



# GLANCE

Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity  
Generalate – Rome, Italy

Volume 2017 #1

April, 2017

*We are sensitive to God's ongoing revelation  
which comes to us in the Gospel and unfolds itself in all living beings  
and elements of nature, in the signs of the times,  
and in what the people of God expect of us in today's world. GC#19*

What needs are being responded to by your province/community/mission at this time?

## HOLY NAME PROVINCE

Stella Niagara, New York

Holy Name Province has responded in many ways to the needs of the people over the course of its long history and we have shared some of those ways in previous GLANCE articles. The sisters and those with whom we partner in mission continually seek to read the signs of the times and to determine just what the people of God expect of us as we move forward. Often the role and response of a particular ministry evolves in response to changing needs and expectations. This has been very true of the Center of Renewal Retreat and Conference Center at Stella Niagara (COR).

COR first opened in 1974 in what had been built in 1966 as a novitiate building. It started in response to the need for renewal in the Church in the Buffalo/Niagara area and was dedicated to spiritual renewal for priests, sisters, and laity. From its earliest days, the Center fostered an ecumenical thrust in its ministry and the team members included sisters and priests. Over time the COR staff grew and developed and provided their own programs, as well as offering individual spiritual direction when requested. By 1997, in response to changing times and needs, it was decided to change the character of the Center to one that solely offered affordable hospitality to a wide variety of groups and individuals. Staffing changed to reflect this new reality and lay directors and clerical staff were hired to respond to the needs of the various groups which rented the facility.



In the ensuing years, the Center has provided a warm and welcoming environment to a wide variety of groups including churches, schools, craft clubs, professionals, community organizations, family reunions, etc. With the close of other retreat centers in the Western New York area, COR finds itself once again evolving to respond to the needs of today's world. A new programming

committee comprised of board members, sisters, and interested laity is working to bring in nationally known spiritual presenters, to provide day, evening, and weekend programs: such as Advent and Ash Wednesday retreats, S. Karen Allen's series on *Landato Si'* and S. Gertrude Lacki's Pysanky Egg

Decorating Contemplative Weekends, and other directed and guided retreats. Outside groups include: the internationally known “Road Scholar” program, our own province-sponsored Women’s Respite Program, and groups which used to meet in other facilities finding a home at COR. Thus, the Center of Renewal, a sponsored ministry of Holy Name Province, continually strives to be “a joyful sign of peace” in today’s world.

S. Mary Serbacki

## **SACRED HEART OF JESUS PROVINCE** **São Leopoldo, Brazil**

Feet on the ground and eyes fixed on Jesus!!!

We are daughters of Mother Magdalene and we live in diverse realities in Brazil. Our province covers four specific regions – South, Southeast, Northeast and North - with different needs and challenges which require concrete answers. In this diversity, the people of God expect from us, Franciscan Sisters, above all, attitudes of faith, hope, mercy and love. Trust in the Good and Provident God, who hears the cry of his people and acts in history, is the message that our reality longs for most.

In the area of education, we seek to carry out a teaching that leads the person to be independent, free and responsible, developing the Franciscan principles and values that lead to full human development. Many of our Sisters are in mission areas, in realities suffering by drought, disrespect for rights, negligence of authorities, mistreatment and violence. In these regions, we seek to be a presence of



hope by word and action in the defense of rights. The great projects that threaten life challenge the Sisters to struggle with the people in defense of life and dignity for all. In the area of health, in our hospital we serve all people with fraternal love, especially the most fragile. We also work in alternative health care with natural resources through more accessible methods.



In our diversity, we are especially marked by unity in the mission through the prayerful hands of many older Sisters. With a missionary heart, they keep alive the flame of spirituality and communion with the mission of Jesus.

"The manifold grace of God" (1Pt 4,10) present in the life and mission of each Sister, reveals itself in the day-to-day living of fraternity together with sisters and co-workers in schools, in the hospital, in the Lar Santa Elisabeth, in the Pensionato São José, in the Franciscan Center, at Monte Alverne and in the inserted communities. So, every hug, gesture of caring and care of those who come to us or whom we meet, every word of motivation and hope is a way to announce the presence of God in our life and in all Creation.

S. Glenda Sábio Garcia, S. Fátima Lessa Ribas, S. Maria Celina Torres

## **SAINT FRANCIS PROVINCE**

### **Redwood City, California**

In St. Francis Province, one Associate group in the San Francisco Bay Area, a group of both Associates and Sisters, has been struggling with “God’s ongoing revelation...in the signs of the times, and in what the people of God expect of us in today’s world.” Since the general election in the fall of 2016, we continue to confront issues of immigration and racism as we have never had to do in the past. We have studied and prayed together to know “what is ours to do” for our immigrant brothers and sisters during these critical times in our country.

We realize that here in California many immigrants are living in fear. As the federal government continues to arrest men, women and children who do not have official citizenship, we see that families are being separated every day and children are afraid to leave their parents to go to school—fearing that their parents will not be there when they return. We feel helpless, but have decided that we must do something! And right now, we are searching for the way in which we can respond as a group to the needs of these parents and children. An immigration rights attorney spoke to us and was able to give us good information on how to help immigrants know their rights when Immigration Control comes to their homes. As a follow-up to that, some of our members participated in “Rapid Response” training workshops, wherein they are trained by a legal team to become “a legal observer and moral witness” during ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) operations.

There are many other issues involved in the immigrant crisis in our country right now. As undocumented immigrants face deportation, they are faced with issues of who will care for their children and what will happen to their bank accounts. We are looking at the possibility of becoming a “safe bank”—holding their money in a special account which would allow us to release the money to them back in their own countries. We ask for prayer as we continue to discern the wisdom and the way to respond to what is “ours to do” at this time!

S. Ellen McCabe

## **MOST HOLY TRINITY PROVINCE**

### **Semarang, Indonesia**

"We become a sign of the joy of peace in the life accord of diversity "



While I wrote this article, the King of Saudi Arabia, Abulazis Salman bin Al-Saud, is visiting in Indonesia for ten days (March 2 - 12, 2017). He with 1,500 Arabians spent time for vacation in Bali for one week. King Salman shared that he felt so much tolerance in an aura of peace, despite the differences in Indonesia, despite the fact that Indonesia is 95% Muslim and 5% other religions, composed of five religions (Christian, Catholic, Hindu, Buddhist and Kong Hu Chu). It was amazing because outside of the formal meetings, he was scheduled to meet with thirty-eight religious leaders in Indonesia: Islam Muhammadiyah, Islam NU, Christian, Catholic, Buddhist, Hindu and Confucian.



King Salman's presence as the leader of Saudi Arabia in Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia, came at a very appropriate time. Why? It was very important because in Jakarta, there is an ongoing campaign for the election of governor. One of the candidates is a Christian who is very revolutionary, known as Ahok. His work as the Governor of Jakarta led to various significant changes; he loved the people and dedicated his whole life only to thinking of the welfare of society, especially those who are poor. There will be major

problems if a candidate emerges from one of the other minority religions in Indonesia because this will lead to intolerance, threatening the unity and harmony of the Indonesia Republic.

Most Holy Trinity Province is in a country made up of thousands of islands, with sisters having many differences in language, ethnicity, culture, educational background, relationships and behavior. This situation demands of each of the sisters to be very skilled in building true fraternity which is part of the OSF spirituality. It is our duty to preserve the integrity and authenticity of OSF sisters, aware that each Sister has the basics of our calling in grace and love of God without limit. "He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. (Phil. 2: 8) Like Christ, we seek to carry out the will of the Father. We are sensitive to God's ongoing revelation which comes to us in the Gospel and unfolds itself in all living beings and elements of nature, in the signs of the times, and in what the people of God expect of us in today's world."(GC # 4) So, let us be faithful and listen to the revelation of God through the gospel which we concretely encounter through life events and signs -signs of the times... Sensitive to the see the signs and skilled in dealing with every sign - signs of the times.

## **CHRIST THE KING PROVINCE**

### **Lüdinghausen, Germany**

Strengthen your brothers and sisters. Our province through its members continues helping in different needs as we told you in other editions of GLANCE. Today I want to speak of a special need that shows up very clearly in our days. With around 20,000 religious sisters and brothers in Germany, we see around 1,000 of them dying each year. Most of our brothers and sisters are old – and some communities are too old to take care for themselves. More and more we see sisters (and sometimes brothers) of one congregation helping as leaders in other congregations or monasteries. This is true for local ministers, abbots, provincial ministers and general ministers. Sometimes those who need most help are most unwilling or unable to see their need and to accept help. This causes human and spiritual, financial and administrative crises, sometimes real tragedies.

Some communities are led astray with thoughts that increase problems instead of reducing them: They "invite" sisters from other countries with more vocations. This sometimes is more like "buying" sisters without giving them the necessary conditions to continue their personal religious life according to their culture. Others accept novices whom they can no longer give an appropriate formation – and sometimes accept people who are too weak or even too sick to live religious life in such a challenging time. Some simply get stubborn forgetting their vow of obedience and cause scandal in the church and to the church.

The ministers of our province have been very farsighted during the last decades. So, there are different moments where we can help other congregations how to deal with some of these problems. We welcome sisters of other congregations to talk about the solutions we found, about our good ideas – and about what did not work. This is true for our house manager who is a lay woman. It is true for

houses we built in new styles, for administrative strategies we found and for other areas of religious life in our actual situation.

We invest quite a bit of energy to engage in networking. To talk only of myself I am on the board of the Leadership Conference of Religious in Germany which represents both, men and women religious. In this Conference, we try to help single communities, we try to be in contact with church authorities to sensitize bishops and their (big) administration staff for the needs of communities, we do networking among the orders. For eight years, I was a consultant in the Committee for Pastoral and Consecrated Vocations of the National Bishops Conference where I could do the same things in another context. We as province help with money and “women power” where we can support the Franciscan family and other religious in courageous steps towards more intercongregational ministry, living, public relations, networking.

I am grateful to be member of a province that never closed her eyes to all these challenges and always took courageous steps to go forward. And I am grateful that sometimes my knowledge in psychology is helpful in this area: Counseling, therapy and spiritual direction for younger religious who sometimes feel burdened by their situation; workshops and advanced training for leaders and formators; lectures for sisters and brothers to strengthen them in their capacity to mature. This is my very personal way to meet one of the needs I see in my country. I do not have a “Marshall Plan,” (a great recovery plan); I do a bit here and a bit there, as the Spirit moves me. I do not know where it may lead me and us. But I feel that this “strengthening of my brothers and sisters” is part of my vocation and that this is not my choice but HIS work.

S. Katharina Kluitmann

## MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS PROVINCE Orlik, Poland

Sensitive to the revelation of God that comes to us in the Gospel,  
we try to be in the places where people need us through the actions and prayers.

Continued support for the families in Syria within the framework of the program, Family to Family; prayer for missionaries "adopted" for the time of Lent; helping an elderly lady with her granddaughter who needed a shelter for a few days; adoption of an unborn child: these are just some of the actions we undertook in the month of March.

Inspired by the spirit of *lectio divina*, we share the beauty of the Gospel with the people who come to our chapel to pray and to celebrate the Mass. Before Sunday Masses through a series of short videos on the Sunday Gospel, we help the believers to know God in the Bible. The weekly introduction to the



Liturgy of the Word gathers many people, giving them a chance for a deeper reading of the Gospel and encounter with the living Jesus.

An important initiative to which we invited other people was an Extreme Way of the Cross from Dziemiany to Wiele, which was held for the second time. The idea of this Way of the Cross is to walk at night for at least 40 km (about 25 miles), corresponding to the 40 days of Lent, through a deserted region in complete silence. From Orlik, we had to walk 41 km and it took at least 9 hours. This event gathered almost two thousand participants. Darkness, silence, loneliness, often pain and weakness allowed many people to experience God. Miracles and conversions took place that night.

*“One time, I sat on the grass in order to meditate alone and be in silence for another station of the Way of the Cross, and when I wanted to stand up to continue, I just could not get up. I struggled like a beetle tipped on its back. My muscles refused to obey me. Someone gave me a hand and put me in a vertical position. Today I already know that I really needed the experience of the Extreme Way of the Cross. It was a decisive moment in my life. I feel happier and I see my life in a different way. I also discovered my limitations and I am already working on them ... This experience of God is not enough for me. Every day I want God more and more,” wrote one of the participants.*

And here is a short testimony of one of our sisters: *“I ended up with worn-out joints and blisters but I am happy and grateful to God for giving me strength on the road, which was difficult, but incredibly beautiful. This is not easy to describe. One needs to experience it”.*

New forms of evangelization and new forms of spirituality are also a response to the needs of the contemporary world. Evangelizing others, we ourselves are evangelized.

S. Faustiana Kulas, novice

## SACRED HEART PROVINCE Denver, Colorado

### Earthcare

Several years ago, at an annual province meeting in Denver, the Sisters discerned that they would labor for the Care of the Earth. We saw climate change and its effects as the critical issue for all creation. A core group called the Earthcare Committee offered to give direction to the province’s efforts.

Weekly Earthcare Notes: The Earthcare Committee wrote “Earthcare Notes” for our weekly province update to educate, to inspire, and to keep our eyes on the prize: the care of the Earth. Here is an example:

Earthcare **March 25, 2016**

*It is you, matter, that I bless...you who wreck and build...the sap of our souls, the hand of God, the flesh of Christ. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin  
Cosmic Risen Christ send us your Spirit.*

The earth’s temperatures in February 2016 have “smashed” all records.

<https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/sotc/global/201602>



Canticle of Creation. For the past fifteen years we have given cabin, camping, and backpacking Franciscan Nature retreats based on Francis’ Canticle of Creation. Appreciative of Pope Francis’ encyclical “Praised Be: Care of our Common Home” we teach groups its message.

Based on the Committee’s recommendations, the Province gives funds to outside **Earthcare Projects**. The following are examples of these.

### Stand with Standing Rock:

Water is Life: Last year the province developed a financial fund for Earthcare. We supported North Dakota Standing Rock Reservation’s “prayerful and peaceful” resistance to the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL). This 1,172-mile-long pipeline would carry 470,000 barrels of oil per day across their treaty lands and sacred burial sites and under the Missouri River, the main source of their water and one of the longest waterways in the world. Their message was WATER IS LIFE. The Standing Rock Reservation created several camps in the North Dakota wilderness where they were joined by indigenous and others around the world who at times numbered as many as 10,000. Our Sisters’ history with the Lakota people dates back to the 1880’s when we came to teach on the Dakota reservations. One of the Lakota women who joined us was the late Sister Marie



Therese Archambault. I felt her intercessory prayer when on the anniversary of her death, her nephew, the Chair of the Standing Rock tribe, David Archambault, received word that President Obama placed a temporary halt on the pipeline. But the struggle continues as the new anti-climate President reinstated the pipeline. Some of our Sisters continue to gather in nationwide coordinated marches behind the drumbeat.

Another organization, [350.org](http://350.org) is building a global grassroots climate movement which we support. [The number 350 means that for climate safety we must reduce the CO2 in the atmosphere from over 400 parts per million to below 350.] We are funding 350's banners for the Colorado April Earth Day and Climate Action marches.

As daughters of Mother Magdalen let us unite in the urgent need to protect our Planet.

Elizabeth Fuhr, osf

## IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY PROVINCE Santa Maria, Brazil

United in one heart, in our diversity, we become a sign of peace and joy!

We live in a situation of crisis, between surprises and perplexity, we see a process of deep changes. Many are the questions that arise from the experience of men and women of our time, but there are also many seeds of life and hope appearing in our daily lives. We are living in a fragile context where disease, drugs, promiscuity and crimes happen among many young people who lose their lives, harvested early in the continuous acts of violence. We are convinced that the evangelical mission of Francis of Assisi is a well-accepted actuality. As we know, he has awakened attraction and welcoming in every culture and time. We, too, can embody this evangelical project of Francis through our prophetic witness in our mission as Franciscan sisters, being messengers of peace and all good.



Here in the region of Minas Gerais and Bahia, we aim to restore dignity and life of the people and, therefore, we are present in biblical pastoral, reflection groups, catechesis, pastoral of the child, pastoral of sobriety, Ecclesial Base Movement (CEBs), artisanal projects with women and teenagers, music projects with children and young people, assistance to natural health, pastoral of listening and visits to families. We know situations of extreme poverty in which children and teenagers are placed on the margins of developing their talents and possibilities. Afro-descendant culture is predominant in this region and the people bring in their veins musical talent, joyful rhythm of translating the legacy of their culture, poetically through songs. Thus, ALEGRARTE - a music project developed with children and teenagers to teach guitar and flute, was founded. As the name itself says, joy is a gift. The presence of music in the lives of children and teenagers brings back many possibilities, such as perception of the world, creativity concentration, sensitivity, and self-esteem.

I share the joy and excitement of seeing children revealing musical talent in such a short time. One of the children, Emanuel Rogério Cardoso Pereira, 12 years old, who won first place in the selection of SESC, Trade Social Service for guitar education, came to our house with his parents and said: "Sisters, let's turn ALEGRARTE into an orchestra. Here I learned the first notes and enthusiasm for music. I came to thank you!" Evangelization takes place between the lines of each work, revealing the hope that guides our actions in search for peace. The mission of each Sister adds and diversifies the beauty of our Franciscan spirituality and of Mother Magdalene Charism. God be praised!

S. Efigênia Pittarello Torres

## GENERAL COUNCIL SHARING



What needs are being responded to in our congregation? The litany of praise and thanks to God includes open eyes to see the homeless and those who are being expelled from their homes, their lands; understanding hearts to hear to the stories of suffering and pain; clear ears to listen to the cries of the poor, the hungry, the desperate; compassionate lips to give words to the voiceless, song to the spirit and hope to the downhearted; strong hands and feet to do what we can with our brothers and sisters who expect much of us – to be the presence of God and the outpouring of God's love and mercy.



From February 11 to April 30, four General Councilors have been in Guatemala and Brazil for General Visitation. We have seen first-hand and truly experienced the response our sisters give to the needs of the people living at the margins – margins of society, margins of health, margins of education, margins of community ... all margins of justice and peace. This is a testimony of mercy and love that the sisters of Brazil and Guatemala give –

and a reminder that we could be in any of our provinces and seen the same great witness of trust and compassion we all try to be as daughters of Mother Magdalen. We praise and thank God for God is good, so very, very good.

Please pray for us in the coming months:

June 11-18, 2017

October

October/November

October/November

December

Provincial Chapter: Redwood City

General Visitation: Mexico

Celebration of 25th Jubilee of the Mission: October 3-4

General Visitation: Stella Niagara

General Visitation: Redwood City and Denver

Provincial Chapter: Indonesia

The General Council: S. Deborah, S. Dirce, S. Patricia, S. Clara, S. Pacyfika