



Seeds of Life December 2009

Congregation of the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother

Third Order Regular of Saint Francis of Assisi

#1

TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Letter from
Sr. Teresina Marra**

**20th General Assembly
Mandate Follow up**

page 2

**Care of the Poor
through Marian Health
System**

page 5

**Honoring the Past
Celebrating the Present
Moving into the Future**

page 6

**Reflections from
Our New Members**

page 9

Publication by:
General Administration
Casa Generalizia
Via Paolo III, 7-9
00165 Rome, Italy

*Justice and peace shall kiss.
Truth shall spring out of the earth, and justice shall look down from heaven”*
(Psalm 85:11-12)

Dear Sisters, Associates, Friends, Collaborators,

As I reflect on this year's events both in the congregation and in the world, I have feelings of gratitude to God and to all of the people committed to Jesus' mission to bring Good News of His love to all. Also deep feelings of sadness arise within me when I think of the wars, violence, hunger, migrations and the very destruction of God's earthly environment. Within each of our countries so many people suffer the effects of the world-wide economic and political crises. Yet, the prophecy, "*Justice and Peace shall kiss...*" will always be an announcement, a call or cry of hope for all. It is possible!

It is God Who begins the dialogue with us and this dialogue becomes a relationship that embraces humankind and creation. Creation is the starting point; God reveals Himself through Creation and in Jesus reaches the height of the Communion. He invites us to enter into dialogue with Him through personal relationships and through the events of the world. In the Scriptures, Jesus clearly shows that God's dialogue begins with the people, the voiceless poor, revealing His Face without distinction or discrimination. In the quotation of the above mentioned Psalm, we can see and contemplate our reality with God's eyes of compassion and tenderness. Only in this way will we be able to discover the roots of injustice and work to transform reality.

The SSM Constitutions, #6, includes the following quotation from the Bible as the basis of our Apostolic Service: "*and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?*" (Mi 6:8). As disciples called to proclaim the gospel message, build up the community of faith, and give dedicated service, this passage becomes a mandate as well as a way of life for us. (OWL #50)

One only has to pause and think for a moment of the efforts and relationships made in justice and peace by so many people of good will. The encyclical letter of Pope Benedict XVI "*Charity in Truth*", stands out and was recognized by the powerful of the world as a "*Deep and far-seeing reconsideration of the development model to correct dysfunctions and perversions*". In his introduction, the Pope says "*Love is an extraordinary force which leads people to opt for courageous and generous engagement in the field of justice and peace*".

We, every SSM, is called to *bring fuller life to others* to witness and live out Jesus' Love through justice and peace actions, for it is a fundamental aspect of evangelization. This is the reason why this newsletter "Seeds of Life", brings honor to the sisters who came before us and celebrates the life of religious consecration; it underlines the commitment of our sisters and the people collaborating with us in the social justice field to respond to this call to charity in truth.

**Sr. M. Teresina Marra
General Superior**

20th General Assembly Mandate Follow up

Each of the province/regions/mission is highlighting one ministry that gives clear witness of the Mandate and expresses a new or different focus.

Region Austria

Advocacy for Social Justice

Goal: To move forward with our commitment to social justice.

First, we met as a region and worked intensively on the theme of the 20th General Assembly, "The Love of Christ Urges Us On!" We studied the principles of Catholic Social Teaching: Dignity of Person, Solidarity, Subsidiarity and Common Good. The Social Commission of the Ecumenical Churches in Austria was helpful in showing us the way. With plays, movies and discussions we deepened our understanding of the meaning of social justice in our lives and how to apply it to our ministries. Some of the examples that we are already doing are the following: supporting social justice organizations, helping people who need language translation; decreasing our material and energy consumption and teaching co-workers and students respect for material things.

In connection with this theme, a group of nine young volunteers traveled to Grenada, West Indies (July 13-24) with Sr. Gudrun Maria Schellner to offer summer school to the St. Rose Modern Secondary School students. They offered subjects such as arts and crafts, theater, music, games and dance and integrated reflection and prayer throughout the experience. In addition, they helped the faculty with projects still left undone from the hurricane: cleaning, painting and moving furniture—always with the motto "Love one another as I have loved you". By their focused attention on this group of students, the volunteers offered them examples of "SSM Presence."



Gratitude - Sr. Gudrun Maria Schellner and a student in a warm exchange

Region Brazil

Evangelization

Goal: Evangelization among peoples of different cultures and customs with respect for and appreciation of human life.

We are a small number of sisters, only eleven of us, who are present in the States of São Paulo, Goias, and Mato Grosso. We improved our communication and understanding of each other by exchanging places and times, as well as by adapting ourselves to the needs and projects which were accomplished together through itinerant activities.

We now move and work together for the following occasions: Franciscan Week of St. Francis of Assisi University; The Franciscan March, which involves people from all over Brazil; projects and evangelization in the villages of the Xavantes Indians; evangelization of children and adolescents in the public schools; parish catechesis and weekly Eucharist with the students; ongoing spiritual formation with faculty and co-workers; couples' gatherings and ongoing formation. Our most recent event was the March with young people against violence and sexual abuse of children and adolescents. More than 500 youth participated.



Sr. Arminda de Paula Camargo - Franciscan March and youth

Region Germany

Evangelization

Goal: To move toward an intensified ongoing formation program with our co-workers to express our mission within the Church and in collaboration with others through a new framework and mutual enrichment.

St. Francis, St. Clare and the SSM's were the themes of the Ongoing Formation Program.

To help our co-workers better understand and appreciate the spirituality and values of the SSM's, 20 employees from the kitchen, laundry, and assisted living areas of the Seniorenzentrum and Marienburg travelled to Assisi from June 8-13, 2009 accompanied by Srs. Regina Fučík and Maurilla Renner. There they walked in the footsteps of Sts. Francis and Clare and had time to reflect upon their own lives. By removing themselves from their daily activities the hope is that they would return to their homes and work renewed and strengthened.

These days in Assisi became a rich experience and mutual time of encounter for all those participating and has helped our sisters move closer to the goal of improving understanding and appreciation for the spirituality and values of the SSM's.



Srs. Regina Fučík, and Maurilla Renner, and other Sisters from Assisi, with employees from Abenberg enjoying the Franciscan Week in Assisi

Region Italy

Evangelization

Goal: To continue to develop the Family Encouragement Program by journeying with couples in simple Franciscan joy, giving witness to God's tremendous love for each of us.

Our desire to address this need grew out of the knowledge that many couples have expressed a wish to find space for themselves and each other in a context of spiritual and human development. Regional leadership responded to this need by commissioning a group of sisters to start this new and exciting journey without knowing what the outcome might be.

Two groups of ten couples have been organized: Group I was established in 2008; Group II is from Holy Family School in Capannelle where the SSM's sponsor an elementary school. The catechesis is divided into two parts: 1) Focusing on God's Word with a catechesis of an excerpt from the Gospel; 2) Applying God's Word to daily living. Child care is provided by youth who are committed to a faith journey and are willing to volunteer some of their time to this process. Refreshments/Agape is also included.

Their gratitude has been awesome, not only to the sisters working with them, but also to our whole congregation for providing a place (Casa Tabor and other premises of Region Italy) for them to be, to reflect and to grow. For the sisters working closely with the families, we experienced a connection with our core values as SSM's—to share and to feel compassion with the suffering—in this case, the difficulties of living together as a couple/family and the continuous welcoming of each other in forgiveness, together seeking a greater awareness of the Love of God. Because of the strong desire of the couples to continue on this journey, they collaborated with our sisters in developing the agenda for 2010.



Sr. Paola Elisabetta Biosa and families

Mission Ifunde, Tanzania

Advocacy for Social Justice

Goal: Clean water as a human right in order to: improve life conditions for the people; help the sisters engaged in apostolic activities; diminish and prevent infant disease and mortality; help the women, children and adolescents in their daily hard work and enable girls to go to school

Water is Life

“Can I have a glass of water?” This seems like a reasonable request, but, here in the area of Kahama, Tanzania, many thousands of people are obliged to use polluted water. Many children die before the age of five. Here there aren't rivers; here the women often make long journeys on foot; here the children and adolescents lose school hours in order to find water; here even water is water, even if it is dirty, salty and/or contaminated.

Thanks to the collaboration of many benefactors, we have achieved this objective for us and for the local population. Three wells and numerous holding tanks at various places collect the rainwater for the gardens and for use during the dry seasons. Now we are working on expanding the water project to as many villages as possible. The people are greatly encouraged and are helping us as much as they can to make this a reality.



Sr. Alessandra Maria Zonato and youth delight in the joy of clean water

US/Caribbean Province

Evangelization through Advocacy for Social Justice

To stand with and assist the poor of our times, especially women and children, and to collaborate / network with others. (Vision and Direction 2009-2013)

Sister M. Patrick Flanigan has been in Hispanic Ministry for the past 18 years. First, she ministered in the Dominican Republic at Luperon and then at St. Joseph's Parish in Wautoma for the past 9 years. While she is presently the Director of Hispanic Ministry in the parish she is also the Director of Hispanic Ministry for seven counties for the Diocese of Green Bay, Wisconsin. All three of the SSM goals are achieved in this ministry to persons who are in this country very often without the proper paper work, who must appear in court on occasion without the needed language skills, who request sacramental preparation for themselves or for their children and who at times need someone to advocate for them with members of the Anglo community who either totally dislike them or simply tolerate their presence.

Since almost the entire family works in the fields during the day, Sr. Patrick and her staff of volunteers often spend every evening in the summer in the migrant farm camps preparing the adults and the children for First Eucharist or Confirmation.

Sr. Patrick indicated that it is so important when ministering to Hispanics that the minister become one with



Sr. M. Patrick Flanigan visits with a new mother and her infant

them, heart and soul, meaning that the minister is to receive as well as to give. She believes that the Mexican community is so unique because of their connection with Mary which they have generously shared with her during these years of ministry.

Care of the Poor through Marian Health System

US/Caribbean Province

The Mandate of the 20th General Assembly is alive and well in Marian Health System. From the beginning of our hospitals the SSM's have always had a special care for those who could not afford health care. **The sisters believed that health care was a human right** and proved it by their many examples of how they worked to heal, comfort, and support those in need despite inadequate resources. **Today, our belief has not changed**; together with our thousands of partners in ministry, we have greatly expanded care to uninsured populations through sophisticated technologies and systems and multidisciplinary teams of caring and gifted personnel. However, the challenges of cost and complexity are becoming more and more difficult.

As tax exempt organizations, our health care systems are required to "quantify", that is, to measure our contribution financially. In other words, we must prove annually that we are "Not for Profit" organizations – worthy of not paying income taxes. In addition to Charity Care and Medicaid, our hospitals are expected to provide other health care services in the communities we serve.

Considering all the obstacles they face, we can feel very proud of Marian Health System's contribution to the uninsured and that in our name continue to carry on Jesus' ministry of healing. In future issues we will continue to highlight care of the poor from other parts of the congregation.

In Marian Health System, we have a standard way of reporting—it's called, "The Community Benefit Report. Here is the 2008 Summary:

(M is for million)	St. John	Via Christi	Ministry	Tot. Marian
Charity Care				
<i>no reimbursement is provided</i>	39,275M	35,231M	25,594M	100,100M
Medicaid				
<i>small amount of reimbursement</i>				
<i>compared to costs</i>	20,401M	20,209M	65,642M	106,252M
Care for the poor	59,676M	55,440M	91,236M	206,352M
<i>Percent of Operating Expense</i>	7.0%	4.5%	8.8%	6.6%
Other Community Benefit				
- Subsidized health services \$10.2M <i>(i.e. psychiatry, neonatal intensive care wellness)</i>				
- Community health services \$15.2M <i>(i.e. free clinics)</i>				
- Health professions education \$22.2M <i>(i.e. medical students)</i>				
- Research \$400,000 <i>(i.e. quality of care improvements)</i>				
- Donations and grants \$5.4M <i>(i.e. Educational institutions to alleviate healthcare shortages)</i>				
- Miscellaneous Community Benefit \$900,000 <i>(i.e. Children's Organizations)</i>	14,394M	18,514M	20,937M	54,250M
Total Community Benefit	74,070M	73,954M	112,173M	260,602M
<i>Percent of Operating Expense</i>	8.7%	6.0%	10.8%	8.4%

Honoring the Past, Celebrating the Present, Moving into the Future

We have so much to be grateful for as we look backward for a few moments. We know our roots from Mother Frances and the sacrifices and sufferings the early sisters endured. We admire their unwavering vocation and dedication to the Lord and the people they touched as they ministered among the poor, the wealthy, the sick and the healthy in each of the areas they felt called to serve.

This dedication and selfless attitude of service has been handed down from generation to generation within our congregation. As we look at the sisters who have been good and faithful servants and thus called to the

Lord this past year and those sisters whom we take time to celebrate and rejoice in their faithful years of service, we are reminded of the "communion of saints" which we profess as part of our faith. Truly we are all united in our faith and prayer and common life.

As we move into the future and have tough decisions to make; have new ministries to which the signs of the time are calling us and our always old and always new call to faithfulness, let us remember the wonderful sisters who have made all this possible for us and take up the cross as they did and walk along with Christ at our side.

Names of our Deceased Sisters November 2, 2008 through November 2, 2009



Sr. M. Remberta Steff

Sr. Mary Paula Jacobs

Sr. M. Andrea Sichert

Sr. Ann Marie Seitz

Sr. Mary Ida Nieberle

Sr. M. Ansgara Eittinger

Sr. Marcella Marie Winkels

Sr. M. Mathilda Spielmann

Sr. M. Valeria Donhauser

Sr. M. Loyola Schmidt

Sr. M. Archangela Schleer

2009 Jubilarians

Let us remember to pray for each of our jubilarians and pray to our sisters who have died for the graces to carry on the work begun by Mother Frances

75 Years

Sr. M. Elisabethina Heiss US/C

Sr. M. Josepha Wartner US/C

70 Years

Sr. Jean Marie Krueger US/C

Sr. M. Scholastica Harrer US/C

Sr. M. Walburgis Schmidt US/C

Sr. M. Asteria Gehr Germany

Sr. M. Manuela Himmler Germany

60 Years

Sr. M. Cecile Paulik US/C

Sr. M. Dorothy Bruder US/C

Sr. Frances Ann Renn US/C

Sr. M. Maura Voegerl US/C

Sr. M. Theodora Regnet US/C

Sr. M. Bernarda Schnörer Germany

Sr. M. Cordula Eichinger Germany

Sr. M. Flaviana Flurer Germany

Sr. M. Floriana Meier Germany

Sr. M. Jakoba Cwiach Germany

Sr. M. Valentina Eichinger Germany

Sr. M. Gonzaga Soderer Italy

50 Years

Sr. Dorothy Ann Dirkx US/C

Sr. Marilyn Vollmer US/C

Sr. Rita Marie Lustig US/C

Sr. M. Christine Gall Austria

Sr. M. Ottilie Lachinger Austria

Sr. M. Frieda Zwengauer Germany

Sr. M. Friedgara Regler Germany

Sr. M. Hildegard Schmidt Germany

Sr. M. Irene Schneider Germany

Sr. M. Irlinda Schiele Germany

Sr. M. Irmtraud Dietl Germany

Sr. M. Paula Auburger Germany

Sr. M. Vigilia Frank Germany

Sr. M. Vinzentina Kreller Germany

Sr. M. Tecla Merlino Italy

25 Years

Sr. Maria Felicidad Chavez US/C



Jubilee Germany



Jubilee Italy



Jubilee Austria



Jubilee US/Caribbean

Reflections from Our New Members

How have the spiritual practices and the Franciscan Spirituality affected your life as a new member of the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother?



Sr. Laura Maria Caddeo
Region Italy

I entered the SSM Congregation because I knew the Franciscan community both in my town of origin and in Assisi. At the beginning, I was struck by the spontaneity of relationships, so friendly and simple, without formalities, and the atmosphere of a "big family" where everyone could find a place and feel at home... After sometime, I also discovered the centrality of God's Word and the Eucharist, as well as a continued and fervent commitment to evangelization. The Franciscan charism helped me and strengthened my sense of obedience to my story and my sense of belonging to the Church.



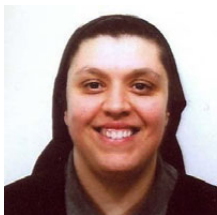
Sr. M. Marcella de Marco
Region Italy

The Franciscan Spirituality affected the beginning of my individual faith journey. The person of Francis enabled me to meet God in a personal and more informal way. I started to live faith in a completely new way. I was very touched by the radical nature of this saint and his passionate way to live his faith. Francis' spirituality helps me to return to the power of God's mercy and not to be afraid of my littleness; it helps me to welcome everyone as sisters and brothers and many times his directions are helpful in overcoming various situations. The Franciscan aspect of praise and restitution to God has helped to cultivate a grateful attitude to God and keep that same spirit in my heart.



Sr. M. Nair Alves da Silva
Region Brazil

Franciscan Spirituality is a very important aspect of my life. The simplicity of it and God's love communicated by St. Francis attracted many. Prayer and contemplation are important points for me to follow the Triune God as a Sister of the Sorrowful Mother.



Sr. M. Rosa Toccolini
Region Italy

In my life as a Sister of the Sorrowful Mother, I think that the Franciscan Spirituality is particularly present in the aspects of simplicity and fraternal sharing that I try to carry out in my relationships, both with the sisters and with other people that God allows me to meet. As I became acquainted with our sisters,

I was touched by their simple and spontaneous sharing of God's gifts during meals, prayer, meetings, daily work in the community and with the laity and also by the mutual listening among each other, without creating distinctions between roles or life conditions. Today, as a member of the congregation, I believe that it is essential to continue this simple lifestyle; it doesn't place obstacles in the way of meeting other people. It teaches us how to welcome and make other people feel loved in the name of Jesus Christ, as Francis did with his friars and all the people.



Sr. Gillian Angela Marie Jerome
US/Caribbean Province

Many different parts of our Franciscan heritage inspire me, but the one that speaks to me the most, is the simple Prayer of St. Francis..."Lord, make me an instrument..." In the past I simply mouthed those words; now I pray the prayer more consciously. I realize that in that prayer lies the fullness of the "Kingdom of God" to which I am called to contribute to make a present reality. Hence, to the measure that I am at peace is the same measure that I give to the world....A Franciscan way of living, therefore, calls me into right relationship with God, self, creation and others, and I cannot think of a better way to do this, than to be in right relationship with myself. It is a challenge, yet it is possible. My prayer is that as a Sister of the Sorrowful Mother I will continue to strive to live simply and consciously, with a deeper love and respect for others, so that my example may speak for itself.



Sr. Daniela Maria Alborghetti
Region Italy

I have been attracted by the person of Francis since childhood; his ability to rejoice at everything, the joy of seeing God in the most humble of creatures; being trustful in his heart like a child who expects everything from his parents and knows that all his needs will be satisfied. All these aspects of the Franciscan Spirituality have accompanied me as a Sister of the Sorrowful Mother. In the last few years, Francis' unceasing reference to the Mercy of God supported me very much. God does not disdain any of us and it is through our poverty that His grace and power shine. My continuous experience of God's Mercy helps my heart to be more merciful to our sisters and those close to me. All of this makes me think of Mary, and, in a particular way, of standing under the cross. In her moment of utter poverty and untold suffering she became a mother in the fullness of motherhood, welcoming in her heart all the sons and daughters who were entrusted to her by her dying Son.



Sr. M. Monica Baneschi
Region Italy

Franciscan Spirituality was fundamental for me to live my faith more joyfully, long before I entered the congregation. During my novitiate in Assisi, I had the grace to immerse myself in the places of Francis and Clare and to “absorb” their charism by the living testimony of their current spiritual children. The study of the Franciscan Sources and the Third Order Rule was very important to help me to get closer to the heart and faith of Francis. His style of praying has also greatly impacted my way to pray. Through the study and testimony of brothers and sisters who follow in the footsteps of Francis to reach Christ, I learned to love this spirituality ever more and I desire to be guided by it throughout my consecrated life. My desire and commitment in my daily life is to be able to incarnate the Franciscan simplicity, joy, community and gratitude for all the gifts I received.



Sr. M. Marcilene Faria
Region Brazil

I would like to tell you that I experience the Franciscan Spirituality through simplicity, a warm welcome and free surrender to God; the grace of Providence, mercy, fidelity to the Sacraments and love of the Church.



Sr. Yvette Marie Fernander
US/Caribbean Province

As a new member of the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother, my spiritual life continues to be the focal point and the engine that guides my daily life. I attribute my vocation to my mother because it was her witness, her examples of service and prayer that helped to form me into the person I am today. Since entering the congregation my experiences of prayer, study and reflection on the Scriptures, Our Way of Life and our Franciscan Spirituality have given me a greater understanding and appreciation for life and the call to be light for others. Studying and living the Franciscan Spirituality have made me realize that I can live with less and still be content and has given me a greater appreciation for and awareness of the less fortunate. Franciscan Spirituality has reinforced my belief in welcoming others, while respecting, caring and honoring the earth, animals and all of God’s creation.



Sr. M. Stefania Sangalli
Region Italy

My vocation arose in Assisi, a place marked by Franciscan Spirituality which connected my experience with St. Francis. Growing in the charism of the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother, I experienced some important aspects of Franciscan Spirituality. The constant reference to conversion by St. Francis, the journey to be humble of heart and to ever more welcome God’s love arises from a special relationship with the Father. My journey to truth is guided by listening to the Word and receiving the Sacraments, daily Eucharist and Adoration. In this my first year of temporary profession I am ministering to the youth in St. Maria degli Angeli. One of the most important aspects that I have experienced in this ministry is the loving and simple welcome, sharing of meals and prayer. The youth are willing and helpful; doing whatever is needed in the house. The simple lifestyle and the Providential support of friends and benefactors is concrete testimony for the youth. Living in this place full of Franciscan Spirituality allows me to live it more intensely, for example, by participating in important celebrations and being a guide for youth when they visit the holy shrines.



Sr. M. Sylvia Benetton
Region Italy

In my nine years of religious life, seven of them spent in Assisi, the experience of Francis and the Franciscan Spirituality have very concretely affected my daily life as a Franciscan Sister of the Sorrowful Mother. They continue to affect and leave a mark on my individual and communal journey by:

- *Seeking God’s will in my choices*
- *Accepting and living the great challenge of uniting action and contemplation.*
- *Living the Paschal Mystery*
- *Focusing on daily Eucharist, rendering thanks to God for everything.*
- *Living joyfully and simply in the community by following God*
- *Living the vow of obedience to Him through my superiors*
- *Fullness of motherhood welcoming in her heart all the sons and daughters who were entrusted to her by her dying Son.*