

REFLECT

Ursuline Sisters
Generalate
Rue Musin 1
1210 Brussels



March 2015

Dear Sisters and Associates,

Peace and Joy of the Risen Christ.

The last forty days have been a journey toward transformation. This journey has prepared us to encounter the Risen Christ.

The four Gospel accounts give us the same message that Easter is about encounter and transformation, a new beginning and missioning.

It's interesting to note that the women in the Gospel were the first recipients of the message of Christ's Resurrection. It started at the tomb - the empty tomb! The angels at the tomb communicated to them that Jesus was risen. "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen" (Lk. 24:5). The response of the message of the angels has been depicted differently by the four Evangelists. "They



left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples" (Mt. 28:8). "They went out and fled the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid" (Mark 16:8).

"Go to my brothers and say to them.." Mary Magdalen went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord": and she told them that he had said these things to her" (Jn. 20:18).

The women envisioned Jesus being entombed when they arrived at the tomb. But everything had changed. They could not fathom the mystery of the resurrection. They experienced great joy in knowing that Jesus was alive; but on the other hand they feared to tell others. Perhaps no one would believe their stories because women were not trusted in their culture and society. They were afraid to be who they were. They were vulnerable. Mary Magdalen passed beyond the culturally bound society and sought her

beloved until she was being called by name "Mary" by her beloved.

However, in the midst of fear and vulnerability, the women experienced courage. They were empowered by the Risen Christ to be the messengers of joy.

How do I personally encounter the Risen One in my everyday life? What is my disposition and response to the Easter message for mission today? What is the Risen One inviting me/us to as women religious at this time?

Transformed and empowered by the Risen Christ, may we be the messengers of joy, peace and hope especially to the vulnerable around us. May we play the role of angels at the tomb to roll away the stone and free those who are entombed and silenced by fear and doubt.

On behalf of the General Leadership Team, I wish you all a wonderful Easter Season.

- Sr. Bimla Minj



"When we unleash the power of women, we can secure the future for all", said UN, secretary General Ban- Ki- moon in his message for International women's Day 2015.

In honor of UN International Women's Day, March 8, we honor the memory of Sister Bridhi Ekka, osu, a tireless apostle.

"There may come persecutions but I have to work for the church in union with the bishops, priests, religious and all members of the church." Sister Bridhi

A sign of hope in a broken world

Sister Bridhi (1944 - 2015) lived the Ursuline charism by reading the signs of the times and its needs and moving in that direction. She was a dynamic force in our contemporary society. She combined creativity, courage, and stamina with faith in her work to improve the status of women.

Sister Bridhi stood by the poor and marginalized and empowered them, especially in the village apostolate. Parents and students cherished her motherly love and her efforts to promote schooling for all children as well as introducing new methods of agriculture.

Ready to take new risks

Responding to her call to be an Ursuline and following the example of St. Angela, she shared the gift of her life in service to others and impacted the lives of thousands

of women. An example of this is her ministry as Coordinator of Mahila Sangh in Ambikapur Diocese. Sr. Bridhi brought women's rights awareness to 24 villages and organized 42 self-help groups.

In her own words, Sister Bridhi shared her experience of working with the Women's Association in the Diocese of Ambikapur:

I travelled long distances to the villages on foot and conducted seminars for women on the role of women in the villages and church.



When I look back at their former situation and look at the present, I find that enormous changes have taken place in their way of living. Their togetherness and unity help them to tap the various resources of development available from the government. They can raise their voices now.

A messenger of joy, peace and hope

As a result of teaching women's rights and setting up self-help groups in many villages, our brave sister was accused of making conversions and sent to jail in 1996 and 2002. While in jail she won the hearts of women and children who were depressed and sad. She spread the Good News by praying, singing, and dancing with them. In her words:

I was happy that I was with them to sympathize and alleviate their inner worries, difficulties and problems.

(AQUA,INDIA, October 2002)

With all these experiences, my love of Jesus got renewed and my faith grew deeper in Him and I shall go on preaching His name till my last breath."

(AQUA, INDIA, October 1999)

We might ask ourselves if we allow the Holy Spirit to animate us to be messengers of joy, peace and hope especially to the vulnerable as Sister Bridhi did. May we keep her in mind every day especially on the day of her death, February 4 2015.

Belguim Province

Sister Lilima, our young Indian Sister, visits sick and elderly women in our Parish. Our community consists of 7 other Sisters between 79 and 91 years old. We are not able to do big things for women around us, but we try our best to give them more strength and to deepen their joy.

The women who are living in a nursing home in our commune are visited nearly every

March 2015

day. We listen to them and do small things for which the staff has not enough time.

We bring them Holy Communion and pray with them. Knowing that they are loved makes them stronger and happier in this last period of their lives.

A lady in our neighborhood lost her husband suddenly.

Forty years ago she lost her three children in an accident.

She is old and has nobody. Her health is very weak and the doctor advised her not to stay alone at night. Her name is on a waiting list for a care center. Meanwhile, as a bridge between home and the care center, two of our sisters take turns to sleep in her house at night. This helps her to overcome her fear.

We are living in a famous pilgrim place, visited by a lot of pilgrims. People used to bring us all kinds of objects which we sell for projects in India and Congo. Because of this shop it is easy for people to come in and they like to enter. They find someone here who listens to them. Especially women are happy to find someone to whom they can tell their pain. They tell why they are making a pilgrimage and often we hear painful stories, such as: one of their

children is seriously ill or they have a son or daughter who is going through a divorce.

Sometimes they speak about the difficult relationship with their husband, about psychological or social difficulties, about

their loneliness or their fears. We listen to them with love and they go back home comforted and strengthened.

These are little things that we older sisters can do for women in

need. It is nothing spectacular but we do it with love and joy.

The community of Scherpenheuvel

To Be The Messengers Of Joy

Our Sisters worked endless hours in their younger days, now the same zeal motivates them to give attention to the needs of other elderly people who may feel isolated from others.

It is admirable how some of our aged sisters in their 80's are interested in those who seem to have been abandoned by society. The Sisters brighten their day by speaking with them and by walking with them.



Another way the sisters stretch themselves beyond themselves for the sake of others is by giving attention to handicapped persons and by encouraging them.

Outreach is at the heart of getting older and the Sisters of the Lier community realize the importance of going out to others. By visiting regularly our old Sisters in Floordam and by organizing visits from the community to Melsbroek-Floordam, they show their sisterly love and friendship.

The kindness of our Sisters towards others enriches both their lives and the ones they touch and exemplifies the importance of social outreach at every stage of life.

The community of Lier

Helping women through conversation, awareness, discernment and prayer

When I meet women who are burdened in any way, I help them discover new ways forward to be freed from their weighty problems. I offer them human companionship and prayerful guidance.

Recently I was able to listen lovingly to a woman addicted to alcohol and I prayed with her to free her from the addiction. I directed her to AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) where she has found support.

A 75 years old woman spoke to me in tears: "I could not stop my husband when he abused our own small children. I've never told this to anyone. After all these years I

am still consumed with a great sense of guilt. I want to finally get rid of it. What should I do?" I spoke to her about God's great mercy and encouraged her to go to the sacrament of reconciliation. She followed my advice and told me that a heavy burden was taken off her shoulders. That was just a beginning. She has still to go a long way- to ask forgiveness from her children and forgive her husband. However, this is possible with the power of prayer.

The community of Ternat

Congo Vice Province



The Collectif Alpha Ujuvi, started by our Sisters in Goma, has as its mission to promote peace, democracy, human rights and community development by combating illiteracy. The Collectif Alpha Ujuvi has been working since 2003 for the welfare of vulnerable people and women in particular. Its areas of intervention are: education for all, protection, and community rehabilitation.

As a part of the RHUSIMANE literacy circle the *mamans fazila* learn to read, write and do math. These women call

themselves FAZILA RHUSIMANE, which means *women of value stand tall*.

A lecture was given on the theme of the International Women's Day by one of our sisters and the women of the circle. The entire community in MURHESA participated. Women put on plays dramatizing their actual situations. After that, they all shared in a joy filled celebration.

Sr. Sylvie Ilunga

Ranchi Province

« Women are part of humanity and without giving them recognition as human beings no community or nation could ever develop.”
Sima Samar, community leader 1994



International Women's Day was celebrated in the Diocese of Khunti. The Program included a Peace March, a welcome by the Ursuline postulants from the Formation House and speakers covering topics from human trafficking to politics and culture.

Sr. Ranjita a social worker, encouraged women to acknowledge their contribution to the family and society and to be aware of what is happening in their family and village.

She told about the victim of human trafficking. From the time she was 13, Phulmani (name changed) was force to act as a surrogate mother. She delivered six children by human traffickers from Jharkhand, a hotbed of modern day slavery. Phulmani was lured to Delhi by an agent from her village with the promise of a job. Her experiences have left her emotionally and physically scarred.



She asked all the women present to raise their voices against injustice and to realize their personal and collective power to overcome evil. The women felt encouraged to stand together in their journey.

Women from self-help groups shared their success stories about starting small poultry businesses and shops in the villages which have improved their families' condition and status.

Sr. Ranjita Kindo

US Province

Following my retirement from being a Hospice Chaplain I felt free to follow an inspiration and desire to gather women who wanted to grow in their spirituality. I and

another women who also was aware of the spiritual needs of women and their desire to grow spiritually began with a group of five women, calling the group Woman's Sacred Journey.

As we celebrate five years of being together the group now totals twenty five women who meet weekly for prayer and sharing, giving support to one another. Last year the group wishing to assist the Ursuline Sisters financially sponsored a TEA, which they will do again this year.

Sr. Ann McHugh OSU

CLT meets with four Indian PLTs

The Congregational Leadership Team met with our four Indian Province Leadership Teams on February 12 - 13, 2015 in the Ursuline Provincialate, Merici Niwas, Gumla. It was a great event for the Indian Provinces.

Our newly elected first Indian Congregational Leader, Sr. Bimla Minj and the General Assistant, Sr. Nirmala Kujur conducted an orientation program for the Indian PLTs namely Ambikapur, Gumla, Ranchi and Tezpur. Nineteen Sisters participated.

The two day program was very enriching and inspiring. During our time together we were invited to share our hopes and desires as Province Leadership Teams.

The questions given by the Congregational Leader to discuss in our small groups were enlightening and helped us see the future of the provinces and to take concrete steps. She invited us to focus on the theme of the General Chapter 2014 - "Live Contemplative Spirituality for Mission Today." Based on the theme, questions were put before us. How can we make Ursuline presence more relevant?



March 2015

What is it like for us to be leaders today in 2015, leaders of women who are religious, who are Ursulines of Tildonk? How do we foster Ursuline identity and unity in the Congregation?

The above questions were eye opening for us and helpful as we move ahead with one mind and heart and work together to keep the spirit of the Congregation alive in our challenging world. We experienced a very strong spirit of oneness. Some concrete guidelines were drawn up to be implemented in all the Indian provinces as well as in particular provinces.

The meeting ended with a short evaluation and a simple closing ritual - "We walk the sacred journey. We risk the sacred journey. We go to make a difference."

-Sr. Anna Minj

