very moving experience for me.

After the tour of the school, we joined a small group of elderly RSCJs who had come very specially to meet us from the ‘elder care homes’ where they reside. It was a very heart-warming experience to see these RSCJs, most of whom are wheelchair-bound. They were all very excited and eager to meet us, were lively and curious as ever to know as much as possible about our home provinces. Some of them recalled some RSCJs like Srs. Marie, Gai, Ambuja, Joanna, Celine etc., and enthusiastically enquired about them. Srs. Marie, Esmey, Nancy, Elizabeth Snedden, Joan, are some RSCJs whom I met that day. For me it was a happy time but it was also a moment when I became aware of the reality of the Australian Province. Their province is actually an aged province. I felt happy to realize that we are still a younger province, that we have lots of ministries and that our people still need us. The reality of the mission in Australia is very different from that of ours. On our return back to the Centre, I spent time in silence just taking in the experiences of the day. It was indeed an enriching day.

The next day we had Sr. Elizabeth Snedden. She shared her expertise on community life with us. She had done her doctorate not very long ago on community life. In spite of being under treatment for cancer, she spent the whole day with us, making us aware of the importance of affirming each other in our daily life in community.

The last day of sessions dawned and we were introduced to Ms. Genelle Stock, who has been working for the province for the past 12 years. She is the only lay person who is on the team of the Dream-catchers. She shared with us her experience of working on the team and how this process of dreaming is leading us on to something unknown and yet necessary in present times.

Sr. Anne Corry, who also arrived the night before, shared with us the experience of the JPIC meeting in Manila.

In the evening, the evaluation process helped us to internalize all that we had lived through in the past eight days. Each one of us was filled with deep gratitude for all the blessings and the graces received during our stay.

I am deeply grateful to Sr. Anila for giving me this opportunity to meet once again our Asian RSCJs and have this renewal experience of being a part of international society.

Rajani Khandagale rscj

A Unique Exchange Programme

This year our Science students were privileged to participate in a very unusual exchange programme with students from Nagaland. We were approached by an NGO (Indian National Fellowship Centre) who organises this kind of an exchange on an annual basis. The Solidarity Students Exchange Programme (SSEP) is an exchange programme between colleges in Nagaland and Mumbai designed especially for girls. The program envisages bringing together the youth of the country by giving them a flavour of various cultures and diversity. It is an educational-cum-cultural exposure trip.

SSEP 2019 involved Kohima Science College, Nagaland & Sophia College as partners. In the first leg Kohima Science College (supported by Dr. K & T Kreditsu Foundation) sent a team of eight female students to Mumbai, 8th to 15th September 2019. The second leg will have a similar team from the Science departments of Sophia College going to Nagaland in Jan/Feb 2020.

The entire programme was fuelled by the enthusiasm of the staff and students. The girls from Kohima College were taken around our college, especially the laboratories, sat in on some of our classes and got to know their fellow students, especially those shortlisted to go to Nagaland in early 2020. They presented a cultural programme to introduce us to the Naga culture. They also got a taste of our Mumbai culture through the excitement that is Kaleidoscope during the week they were with us! But that was not all: they visited the TIFR and the Nehru Science Centre and Planetarium. They also had a day at the Keshav Srishti Centre (nature trail, greenhouse, vermiculture, nectar garden, gaushala, biogas plant, organic vegetable garden) and the Global Vipassana Pagoda – Buddhist meditation centre. While travelling out to Malad and back for this experience, they also got a feel of our special Mumbai brand of the Ganesha festival: pandals, murthis, processions, band-baajas, traffic jams et al! Then there were visits to the museums (including Mani Bhavan), a Mumbai Darshan tour, time for shopping/window-shopping. One very important activity, which made for real bonding, involved the Nagaland students being taken in small groups to the homes of some of our girls for a meal.

I think our guests had a wonderful time and the connections forged during this intense week obviously went deep – there were floods of tears when it was time to say goodbye. Our girls are looking forward to visiting Kohima Science College in February, and to renewing the friendships that have been launched. Perhaps the most important learning for both groups is discovering that with all the differences of culture and food and lifestyle, we are all Indians, we are all people who can relate to each other. May there be many more such programmes that bring us together as one, to resist all efforts to divide us into oppositional groups.

Ananda Amritmahal rscj