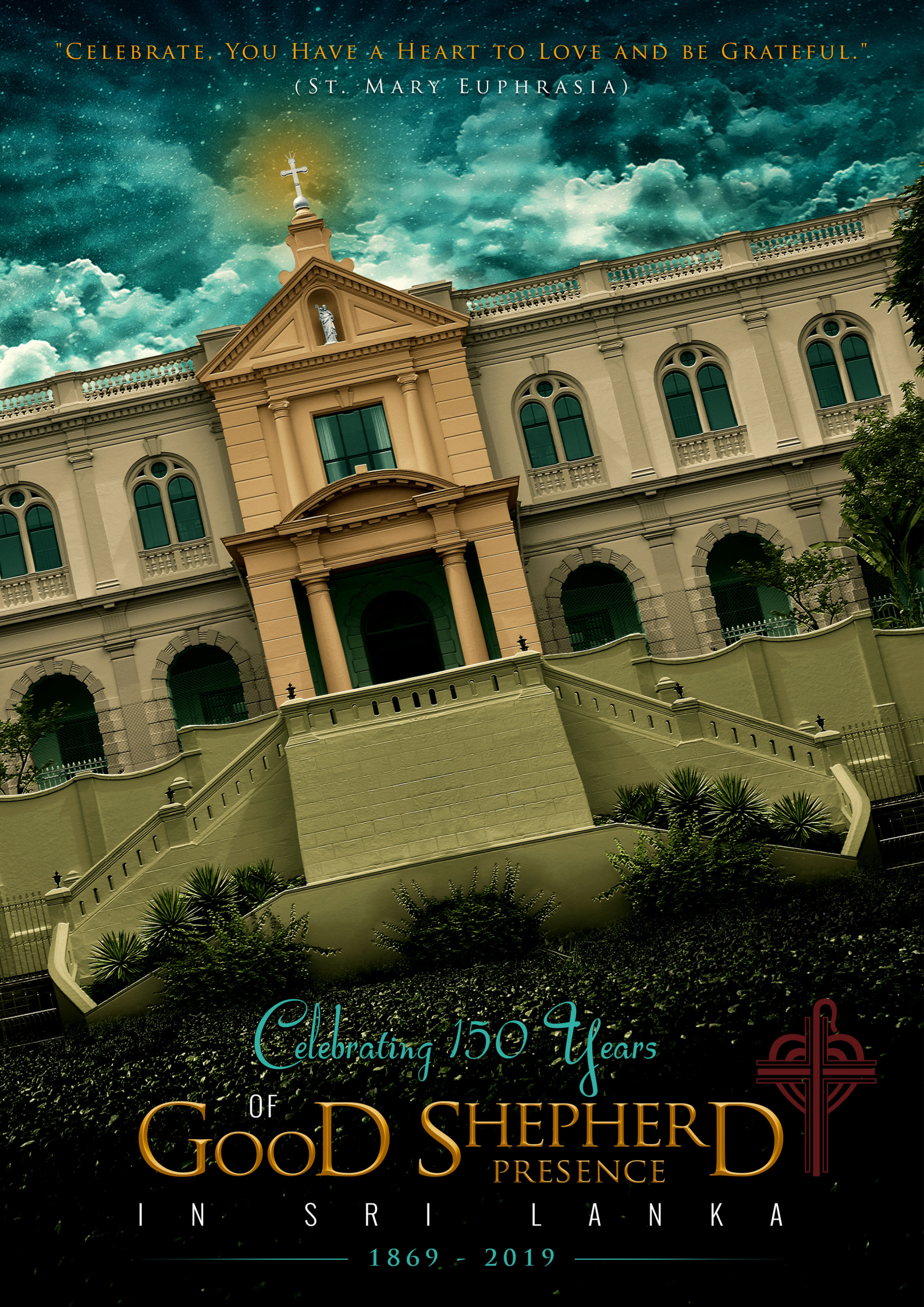

"Celebrate, You Have a Heart to Love and be Grateful."
(St. Mary Euphrasia)
Celebrating 150 Years
OF
GooD SHEPHERD
PRESENCE
IN SRI LANKA
1869 - 2019

"Thankfulness gives birth to great and noble thoughts ...
Thank the Blessed Virgin, and again,
express your gratitude to God with whom we are united by Eternal Bonds!
Tell it over and over to future generations , carry it with you to your missions!
Speak about it among yourselves in far off lands! May this memory be your consolation , your hope, and so you will always be filled with thankfulness. We are the children of miracles !"

"You could apply to yourselves personally our Lord's words:
"Gather up all the pieces so that nothing is lost. "
With all those little details you could make a delightful dish
which will nourish future generations!"

(Words of **ST. MARY EUPHRASIA PELLETIER.**)



SESQUICENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY

150 Years of **Good Shepherd Presence** in Sri Lanka

1869 - 2019



DAY OF CELEBRATION
18TH MAY 2019

THEME

CELEBRATE !

You have a heart created to love and be loved !
Courage - Go forward ! (St. M. Euphrasia)
With a great heart and willing spirit (St. John Eudes)

GOAL

"Make St. M. Euphrasia alive and vibrant in Sri Lanka / Pakistan"

OBJECTIVES

Appreciating our Good Shepherd Story Enhancing Mission Effectiveness

Prayer for the Sesquicentennial Anniversary



Go forward in the Spirit of God.
I am relying on your zeal.
S.M.E.

Gracious Father we praise and glorify you for the gift of St. Mary Euphrasia and her vision and mission which we inherited as Good Shepherd Sisters in Sri Lanka. Our hearts are filled with gratitude for the manifold Blessings we have received during the past 150 years & for the great mission that has been accomplished by our sisters all throughout. We now surrender the future to you. We ask You our Shepherd God to bless us with courage and strength as we go forward inspired and fired with the ardent Zeal and Commitment of St. Mary Euphrasia. May we reach out with Compassion, Love, Mercy and Forgiveness to those around us especially to the ones that are lost and beyond to all those who need healing in our broken world.

Amen !



The Holy Father Francis
cordially imparts the requested Apostolic Blessing to

of

on the occasion of the 150° Jubilee Celebration
of

and through the intercession of the Virgin Mary
invokes an abundance of Divine graces

18th May 1869 / 2019

Ex Aedibus Vaticanis, die 13.11.2017

+ Konrad Krajewski
Archiepiscopus Eleemosynarius Apostolicus



MESSAGE FROM

Pierre Nguyen Van Tot

Apostolic Nuncio

With great gratitude to God and also with joy, I congratulate the Religious of the Good Shepherd for the years of their presence in Sri Lanka. Their arrival certainly benefited the Church immensely in carrying out its mission in preaching the Good News.

"Nothing was too small, too arduous or too costly to put into action day or night for one of God's little ones" was the true spirit of the Foundress, St. Mary Euphrasia. Inspired by these words, from the time of their foundation, the Sisters have been carrying on a wonderful work especially of promoting the welfare of young women and girls, enabling them to work for the good of Sri Lanka.

Having begun their mission in the field of education, their untiring labor has formed thousands of students who have been shining in responsible positions both in Sri Lanka and abroad. The large school buildings put up by the Sisters in different parts of the Island, and shepherding some of the leading schools in Sri Lanka, bear testimony to their dedication. Right from the beginning, an all round education has been imparted to the students who come out with good leadership qualities.

Women in desperate situations continue to receive the benefits of their apostolate of mercy. The love and care of Sisters have given new hope, to the orphans and elders. Thus mercy and compassion of Jesus, the Good Shepherd are being felt by His flock whoever comes in contact with them.

It is our fervent hope and prayerful wish that the impressive apostolate carried out by the God Shepherd Sisters up to now be continued, bearing much fruit and bring in a rich harvest to Sri Lankan society.
While felicitating and extending my prayerful best wishes to the Good Shepherd Sisters, I hereby impart the Apostolic Blessings of the Holy Father Pope Francis.

Colombo,27th December 2018

Pierre Nguyen Van Tot
Apostolic Nuncio



MESSAGE FROM

His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith

Archbishop of Colombo

It is with deep gratitude to God that I am sending you these words of greetings, dear Sisters of the Good Shepherd, as you celebrate 150 years of your presence in Sri Lanka.

This is a long period of time in which you, who stepped into Sri Lanka in 1869, at the invitation of the then Archbishop of Colombo, Most Rev. Dr.Hilarion Sillani OSB, in order to serve the people of Sri Lanka with your own special charism, especially in the field of education, have been part of our Christian presence in this little Island home. The small band of Sisters who landed on our soil with the grace of God have, through you, become a fairly large group of missionaries spread among all the different groups of people living in this country.

God has blessed you, dear Sisters of the Good Shepherd, truly to render yeomen service to this country and its people in the fields of education, social services, care of the under privileged and abandoned children, centers for single mothers, protection and care of life, prison ministry and all types of other engagements in the service of the poor. The services you render to the destitute, especially among children is something truly reflective of your name: the Good Shepherd. All of these have been possible due to the dream of your Foundress St. Mary Euphrasia whose Motto was “One person is worth more than the whole world”.

While thanking God for you, I wish to congratulate you for this immeasurable service you are rendering to the Church in Sri Lanka and to all our citizens. May I wish you Good Shepherd Sisters, many more years of happy mission in this land and elsewhere in the service of the Lord and of His flock. With best wishes and the assurance of prayers.

Ad Multos Annos!

March 2019

Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith

Archbishop of Colombo



MESSAGE FROM

Bishop Vianney Fernando

Bishop of Kandy

Message for the Souvenir for the 150 years of the presence and ministry of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd Congregation in Sri Lanka.

On this memorable occasion of the celebration of the 150 years of the presence and service of the Good Shepherd Congregation in our Island Home, Sri Lanka, we, the local Church of Kandy join in the celebration by thanking God for the pioneering missionary Sisters who rendered yeoman service to the newly erected Vicariate in 1883 which became a diocese with the establishment of the hierarchy in 1887. On the request of the 1st Bishop of Kandy Rt. Revd. Clement Pagnani OSB, the Convent of Kotahena sent a Sister of St. Francis Xavier, Sr. Mary Agnes of Jesus to Matale, initially for a period of three months, but she ended up spending 52 years in Matale until her death. Thus began the arrival of the Sisters of St. Francis Xavier who along with more local vocations opened up several convents and schools in the diocese of Kandy, which comprises the Central Province of Sri Lanka. At the time of the amalgamation, in March 1958, of St. Francis Xavier Sisters with the Good Shepherd Congregation, there were seven houses and institutions with 49 Sisters laboring in the Diocese of Kandy.

We are deeply grateful to those pioneering missionary Sisters, who toiled in the midst of many hardships and difficulties in looking after orphaned children and their education with great love and dedication. Due to the pioneering efforts of those Sisters, today, we have Good Shepherd Sisters serving in several Convents, namely, Wahakotte, Matale, Katugastota (both the Convent and the Centre for women and girls in crisis) ,Kandy, Home for the Elders in Mahaiyawa, Gampola, Nawalapitiya and Nuwara Eliya. With the takeover of schools, the Sisters engaged in the Christian formation of our children, through regular Catechetical camps by preparing them for first Holy Communion and Confirmation at a time when our present day Catechetical programs were not yet organized. The pioneering missionary Sisters have left behind a rich legacy of missionary dedication and commitment. It is now incumbent on the present and future generations of the Sisters to carry forward the flaming torch in the service of the Lord and His people according to the charism of the Foundress, St. Mary Euphrasia.

Pope Francis, our Universal Shepherd's voice must be heeded at this moment, which is a" Kairos moment" for the Congregation of the Good Shepherd Sisters. In "Evangelium Gaudii", the Holy Father proposes a profound missionary renewal of the entire Church; certainly the Religious and Clergy are pivotal to this renewal. In the words of Pope Francis," We need an evangelizing Church that comes out of herself ", not a Church that is "self-referential", and "lives within herself, "for herself" and "of herself". "I dream of a "Missionary option", that is a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today's world than for her self-preservation… All renewal in the Church must have as its goal, the mission of the Church, if not it will fall prey to a kind of ecclesial introversion" (EG .27).

While we congratulate the present leadership and the membership of the Congregation for all that has been over the past 150 years, it is our fervent prayer and hope that the Congregation would forge ahead in reviving the missionary thrust of the Congregation in fidelity to the Lord and the Church as well as its beloved Foundress, St. Mary Euphrasia.

+Bishop Vianney Fernando
Bishop of Kandy



MESSAGE FROM

Rt. Rev. Dr. Valence Mendis

Bishop of Chilaw

It is with immense joy that I write this message as the Good Shepherd Sisters celebrate the 150th Anniversary of Presence in Sri Lanka. It is indeed an occasion to thank and praise God for the wonderful blessings that God has showered upon you during these long years.

The involvement and commitment of the Good Shepherd Sisters in different apostolates have always been very much appreciated in the Diocese of Chilaw particularly in the Social Apostolate, Counseling and Education. The Sisters have shown a great concern for the poor and the downtrodden and they have opted to a radically simple way of life in the diocese of Chilaw.

In this way they have been able to be a vibrant witness of God's love and tender care for the poor.

Their generous contribution and support towards the Sri Lankan Church is praiseworthy. Various initiatives that have been taken to bring the faithful closer to the word of God has helped a great deal to promote the Small Christian Communities in many parishes where the Gospel is proclaimed and believers are formed and sent to renew the earlh as Jesus commissioned. They have molded thousands of children to become useful citizens in our country by way of their involvement in the field of education.

As you celebrate the 150th Jubilee of your Presence in Sri Lanka I wish God's abundant Blessings upon all the Good Shepherd Sisters. I pray that our Heavenly Father may continue to bless you in accomplishing your Motto to "Go Forward with a Great Heart and a Willing Spirit.

11TH October 2018

+ D. Valence Mendis

Bishop of Chilaw



MESSAGE FROM

+ Cletus Chandrasiri Perera

Bishop of Rathnapura

A Grace – Filled and Christ – Filled Event

It is with over whelming joy that I write these few lines to the souvenir, marking the 150th Anniversary of the Presence and Mission of the Good Shepherd Sisters in Sri Lanka.

As a person, born and bred at Seeduwa, I came under the good influence of the Good Shepherd Sisters from my childhood. It would not be an exaggeration for me to say that their presence and mission had a part in inspiring me to decide to enter into Religious Life and the Sacred Priesthood. I still remember, years ago, how these sisters came as a community at St. Mary's Church, Seeduwa, prayed the Liturgy of the Hours together and how they, with much love and dedication, taught us catechism in the parish. In fact, they were the first Religious Sisters whom I met in my life.

I rejoice with them on this grace-filled and Christ-filled occasion of the 150th Anniversary of their Presence and Mission in Sri Lanka. Added to my joy as a Sylvestro-Benedictine, is the fact that they set foot on the soil of Sri Lanka in the year 1869, that is, during the period of the Sylvestro -Benedictine Administration of the Southern Vicariate of Sri Lanka with Colombo as its centre under the pastoral leadership of Most Rev.Dr.Dom Hilarion Sillani OSB as Vicar Apostolic, who welcomed them with open arms into his Vicariate.

I am happy to be associated with the Good Shepherd Sisters on this occasion of praising and thanking God Almighty for the mirabilia He has worked through them for the people of Sri Lanka and to extend to them my heart-felt and prayerful felicitations and congratulations.

+ Cletus Chandrasiri Perera OSB

Bishop of Rathnapura



Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Ponniah

Bishop of Batticaloa Diocese

I am indeed very glad to write these few lines of felicitation when the Good Shepherd Congregation joyfully celebrates 150 years of Good Shepherd presence in Sri Lanka on 18th May, 2019.

Every celebration is an occasion to remember with gratitude for the mighty works done by the Merciful Father and Jesus our Good Shepherd and the powerful guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Your awesome presence of 150 years in the Country will be ever cherished with wonder and joy. Your pioneers established the first convent like a small seed with the hope that one day it will grow into a big tree. Your dedicated services to the marginalized, orphans, unwed mothers, widows and poor have helped you to spread your branches almost in all the Dioceses. Your founder members might have been foreign missionaries, but today you celebrate 150 years with local vocations.

On this occasion of 150 Jubilee celebrations of its foundation may I wish God's abundant blessings, prayers and protection. Congratulations and Best Wishes to all the members of Good Shepherd Congregation. We salute the Good Shepherd Sisters for their 150 years of glorious service to the broken humanity. May this great work continue for many more years.

Best Compliments from ;

In union with prayers.

Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Ponniah

Bishop of Batticaloa Diocese



MESSAGE FROM

+ Norbert M.Andradi

Bishop of Anuradhapura

It gives me great pleasure to be united with all those who give thanks to the Lord as the Good Shepherd Sisters celebrate 150 years of their service in Sri Lanka and glorify the Lord for the graces conferred upon them. I was privileged to have been taught by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd right at the beginning of my schooling. They taught me the basic of Christian Faith. Many others uilt on the solid foundation laid by the Good Shepherd Sisters.

As years passed by I also had the good fortune and the privilege of being able to cooperate with the Sisters in a number of places seeking to build up the lives of many, young and old, particularly in the Diocese of Anuradhapura. I recall with a particular sense of gratitude their cooperation in enabling so many young women to rediscover their God –given image and the dignity in keeping with the distinct Charism of the Congregation. The Lord has showered many blessings upon thousands as they spent themselves in the field of education enabling so many to brighten up their lives by learning to be truly women of true erudition. The lives of so many have been blessed by the services of many sisters as they assisted so many men and women in the evening of their lives. Many hundreds have been enabled to end their earthly sojourn in peace and thanksgiving to God as so many sisters served in many Homes for Elders. Therefore, there are many reasons to be thankful to God for the dedicated services all along the long span of 150 years.

I believe that the particular Charism of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd is increasingly relevant in a context where the dignity of children and young women continue to be challenged and threatened where the lives of the young are subject to increasing moral and physical dangers. I pray that the Lord may bless you with many vocations so that you will be in a position to continue your good work among the needy both here in Sri Lanka and Elsewhere.
Let us also take this opportunity to recall with much thanksgiving the services , the commitments of so many of those whom the Lord has called to Himself. May they continue from their heavenly abode to commend to God those who continue to labour here below.

Bishop Norbert M.Andradi, O.M.I.

Bishop of Anuradhapura



+ Raymond Wickramasinghe

Bishop of Galle

Greetings to you in the Lord !

“I am the Good Shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (Jn.10:11).” I am the good shepherd and I know mine and mine know me” (Jn.10:14).

Drawing our common attention to the limitless love and sacrifice of the Good Shepherd, I thank God for the gift of the Good Shepherd Congregation both in Sri Lanka and the Universal Church. I admire your love and concern for the poor and for the most vulnerable. You are ever willing to work in harmony with the diocesan Bishops and ready to spread the message of the Good Shepherd even in difficult areas and parishes. I appreciate your willing services in our diocese particular for your services in Balapitiya. A New Life is dawned in the life of the young women as they go through the programme in Mosvold Education Centre in Balapitiya. Yes, I truly thank God for you.

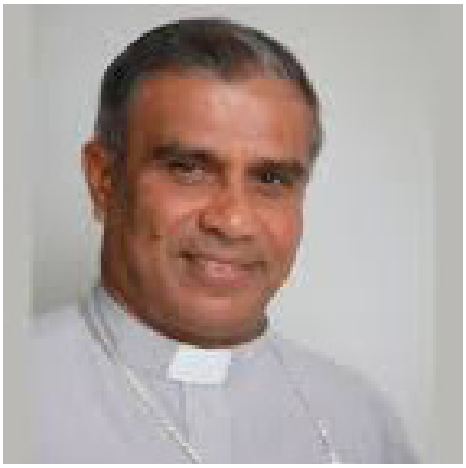
I wish to remind you of the teachings of St.Mary Euphrasia:” My dear daughters, what charity and compassion you must have for these souls whom the Holy Church places in your charge in the name of the Divine Shepherd and of their tender Mother Mary. Love them; love them very much. Console and strengthen these troubled souls; make them happy, make them very happy, by the grace of God. Do not forget that you will win hearts to Our Lord only by charity”. (St. Mary Euphrasia Pelletier, Foundress of the Good Shepherd Sisters; Gaetan Bernoville, (p.182).

May the above instructions of our beloved Saint inspire during these challenging times. May the Holy Spirit guide you in all your future evangelical undertakings.

Many blessings from the Priests, Religious and the Lay Faithful of the Diocese of Galle.
Ad Multos Annos!

+ Raymond Wickramasinghe

Bishop of Galle



MESSAGE FROM

Most Rev. Dr. Harold Anthony Perera

Bishop of Kurunegala

I have the pleasure in sending this message of felicitation to the Provincial Superior and all the Sisters of Good Shepherd Congregation on this joyful occasion of 150 year celebration of their presence in Sri Lanka. Undoubtedly this is a big mile-stone in the work of evangelization in our country. It assumes greater significance. God has worked out his plan through His Lordship Bishop Hillarian Sillani OSB, Vicariate of Colombo to invite Good Shepherd Sisters for mission in 1867. The pioneer Sisters from France who arrived in Sri Lanka in 1869 have initiated their mission from Kotahena which was then a slum area in the city of Colombo. Amidst numerous difficulties, illness and unhealthy experiences, they carried out the mission until the arrival of Irish Sisters embracing the local culture and situation.

The history apparently displays the evangelical requirements of the country then such as English Speaking Education, General Education, Mission of Orphanages for Destitute Children, Care for Refugee Girls etc, and the mission has also expanded towards caring unwed mothers and their babies. Nayakakanda has been the centre for this particular Apostolate.
As the year 1957 no longer allowed for the entry of foreign missionaries, the Sisters were made aware of the need of looking for local vocations and established a novitiate in 1950 with 03 professed Sinhalese Sisters. Today it has grown to a large tree giving shelter to the needy.

The diocese of Kurunegala has been fortunate to have the presence of the Good Shepherd Sisters at Dummalasuriya from the year 1997. It was mainly for unwed mothers earlier and at present the Sisters are more dedicated towards the pastoral care of the people in their parish and nearby parishes.

Today, more than at any time in history, the Priests, Religious and Laity have to come together to expand the mission of spreading Good News, breaking down all barriers. Faith has to be preserved once again as it was in the history and work against the evil forces of the present society. I pray and wish that the Good Lord may shower His choicest blessings upon all the sisters of Good Shepherd Congregation to continue their mission in the years to come.

Most Rev. Dr. Harold Anthony Perera

Catholic Bishop of Kurunegala (N.W.P.)



MESSAGE FROM

Rt. Rev. Dr. Justin B. Gnanapragasam

Bishop of Jaffna

Congratulating for completing 150 years of love and faithfulness to the charism and mission of the Good Shepherd Presence in Sri Lanka. I wish to express my deep joy and gratitude to you dear Revd. Sisters on this great occasion.

I deeply appreciate your presence in my Diocese of Jaffna and service rendered to my flock, especially to those who need most of our concern, care and love. I am also very much grateful for the courageous, daring and compassionate service you rendered to our people during the period of war and post war era.

It is an act of faith and love to opt to work in the Parish of Navanthurai and to continue to minister to their spiritual, moral and social needs with dedication. The motherly love and protection offered to children and women at Mankulam and Koolavady is remarkable.

The concern you have for their future and steps you take to begin new life into them is very commendable.

May you continue to be true shepherds after Christ and may Our Blessed Mother guide and lead you. May the joy of the shepherd be radiated around, beyond all boundaries. Wish you well.

Rt.Rev.Dr.Justin B.Gnanapragasam

Bishop of Jaffna



MESSAGE FROM

Most Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Fernando

Bishop of Mannar

It is my joy to pen these few words of felicitation for the souvenir to mark the 150 years celebrations of the Good Shepherd Mission in Sri Lanka. A hundred and fifty years of committed service rendered by the Good Shepherd Sisters to the people of our country in the field of education and integral formation is indeed beyond expression in human words.

Teaching is one of the triple functions that Jesus our Lord exercised on this earth. The Sisters had been with extra-ordinary commitment performing this noble task of teaching in the foot steps of their Master and Lord. We remember them all with deep sentiments of respect and gratitude.

When we look at the history it was Bishop Hillarian Sillani who invited the Sisters of Good Shepherd to begin their mission here in Sri Lanka. Accordingly St. Eupharasia Pelletier the Foundress of Good Shepherd Sisters sent four Sisters to begin their mission in our country in the year 1869 April l5'h. The first convent of the Good Shepherd Sisters was solemnly opened by His Lordship Most Rev. Dr. Sillani on 25th April 1869 at Kotahena. Then they started the School in the ,ur. y.ur and began their services to the people in the country' At present the Sisters have spread their wings to 67 locations all over Sri Lanka and 6 in Pakistan. We in the Diocese of Mannar are particularly grateful to the Good Shepherd Sisters for the yeoman Service they have rendered in our Diocese. The care given to the war victims and the various Community Development Programmes in the Vavuniya area has been very precious and priceless. The Sisters carried out their apostolate amidst very difficult circumstances.

All those who had passed through the formation of the Good Shepherd Sisters and their Colleges have adorned our communities in mother Lanka and abroad. The Congregation surely is proud of them all. All these glories of the past are a challenge to the present Community to continue to tread this noble path to their perfection. I wish the Provincial and all the Sisters of Good Shepherd who gather together to celebrate the hundred and fifty years of their mission, God's continued protection and guidance.

Most Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Fernando

Bishop of Mannar



MESSAGE FROM

Rt. Rev. Dr. Christian Noel Emmanuel

Bishop of Trincomalee

I am pleased to write this message of Felicitation Congratulating the Provincial and the Sisters of the Good Shepherd as they celebrate 150th Anniversary of the arrival of the first set of sisters of the Good Shepherd to Ceylon. Every success has a beginning. It was at the invitation of Most Reverend Monsignor Hillarian Sillani, Bishop of Callimui, Vicar Apostolic of Colombo, Mother Mary of Euphrasia Pelletier the Foundress of Good Shepherd Sisters decided to send sisters for the first time to Ceylon to serve in Colombo. Discernment to serve the faithful and save souls was made, communication between the Bishop and the Foundress was done and God did the rest. Though Mother Euphrasia Pelletier was not alive when the first batch of sisters arrived in Colombo and started serving at Kotahena yet she would have been making special prayers on behalf of the Congregation.

Bishop too was very clear in his intention to invite the Good Shepherd Sisters to begin their Mission in Colombo – 'come and begin so useful a work by means of which piety, good morals and good education will be instilled not only into young, virtuous people but also into poor misguided souls'. Sisters too arrived with enthusiasm and missionary zeal.

This noble mission by five foreign nuns with missionary zeal made many young girls join the congregation and now they are serving in 67 locations in Sri Lanka and six in Pakistan. Over 150 years these sisters have served with vigour in the field of education, social work and upliftment of women in all areas always keeping in mind spirituality as their prime exercise.

I congratulate the Superior General , Provincial Superior and all the Sisters of Good Shepherd Congregation on the completion of 150 years of their service in Sri Lanka. I wish and pray that they continue, with the same missionary zeal to serve for the upliftment of women in society irrespective of caste, religion or ethnicity.

May God guide and protect you with His bountiful Blessing to bring more souls to Him.

Rt. Rev. Dr. Christian Noel Emmanuel

Bishop of Trincomalee



MESSAGE FROM

Rt. Rev. J. Winston S. Fernando

Bishop of Badulla

The 150th anniversary of the presence and mission carried out by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd Congregation in Sri Lanka truly an occasion to thank and praise God for calling his daughters to show his love, compassion and mercy by their unconditional commitment to follow his Son Jesus the Good Shepherd.

While the history of the missionary endeavours will be recounted gratefully much of the pain, tears and courageous decisions and steps taken in the last 150 years to accompany the afflicted children, orphans, delinquents, youth, the problematic, the vulnerable women, the unwed mothers and infants, the rejects of the society and elderly are only written on the sands of the earth but engraved on the pillars of the heavenly home.

The greater challenge today is to reach out to such persons to help them integrate themselves in the society than institutionalize them. It calls to break new ground and be renewed in the Holy Spirit"with a great heart and a willing spirit" as St.John Eudes exhorts .

The Diocese of Badulla has been blessed to have the services of the Good Shepherd Sisters at Bandarawela for the last 80 years. We pray that the 150th anniversary will become a spring board for a leap into unknown future known only to God.

With prayerful wishes for God's abundant blessings reserved for those who bear witness to his Son Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd.

+ J. Winston S. Fernando (s.s.s.)

Bishop of Badulla



MESSAGE FROM

+ Benny Travas

Bishop of Multan (Pakistan)

It gives me great pleasure and honour to Congratulate you Sisters on the occasion of the 150th Jubilee Celebration of the Presence of the Good Shepherd Congregation in Sri Lanka.

This is a grand event not only for the Good Shepherd Sisters in Sri Lanka, but also for the Sisters in Pakistan because this Congregation had reached out to this land and had begun missionary work here, and now, the 'fruits of their labour' are visible all around the country.

I still remember, when I was a seminarian working in St. Paul's Parish, Mehmoodabad, Karachi, how impressed I was with the work of the Good Shepherd Sisters who were involved in education in schools, in pastoral care and visitation of the families but especially their charism of assisting women in crises and providing them a safe haven from the horrors of sexual abuse and domestic violence.

Even here, in Multan, the Good Shepherd Sisters have maintained their relationship with the poor and downtrodden and have always shown a big heart to assist the poor and needy girls in education.

On this occasion of the 150th Jubilee Celebration, my prayer for the Sisters is to continue this charism of love for the poor and needy and may the Good Lord Bless you all.

30th March 2019

+ Benny Travas

Bishop of Multan (Pakistan)



MESSAGE FROM

+ Victor Gnanapragasam

Apostolic Vicar of Quetta (Pakistan)

I was delighted to hear that the Good Shepherd Sisters are celebrating the 150 years of Good Shepherd Presence in Sri Lanka. I admire the immense service rendered by the Good Shepherd Sisters in Sri Lanka among the poorest of the poor, the rejected, ostracized, discriminated and oppressed people of the country.

Like the parable of the mustard seed (Mt. 13:31-32) you have spread your branches into other parts of the world, especially to Pakistan.

l, together with the priests, religious and laity of the Apostolic Vicariate of Quetta, Pakistan, join the Good Shepherd Sisters of Sri Lanka, in thanking the Almighty God for the wonderful things He has done to you, and through you t6 the people of Sri Lanka, for the last 150 years, We pray that the Good Lord may continue to shower down His choicest blessings on all of you, so that you may carry on your service to the people of God with greater motivation and dedication, inspired by the charism and example of your Holy Foundress St. Mary Euphrasia.

I wish to take this opportunity to convey my sincere thanks and appreciation for the immense service rendered, and being rendered, by the Good Shepherd Sisters in Pakistan, especially in the Apostolic vicariate of Quetta. Our “Heartiest Congratulations” to all the Good Shepherd Sisters, on the occasion of the celebration of 150 years of your presence in Sri Lankal

May Mary, our Blessed Mother, keep all of you under her maternal protection!

+ Victor Gnanapragasam (O.M.I.)

Apostolic Vicar of Quetta (Pakistan)



MESSAGE FROM

+ Archbishop Sebastian Francis Shaw

Archdiocese of Lahore (Pakistan)

It gives me immense pleasure to congratulate the congregation of Good Shepherd Sisters on their 150th Anniversary of their Mission in Sri Lanka.

On behalf of the Archdiocese of Lahore I admire the wonderful Pastoral care and services to the people of Archdiocese of Lahore since 1976.

Good Shepherd Sisters are having two Convents in Lahore, one is serving the poor and needy through running a Sewing Centre and Montessori at Gulberg and the other serving the affected girls and women who have no one to support in their time of difficulties. They also take Legal remedies for the girls and women facing problems.

I still remember, in 1980 when I was doing my pastoral work at Saint Paul Parish, Mehmoodabad Karachi, I used to visit Good Shepherd Convent with Parish Priest and observed their Apostolate and was impressed for their services to the needy.

I once again congratulate Provincial, Sister Francine Muthugala on celebrating 150th Anniversary of their Mission in Sri Lanka and Pakistan.

19th April 2019

+ Archbishop Sebastian Francis Shaw (OFM)

Archdiocese of Lahore (Pakistan)



MESSAGE FROM

Sr. Ellen Kelly

Congregational Leader

It is with great joy and gratitude that I send this warm greeting to you form Rome
As you prepare to celebrate 150 years of presence in Sri Lanka, formerly known as Ceylon. In 1867 Bishop Hillarian Sillani, OSB received a letter from St. Mary Euphrasia answering his request for Sisters of the Good Shepherd to be sent to his Vicariate of Colombo. However the promise of these missionaries would not become a reality until 1869 due to the illness and death of our Foundress. One can imagine the sadness and sense of loss in the Mother House in Angers, France at her death. They knew no other leader since the foundation of the Generalate. Mother Peter de Coudenhove faced many challenges as she assumed her role as the 2nd Superior General of an expanding Congregation. One of her challenges was to honor the commitment of Mary Euphrasia to send Sisters to this new mission in Asia. The need for education in Ceylon was great and the request of the Bishop was that the sisters open a school. While Mother Peter de Coudenhove agreed to this ministry of teaching, there was a condition set by Mary Euphasia that needed to be honored. A program for "re-education" was to be established as soon as possible andlater along withteaching the Sisters were to opena homefor orphans. As we reflect on your early history we can see common threads that continue to be weaved in our Congregation today. The Sisters sent were faced with many uncertainties, sickness and a lack of human and financial resources and yet they moved ahead to develop programs and connect with other countries in the region. The province of Sri Lanka developed a "missionary" culture intheir early years and sent sisters to almost all the countries of Asia and today they serve in many other countries in our global Congregation. We are grateful to the first Irish missionaries for their courage and the love of the mission that they were willing to risk everything to establish this new foundation. Their spirit lives on in this province. As in many counties there were some people whodid not value our primary mission. However,many lay persons joined to help support your ministries. God's providence for the Congregation is clear not only in past history, but today as the sisters and mission partners respond and reach out to those on the margins. Today around the globe we face many visa issues, but that is not a new challenge as you know from your history when there was a denialof residence visas for foreigners'missionaries which at one point threatened the future of this mission. Once again the province was able to cope and continue to grow.
With the approval of the Holy See on March13,1957 the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Francis Xavier unified with the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd. The two Congregations had a long history together that enabled an amalgamation. Another event that adds to your celebration and gratitude is the foundation in Pakistan on 17thof September 1975. Sister Joseph Deegan asked for volunteers and four sisters generously responded. As in Sri Lanka the needs were great and the sisters responded especially to the poor, especially women and girls. What a wonderful opportunity this 150 Anniversary gives us to read and listen to the stories of the Sisters and Mission Partners whose love and zeal made this celebration possible. Their courage, sacrifices and vision have much to teach us today. When I was a novice in 1966 I remember the stories of your 3rd Provincial, Sr. Mary Good Counsel Mills. She was a good friend of the New York Provincial, Sr. Mary Patrick Mulligan. Sr. Patrick did all she could to raise money and needed items for her friend's mission. She inspired all she met,including the novices, to have an appreciation of the global mission and the creativity needed to develop projects that would empower girls and women. Sr. Mary Good Council was gifted with energy and vision and is just one of your "giants" on whose shoulders you stand today. I am sure you have many more!
The Congregation is thankful for each sister, their families, mission partners, clergy, benefactors and friends who have supported our mission to this day and we hope the spirit of those who have gone before you will inspire you as the mission continues to evolve, as it must, to address the needs of today.

Have a wonderful and blessed celebration! With love and prayers,

Sr. Ellen Kelly
Congregational Leader



MESSAGE FROM

Sr. Zelna Oosthuizen

Congregational Apostolic Councilor for
Sri Lanka / Pakistan - Rome

Celebrate and dance with joy, lift up your hearts to God. Celebrate and sing your praise, sing of God's love." (Lyrics by Monica Brown)

Congratulations !

As you celebrate the 150 years of Good Shepherd Presence in Sri Lanka (1869-2019)

As you celebrate . . . you will remember the past with joy, compassion,
boldness and gratitude….,
remembering those who have gone before you …….
As you celebrate . . . you will embrace the present with gratefulness
and zeal, for God is present in all your plans for God's mission.
As you celebrate . . . you will be beckoned by the future with hope and
courage to strengthen your partnerships through
"Seeing and hearing the good news of Jesus through
The eyes and ears of those who are oppressed, calling
you to respond in radically new ways."
(Congregational Direction Statement 2015)

"Courage - Go forward" (St. Mary Euphrasia)

My prayer for each person in Sri Lanka/Pakistan, who have embraced our mission, is that your presence may transform the lives of all people you encounter, who are in need of God's merciful and reconciling Love.

United in prayer in the great Heart of our Shepherd God,

Sr. Zelna Oosthuizen

Congregational Apostolic Councilor for Sri Lanka / Pakistan - Rome



MESSAGE FROM

Sr. Lilly Devasia

Link Councilor (France)

It is with great joy that I extend my warm greetings and good wishes to the Province Sri-Lanka / Pakistan to the happy occasion of 150 years of the existence of the Province.

I am sure that this momentous year invoke you, dear sisters, special sentiments of emotion and gratitude to Almighty God, as you recall to the historical founding of your province. It is heartening to note that the tiny seed sown by the pioneers who set the foot on Sri-Lank soil 150 years ago, grown into mighty tree by spreading the good news to all over the country as well as other countries.

The mighty tree continue to blossom and yield abundance of fruits as you share the compassionate love of the Good Shepherd in your daily situation.I desire to express my appreciation to each one of you dear sisters, for your precious service towards the humanity, rented with great love and dedication.

I invoke God's blessings and the maternal protection of Mary on you, dear sisters, I pray, that you may bear witness to the merciful and compassionate heartof the Good shepherd in your apostolate of prayer and ministry with renewed fidelity, zeal and enthusiasm. All God's blessings on you dear sisters!

Sr. Lilly Devasia
Link Councilor (France)



MESSAGE FROM

Sr. Mary Francine Muthugala

Province Leader

"We are standing on the shoulders of the ones who came before us,
They are saints and they are humans, they are angels, they are friends,
We can see beyond the struggles and the troubles and the challenge,
When we know that by our efforts things will be better in the end"

Joyce Rouse

Sesquicentennial Celebration is an excellent time for our Good Shepherd Province in Sri-Lanka and Pakistan to reflect on the past and to honour our Foundress and the Pioneers on whose shoulder we now stand. We celebrate 150 years journeying together in shepherding the people of God.has beenan extraordinary journey for us.

As we were preparing for the Jubilee, we had the opportunityto reminisce all thesedear ones who have given us this great legacy. This is indeed a historic moment. I feel a sense of awe and gratitude to St. Mary Euphrasia, our Foundress who responded to the invitation of Bishop Hilarian Silani OSB and gave her consent generously to send the first four sisters to us and for the Irish sisters whose dedication, hope and struggles created this Congregation of Good Shepherd in Sri-Lanka and Pakistan.

Over the years we have grown into a fully established Sri-Lanka/Pakistan Province and now we are proud to say that we have stretched our branches to eleven Dioceses of Sri-Lanka and four Dioceses of Pakistan.

We have spent many moments of shared Sacredness. We have felt the God of Mercy impelling us through the years to respond with even greater urgency to the cry of our wounded world.

We have been trying to deepen our Spirituality at all levels of Formation – Vocation Mission Promotion, Initial and Continuing Formation, Partnership and to strengthen the life of Good Shepherd Communities through personal and communal development and transformation for effective Mission.

We have been evolving in our ministries during the past 150 years while being faithful to the Spirit of the Charism passed on to us by our Founderess St. Mary Euphrasia.As we live and share the Merciful Love of Jesus the Good Shepherd through our life witness and getting involved in various ministries,we have aspecial concern towards vulnerable girls, women and children in our society.

We have tried to increase the impact of Good Shepherd ministries through needs-based planning, best practice based on today, effective project management, monitoring and evaluation, while ensuring equality, effective management and mission sustainability.

Congratulations dear Sisters and Mission Partners! I give praise to our Shepherd God who has used each one of us as His tool to continue His message of Compassion in whatever mission we are involved in. Let our hearts sing with joy today, if we have been faithful to God's call.

Yes, we have a great futureahead, filled with promises from Above. Can we recognize our God with greater zeal, who is alive, among the many who are lost, lonely, ill, neglected, forgotten, abandoned and vulnerable?

Do we have the courage to be Shepherdesses of the future to risk all, for the mission of Love and Reconciliation as we celebratethe150th year of our Good Shepherd presence in Sri-Lanka?

The time is now! The place is here! We are the people! What we do todaybethe footprints of the future.

"Celebrate!You have a heart created to love and be grateful!"
St. M. Euphrasia

Sr. Mary Francine Muthugala
Province Leader

Reaching Out With Open Arms!

“ Gratitude is your inheritance. Engrave it on your heart. ”

St. Mary Euphrasia

Reaching Out With Open Arms !

Appreciating our Good Shepherd Story of 150 years (1869 to 2019)

INTRODUCTION

Our Story is History; and History is Mystery! It is Divine Mystery in the gradual unfolding and unfurling of God's Inconceivable Plan and Designs for His Children! At the Sesquicentennial Anniversary of Good Shepherd Presence in the Province of Sri Lanka / Pakistan, it is awe-inspiring and energizing to look back in wonder , at the past 150 years! As we gaze at the past, hearts tingle and overflow with joy and praise at the outpouring of God's inexplicably gracious, gratuitous and unfathomable Love and Tender Compassion on humanity! And humanity in turn reciprocates, in time and space, with God's Grace and Bountiful Blessings, to leave footprints in the sands of time, for future generations ! These footprints magnify the Name of our Bounteous Shepherd God.

The following Story is not a mere record of History with bare facts and figures. Nay more! It is a record of events and dates, together with an appreciation of the Story of 150 years of Good Shepherd Presence in the Province of Sri Lanka/Pakistan! It is replete with the names of Sisters and others, making it a living and expressive Story of gratitude and warmth!

Our real Story goes back to 1641, when St. John Eudes, founded the Order of Our Lady of Charity of the Refuge in Caen, France. It was founded to provide a refuge for girls and women in moral danger who wished to change their way of life. It was to this same Congregation that Rose Virginie Pelletier, later called Sr.M.Euphrasia Pelletier, Foundress of the Congregation of the Good Shepherd, chose to enter Religious life, making her Religious Profesion of Vows in 1816.

The Mysterious and Evolving Plan of God, constantly active and creative, continued to energize St. Mary Euphrasia, who was never content with anything other than the utmost! As time passed, she yearned to reach out beyond borders and "embrace the whole world". Her magnanimous heart could not be confined to a few only! All needing care and concern, all needing love and acceptance, all needing mercy and compassion, especially the most abandoned, were all within her warm embrace. Thus, after a very painful struggle, borne with deep faith in God's Guiding Hand, she founded the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, as a Generalate, in April 1835,

to “embrace the whole world,” as she said.

And so it was that at such a Momentous Moment as 1835, in this Mystery called History, that Mother M.Euphrasia Pelletier, fired with dauntless courage and missionary zeal, springing from her passionate and audacious Dream,(or was it not God’s Dream!), expressed the response of her magnanimous heart, to reach out, embrace, save, give life, restore to dignity, and gather together all peoples of the world, as spelt out in her own words , thus: “Now we are privileged in having our Institute erected into a Generalate, with many blessings from the Head of the Church. God wants to see our houses all over the world, so you will pitch your tents from end to end of it. One town, one foundation cannot satisfy our zeal. It must embrace the whole world.”

Sri Lanka, was also conceived in this great Dream, as certified by the words of Monsignor Hillarion Sillani, O.S.B, Vicar Apostolic of Colombo, written on 30th March, 1867, who, requesting the “setting up of a Convent in Colombo, for the education of young ladies and the caring of orphans”, also added, “Thank God the monastery is finished, and nothing is wanting that can be desired.... I implore you, do not delay in coming to begin so useful a work .... I beg of you again to send five Religious, ... Do not refuse me!... ”

Recognizing this unmistakable Invitation and Call as coming from the Bounteous Heart of our Shepherd God, the magnanimous heart and missionary spirit of St.M.Euphrasia, hastened to fulfill God’s Dream which she had made passionately her own. She writes: “It is with sentiments of deep gratitude that we received your esteemed letter of 30th March, and hasten to reply immediately and to thank your Lordship for the confidence with which you honor our Congregation by inviting it to your Diocese. ....”

Mother Mary Euphrasia, died of Cancer, in Angers, France, on April 24th, 1868. Before she entered Eternal Bliss on 24th April 1868, St. Mary Euphrasia had already discerned and named the five sisters who would be the pioneers of the Good Shepherd Foundation in Ceylon. Sr.M.Peter de Coudenhove , who succeeded St.M.Euphrasia as the second Superior General, had the honor of commissioning our five pioneering missionary Sisters to Colombo.
The History of the 150 years of Good Shepherd Presence in Si Lanka, falls very naturally into three uneven epochs, namely:

1. THE BEGINNINGS (Inauguration to Eve of Amalgamation)
2. UNION (Amalgamation to Vatican II)
3. POST CONCILIAR ERA .. (Closure of Vat.II to Present Day)

CHAPTER ONE : THE BEGINNINGS

Inauguration to Eve of Amalgamation : 15th April, 1869 to 23rd January,1957

History involves time and space. It does not happen in a vacuum. Therefore the need arises to situate it in the wider perspective of the social, political, religious and cultural background, both national and global. In Ceylon, colonial rule had been firmly established by the British in 1815. Ceylon finally gained her independence, without blood-shed in 1948. This period of the Beginnings was an era when communication and travel were slow, with none of the modern facilities of speedy and advanced modes of Transport nor Communication. In the wider global picture, this period is marred by continued colonization of weaker countries by stronger powers! Furthermore, the two disastrous World Wars of 1914 -1918 & 1939-1945, which devastated the world, had left its permanent scar, taking a heavy toll of life, limb and property !

In the life of the Church, this memorable period spans the papacy of 6 Popes, from Pius 1X to Pius XII. The Bishops in charge of the Diocese of Colombo during this period were 10 in number, from, Monsignor Hilarion Silani, O.S.B. Silv. (1863-1879), to Rt. Rev. Dr. Thomas Benjamin Cooray, O.M.I. (1947-1972). Our Good Shepherd Congregational Leaders during this span of history were, Mother M.of St .Peter de Coudenhove, (1868-1892), Mother M. of St.Marine Verger (1892-1905), Mother M.of St. Domitilla Larose(1905-1928), Mother M. of St.John of the Cross Balzar (1928-1940), and Mother .M.Ursula Jung(1940-1960). The Province Leaders during the first epoch of our Province history were, Mother Mary Prosper Walsh(1924-1932), Mother M Immaculate Hughes(1932-1955), and Mother M. Good Counsel Mills (1955-1973).

1 All direct quotes, extracts and excerpts, as well as historical recordings of facts and figures given herein, are to be found in the Source Materials of the Archives of the Convent of the Good Shepherd, Nayakakanda, or in the Annals of G.S.Convent, Kotahena, as well as in the Annals of the relevant Convents of the G.S. in Sri Lanka and Pakistan.

GOOD SHEPHERD PIONEERS , 15th April, 1869 : In the light of this background, there was prevalent, on the one hand, colonization and land-grabbing, where might was right, with its hunger for power, wealth and prestige,spiraling upwards in both the national and global arena. On the other hand, in the Mystery of God's Plan, there were four humble and committed women missionaries, hearts filled with determination, giving up all they had, in the footsteps of their Master, Jesus the Good Shepherd, leaving France in April, 1869, as servants of God's People, to a land totally unknown to them. The words of St.Mary Euphrasia, " You have a heart to love and be loved.... Courage... Go forward," were probably ringing in their ears, as in lowliness of



" Console and strengthen these suffering sheep; make them by God's grace happy, very happy; this is your duty. Do not forget that you will win hearts to our Lord only by charity."
St.M.Euphrasia

heart and tenderness of love, braving the rough and tough mission of the tropical climate of Ceylon, they came to embrace selflessly, with God's mercy and zeal, the poor, unloved, and marginalized girls, women and children, offering them joy and fullness of life! Thus commenced the God-filled period of 150 years under review, 1869 to 2019. On that blessed and memorable day, 15th April, 1869, the first commissioned Good Shepherdesses, arrived in Colombo. They were, Srs. Marie Euphrasie Goughs, Mary Sacred Heart Masi, Mary Annunciation Marandi, and Mary Suzanne Cardiff. As they set foot on Sri Lankan soil, the Real and Mysterious Presence of the Compassionate Good Shepherd was Inaugurated! Sesquicentennial History in Mystery was set in motion, to the Praise and Glory of Our Shepherd God!

It has been recorded that the four Sister Pioneers "arrived at the Galle Harbour, in the south of Ceylon, from where they travelled to Colombo by horse-carriage. They were first welcomed by the Bishop of Colombo, Monsignor Hilarian Sillani O.S.B., at Philip Neri's Church in Pettah. A procession of carriages and people on foot led them through gaily decorated streets, while music and dancing heralded their arrival to St. Lucia's Church", which is the present Cathedral in Kotahena. The Eucharistic Celebration of Thanksgiving which followed, witnessed the zealous, self-sacrificial offering of their lives to God and His Kingdom, by our first four sister- pioneers. After the Eucharistic Celebration and welcome at St. Lucia's Church, the four sisters were led by Bishop Sillani to their new Convent, up on the hillock, where they were installed with humble jubilation as the first Community of the Good Shepherd in Ceylon, as part of the Province of India.

The Annals of our Convent at Kotahena records that the request made by Bishop Sillani was "for the education of young ladies and to take care of orphans," and on May 1st 1869, the School was inaugurated, with just 8 students. Sr. M.of the Seven Dolours Joly , who was the 5th sister named by St. M. Euphrasia Pelletier for Colombo, arrived on 20th May,1869. She was installed as the first Superior of the Kotahena Community, as well as the Principal of the School which was gradually increasing in strength and vigor. " One of the tasks the Sisters had to pursue was the construction of a Chapel. Consequently the site was blessed on 21st June 1869 and the construction was left in the able and artistic hands of Fr. Stanislaus Tabarrani. The construction of a two-storied building to house an orphanage, began on 21st June 1869, guided by Bishop Sillani. Thus, the first Catholic Convent was set up on one of Colombo's highest points, Kotahena, like a city set up on a mountain!" It has been rightly said that, " the Italian Benedictine Archbishop initiated the venture, while the French Foundress, St.M.Euphrasia, planted the seed which has grown" and has flourished , according to God's Mysterious Plan, in several parts of the island of Sri Lanka and beyond !

Today, the Good Shepherd Province of Sri Lanka/Pakistan, remembers with sentiments



of sincere affection and heartfelt gratitude, St. M.Euphrasia, and her successors as Superiors General, Srs. M.of St. Peter de Coudenhove, Marine Verger, Domitilla Larose, John of the Cross Balzar and Ursula Jung, who continued to send missionary sisters to Ceylon , hailing from France, Belgium, Great Britain and mainly from Ireland. Sisters kept on coming throughout this period till the Amalgamation. Thus, the constant flow of Sisters to and from Ceylon , enriched God's Kingdom with a plentiful harvest of Mercy and Compassion !

HEALTH OF THE MISSIONARY SISTERS : When the Good Shepherd sisters came to Ceylon, Kotahena was a slum area in the city of Colombo, and the whole environment was very unhealthy, to say the least. The harsh climate and the poor health situation in Ceylon at that time, thrust its weight on our missionary sisters who had to undergo much hardship and deprivation. Sr.M.Divine Heart Lindsay died after a short illness on 2nd Deember, 1874. Consumption (now known as Tuberculosis), seems to have affected a number of the Good Shepherd missionaries. Health facilities were almost nil. Sr. M.of St. John the Evangelist Dodsworth too died of consumption in 1876. The death of Sr.M.of St Magdalene Schoocoler in 1878, in Kotahena, due to consumption, is also recorded in the Archives. Sr. Amedee Kennedy too died of consumption in Kotahena, in 1895. It is recorded that from 1870 onwards, a number of sisters fell ill from time to time. Some of them returned to their motherland, while some even reached an early end, and were laid to rest in Ceylon! Sr.M.Suzanne Cardiff, one of the pioneers, was also laid to rest in Ceylon. Srs. M. Seven Dolours Joly, and Mary of the Annunciation Marandi, (also among the five pioneers), returned to Angers due to reasons of ill health. As for Sr. M.of the Sacred Heart Masi (a pioneer), she left for Suez on 7th March, 1880.

FIRST PROVINCIAL CHAPTER, March, 1911: It was during this period that the First Provincial Chapter of the Good Shepherd Sisters was held in Ceylon in March, 1911, in Kotahena, which was then part of the Province of India, which included the countries of India, Burma, Singapore and Ceylon. Till 1924, Ceylon was part of the Good Shepherd Province of India.

NEW PROVINCE OF CEYLON, 1924 : The Mysterious Plan of God keeps on unfolding as this Story clearly reveals. Fifty five years of gradual journeying , with India as the Leader, finds Ceylon as an adult, quite capable of handling her own affairs. Thus, in 1924 Ceylon became a separate Province.

FIRST PROVINCE LEADER OF CEYLON, 1924 - 1932 : With the commencement of the new Province, Mother M. of St.Prosper Walsh was appointed as the First Provincial Superior. She was born in Ireland in 1869, entered the Novitiate in Angers in



1886, and after her Profession as a Committed Religious, "she was missioned to Ceylon in 1890. Her first mission was to our Convent in Kandy. .... She was the Directress of the English School for many years and the Mistress of the Boarding School. .... She was later transferred to Kotahena, and on 28th July 1911 she was installed as Superior of the Convent. At the same time she was principal of the school..... Later she retired from teaching and in 1921, she was appointed as Superior of St. Bridget's Convent till 1924.... In 1924, Mother Mary Domitilla Larose, Superior General of the Good Shepherd Sisters, appointed Mother Mary Prosper Walsh as Provincial Superior of the Province of Ceylon, which responsibility she held till 1932."

The First Provincial Chapter of the Province of Ceylon, was held in March, 1928, with Sr.M.Prosper Walsh as Provincial Superior. Up to 1924, the ministry of the Good Shepherd sisters was confined to schools and orphanages. The Diocese of Colombo realized that a Home of Refuge for girls in moral danger was a necessity. In November 1924, His Grace Archbishop Antonius Coudert, OMI, chose the property for the opening of a Home of Refuge at Nayakakanda, as his Silver Jubilee Memorial. In January 1926, the building was opened. St. John Eudes' section for single mothers was erected in 1938. This establishment facilitated the functioning of the core service of the Good Shepherd Sisters, whose charism was to restore to inclusiveness and dignity, women who were excluded from society and looked down upon as outcasts! Later still, a Creche for the babies, and a Montessori School for toddlers were added. This expansion of Good Shepherd ministry to include the downtrodden and wounded women, young girls and children , marginalized by society, was and is the real "raison d'etre" of the Good Shepherd Congregation. "In 1932, when her term as Provincial Superior was over, Sr. M. Prosper Walsh went to the Convent in Bandarawela to look after the sick sisters. She returned to Kotahena in 1938, and in the same month she celebrated her Golden Jubilee of Religious Profession. From this time her health began to fail visibly... Her illness gradually took its course, till on 21st September, 1939 , she submitted her earthly life to God, and entered her Eternal Reward ! "

SECOND PROVINCE LEADER OF CEYLON, 1932 - 1955 : In 1932, Sr. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Hughes was appointed as the second Provincial Superior of Ceylon, by the Superior General at the time, Sr. Mary John of the Cross Balzar. On 10th March, 1932, Sr. Immaculate Conception Hughes was installed as the Provincial Superior of Ceylon, Burma, and Singapore. Sr. Immaculate had made her First Religious Profession in the Mother House in Angers on 16th July, 1907. As an enthusiastic young Irish sister, she arrived in Ceylon on 13th November, 1907. Her first mission was to educate and take care of the abandoned and destitute girls in the Orphanage at Kotahena. On 8th May, 1922 she was appointed as the Assistant Superior of the Kotahena Community. On 27th August, 1928, she became the Superior of the same Convent. Sr. Immaculate Hughes was involved in the expansion of the Province in Ceylon,



to Panadura, Wellawatta, and Bandarawela, the latter being mainly for the sick sisters, as an Infirmary. She was also responsible for the foundation of Mary Mount Convent in Singapore. On 24th June, 1944, Sr. Immaculate Hughes initiated the Montessori Course of Training , with Professor Dr.Maria Montessori who had arrived in Ceylon for this purpose.

THREE IRISH SISTERS CONFERRED CITIZENSHIP, 1949 : One year after Ceylon gained Independence from British Rule, in 1949, without having made any form of request at all, three of our Irish Sisters were granted Citizenship. They were Sisters Joseph Deegan, Euphrasia Curley, and Francis of Assissi O'Gorman. Sr. Joseph Deegan has shared her experience ,which has been written down thus : "When she had been teaching in school for two years, she was summoned one day to the Kachcheri by the Government Agent... The reason for calling her was that just after Independence, there had been some criticism in Parliament claiming that Citizenship was being conferred principally on the rich, and education was being neglected.

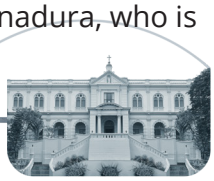
2 At he end of November, 1955, when she terminated her role as Provincial Superior, she was transferred to Nuwara Eliya Convent, after spending 49 fruitful years in Colombo. On 16th July, 1957, she celebrated her Golden Jubilee of Religious Profession in N'Eliya. Gradually her health began to deteriorate, till finally, on 5th January, 1958, she entered her Eternal Reward. Her mortal remains were laid to rest at the Cemetery of Kandy Convent.

Fr. Long, OMI, had obtained citizenship, and he had proposed that the three newly arrived Good Shepherd Sisters, who were highly qualified educationists, should all be given the same honour. So on arrival in the Kachcheri, the Bible was brought. The sisters pronounced their new allegiance to Sri Lanka in public. They, of course, had to renounce their Irish Citizenship! As she swore on Oath, Sr. Joseph Deegan says, she realized how deeply she had committed herself to her new country by this act" On a lighter vein, Sr. Joseph Deegan would say that her new name was "Sr. Joseph Deeganayake ! "

NOVITIATE AT NAYAKAKANDA, 8th December, 195O : As the Annals of Nayakakanda records, on "8th December, 1950, the Convent and the Novitiate at Nayakakanda were blessed and opened by His Grace, the Most Rev. Dr.Thomas Benjamin Cooray, Archbishop of Colombo at 4.30 p.m."

Two postulants from Singapore were admitted to the postulancy on 27th June, 1951. They received the Holy Habit and continued their Novitiate Formation under the guidance of Sr.Mary Anthony Mulkeen, Directress of Novices. On 20th September, 1951 they set sail for Angers to complete their Novitiate Formation and make Religious Profession of Vows.

It is also recorded that: "On Good Shepherd Sunday, 8th April, 1951, we welcomed our first two Ceylonese postulants, -- Sr. Bernadette Gunawardena from Panadura, who is



a convert from Buddhism, and had been teaching in our Convent, Kandy since her Baptism , --- and Sr. Daphne Jayasinghe from Wattala, who lived in Singapore until last year, when her family returned to Ceylon.... On 21st October of the same year,1951, the impressive ceremony of their Clothing took place ... The two dear postulants looked radiantly happy in their beautiful white sarees, and long white bridal veils and bouquets! .... Sr. Bernadette received the name of Sr.M.of St. John Eudes, (in honour of our Holy Founder) and Sr.Daphne received the name of Sr.M.of St. Rose Virginie (in honour of Our Holy Mother Foundress)."

On 7th February, 1953, the third Ceylonese postulant , Marie de Alwis, who had been the Head Prefect of Good Shepherd Convent, Kotahena, entered the postulancy in Nayakakanda. She received the Holy Habit on 8th September of the same year, and took on the name of Sr.M. of the Immaculate Conception de Alwis. She too was sent to Angers to complete her Novitiate and to make her First Profession.

SPREAD OF GOOD SHEPHERD PRESENCE, 1889-1956 : The Good Shepherd Convent at Kotahena, from its inception in 1869 till the year 1955, saw the branching out of ten new foundations of the Good Shepherd. They were:

Kandy : 6th January,1889; the pioneers were Srs.M. of St. Constance Phelan and M. of St.Magdalen de Pazzi Walsh.

St. Bridget's, Colombo 7 : 15th February, 1902 ,the pioneers being Sr.M.Francis Borgia Luigly and Sr.Mary of Our Lady Lourdes Lloyd.

Nuwara Eliya : 19th October, 1902; The pioneers being Sr. Mary of the Holy Name of Jesus Mc'Carthy, Sr. Ida Walsh and Sr.M of St. Constance Cbelaw.

Bolawalana : 14th April, 1923, the pioneers being Mother M. of St.Solange Duschene, Sr. M. of St. Alphonse Laurent. They were joined later by Srs. M.of St. Dominic and Sr. M.of St. Odile, both from France. Thus the whole Community of Bolawalana was French/Belgian, till 1956.

Nayakakanda : 6th May ,1924; the pioneers were Mother Francis Borgia Culleton, Srs.Vincent de Paul McNamara and Our Lady of La Salette Magennis.

Bandarawela : Opened in 1932, as a holiday house , mainly for the sick and ailing sisters.

Wahacotte : Opened on 23rd July, 1944 at the invitation of the Bishop of Kandy, Rt. Rev.Dr. Bernard Regno, OSB. The pioneers were, Srs. Martina, Michael and Veronica, all Irish sisters.

Panadura : 3rd December,1951 when the Provincial Superior was Mother M. of the Immaculate Conception Hughes; the pioneers were Srs .M of the Nativity O'Conner, Philomena Mc'Cabe, and Holy Innocents Ryan.



Wellawatta : 1st July, 1955, when Sr. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Hughes was the Provincial Superior; the pioneers being Mother M.of St. Gerard O'Donnel,(Prioress) Sr.M. of St. Finbarr Twomey(Assistant of the Community and Principal of the school), Sr.M.of St.Columba McCormack and Sr.M. of St.Teresa Mc'Cormack.

Yatiyantota : 12th January, 1956, declared open by Sr. Mary Good Counsel Mills, Provincial Superior from Nayakakanda, the pioneers being Sr.M.Alban Roche, (Prioress), Sr.M. of St. Benigna Reynolds and Sr.M.of St. Cuthbert Mc'Cormack.

The founding of these Houses was not at all easy-going. Our missionary Sisters were not always welcomed by the local people, who already knew of the unpalatable stories and experiences which were recounted , regarding the colonization by the Portuguese, Dutch and the British!

3 Both these Novices later, went to Angers to complete their Novitiate Formation , where they also made their First Profession of Vows.

Since all the Sisters who were involved in the foundations of this period, were missionaries, (Irish, British , Belgian or French), the local people were very vigilant of the movements and activities of the missionary Sisters. Most of all, they were suspicious about 'forced conversions' to Catholicism. However, with the passage of time, when they witnessed and experienced the love and compassion of the Sisters, and their selfless service, irrespective of religion, race, caste or class, especially in the ministry of education of children and young girls, they became friends of the Sisters.

BEGINNINGS OF THE SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS XAVIER : From the beginning of the founding of houses of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd in Ceylon, priests who were concerned were referring to the sisters, Sinhala ladies for teaching as well as for Religious Life. And so several young women were being formed and trained, by the Good Shepherd sisters in several areas, mainly in Kotahena, Kandy and Negombo. As the number of the local sisters increased, they were sent to places , far and wide, such as to Galle in the South, and to other places such as Kandy , Matale... Kalamulla, Katukurunda, Diyalagoda... Mattakkuliya, Mutwal... Pitipana, Duwa, Sea Street and Grand Street in Negombo.

In 1880, Sr. Mary of St. Ignatius Loyola, prioress of the Good Shepherd Convent in Kotahena, obtained permission to commence the Community of the Sisters of St. Francis Xavier, from the Superior General at the time, Sr.Mary of St. Peter de Coudenhove, who approved their Habit as well. In the year 1900, Sr. Mary of St.Domitilla Larose, who had arrived in Ceylon as the Congregational General Visitor, approved the transfer of the Novitiate for all the sisters of St. Francis Xavier, to Negombo. In November, 1902, Sr. Mary Angel of the Blessed Sacrament Lore and Sr. Mary of St. Felix arrived from Angers to be in charge of the Formation of the Novices of St. Francis Xavier.



ARRIVAL OF SISTER SOLANGE, 1909 : On 9th April,1909, Sr. Mary of St. Solange Duschene , a small, humble and energetic nun, bubbling with joy, arrived from Loos, France, and was sent as Directress of the Sisters of St. Francis Xavier to Negombo. Born on 19th March 1878, Marie Laure was the youngest child in the family. At the age of 13, she had decided to belong to God alone. Laure entered the Convent of Angers on 10th June 1891. When the young Sr. Solange wished to go on the Missions, Sr. M.Eulalie - her aunt - said, "Are you really thinking of the Missions? Think again dearest child." Sister Solange replied, "But Mother, I have already thought about it. I do want to go on the Missions.". In the meantime, Fr. Brault from Colombo, went to Angers to get a Good Shepherd sister for Ceylon... A few Sisters were called to the parlour.....,When Sr.Solange arrived he said, "Here is the Sister who should come to Ceylon".

Sr. Domitilla la Rose, Superior General, sent Sr. Mary of St. Solange to Ceylon to be responsible for the Sisters of St. Francis Xavier. On her arrival, 10 Sisters were entrusted to her. Thus it was that Ceylon was blessed to have this great noble woman, to love, serve, embrace and uplift our people, building God's Kingdom in our land, as Directress, and later, as the Superior General of the Sisters of St. Francis Xavier.

On 19th January, 1921, Mother Mary of St. Alphonse Laurent, from Belgium, arrived as Assistant Prioress and Directress of Novices. On 5th February, 1922 , Mother Ange of the Blessed Sacrament Dore who suffered an attack of pneumonia, after a brief period of illness, succumbed to it, and joyously returned to her Divine Creator. A brief excerpt from the Annals of Bolawalana Convent, speaks of her thus, " This joyful giver was always acting grandly, nobly and faithfully. ... Whatever happened to her, the 'oleo laetitia', the oil of joy, was ever seen to overflow upon her and from her. She was a real Ange, an Angel true to her name, much loved by all, and a constant support and joy for the Community." It is no wonder that the land of Sri Lanka has been so hallowed by the lives of so many selflessly committed and joyously dedicated missionaries, the list of whose names, it is regretted, is not possible to unfold without error, due to poor methods of storing at the time! But they are all written in bold letters of Gold in Heaven, giving Glory to God, in unison with the grateful voices of the Province of Sri Lanka /Pakistan !!

In the year 1922, Mother Solange the Directress of the Sisters of St. Francis Xavier, who was living at the Convent in Grand Street, Negombo, was keen on moving the Novitiate away from the hustle and bustle of Grand Street, to a quieter environment. " Mother Solange was a young and energetic woman, small in stature, bubbling with joy, with a clear Vision, sharp Wisdom, and a sincere Commitment to God and His Kingdom. She was a woman of deep faith and undaunted courage. There was such a charm in that small smiling nun, lovable and loving as she was, always captivating others to none

other than God! One could hardly resist the magnetic power of her simple, small yet magical demeanor, which was fascinating to all who met her ! Who could resist the power of God in her? Mother Solange was a woman of deep faith, always searching for God's Will, and eager to accomplish it to the fullest." Mother Solange had a strong support in Mother Alphonse who was the Directress of Novices. Mother Alphonse too was a young nun, towering in height , steeped in God and deeply committed to His Will, amiable and kind, prudent and loving, very understanding of the difference of culture, thinking and behavior patterns of the indigenous sisters. Mother Solange and Mother Alphonse were both French speaking; but they somehow mastered with great facility, the English and Sinhala languages, so that they could communicate with ease with the Ceylonese sisters and with other people as well, in mission.

BOLAWALANA .... SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS XAVIER : 1922

When Mother Solange was " looking for the land marked out by God," as she said, she heard of the availability of a 6 ½ acre plot of land close to the Church of Bolawalana. With the help of the Parish priest , Fr.Mazoyer, O.M.I., and the Hand of Providence extended to them through a kind benefactor, Mr. John Perera, the plot of land was bought for Rs.16,500//-. On 29th August, 1922, the foundation of the new Novitiate building (at present our Spirituality Centre, 'Serene Pastures') was blessed by Fr. Mazoyer, O.M.I. On 25th November, 1923, Mother Mary of St.Alphonse Laurent pronounced her Perpetual Vows at Kotahena. On 30th September, 1928, Sr.M. of St.Dominic, a young Belgian sister, joined the Community of the Good Shepherd at Bolawalana. On 6th January, 1930, she pronounced her Perpetual Vows at the Provincial House in Kotahena. On 27th August, 1946, the new Cemetery at Bolawalana, functioning to the present day, was blessed by Monsignor Thomas Benjamin Cooray, O.M.I., Archbishop of Colombo, who was later consecrated as Cardinal by Pope St. Paul VI.

On 13th September, 1949, Mother Mary of St. Solange Duschene was nominated as the Superior General of the Sisters of St. Francis Xavier. Mother Alphonse was the Prioress of the Community, while being Directress of Novices. On 2nd June, 1952, Sr.M.Odile arrived in Ceylon, rather weak and frail.. She had been in Shanghai, China, during the war, undergoing many hardships and deprivation. She had to leave in 1950 when the Convent was closed down by the Communists. Despite her physical weakness, she was very cheerful and gay, and was happy to join the Good Shepherd Community of Bolawalana. Thus, in 1952, the Good Shepherd Community of Bolawalana comprised of Mother Solange, Mother Alphonse, Mother Dominic and Mother Odile , till the Amalgamation in 1957.

THE PROVINCIALATE AT NAYAKAKANDA , 1955 : A very significant event in the history of the Province was the transference of the Provincialate to Nayakakanda in 1955. That was when Mother M. of Good Counsel Mills (Irish) became the 3RD



PROVINCE LEADER of the Good Shepherd Province of Ceylon. From then on, the centre of all the development and expansion of the Province, including the Novitiate, was from Nayakakanda. Under the guidance and extraordinary leadership and bold Vision and Wisdom of Mother Good Counsel Mills, who was Provincial Superior for 18 years, the Good Shepherd Province of Sri Lanka grew in wisdom and grace, expanded and flourished in God's Kingdom, according to His Own Mysterious Designs.

On 22nd January, 1957, there were 10 Houses of the Good Shepherd scattered in the Dioceses of Colombo and Kandy. There were 117 Missionary Sisters of the Good Shepherd , 3 Temporary Professed Ceylonese Sisters of the Good Shepherd, Srs. John Eudes Gunawardena, Rose Virginie Jayasinghe, and Immaculate Conception de Alwis. 3 Novices (Sr.M.of O.L.of Lanka Wenaden, later called Sr. Marianne ; Sr.Dominic Savio Silva, and Sr,M.Holy Spirit Rodrigo, later called Sr.Marie Phyllis . There were 6 Postulants at Nayakakanda preparing to begin their Novitiate on 8th February . As for the Sisters of St. Francis Xavier of the Diocese of Colombo, there were 395 Professed Sisters in Bolawalana, with 38 Novices and 18 postulants as well. There were 40 Parish Schools, one large Orphanage in Bolawalana, a Home for Elders in Tammita, and Boarding Schools as well (in Ave Maria Convent, Negombo, St. Joseph's Convent, Grandpass, St. Anthony's Convent, Mutwal; Sea Street Convent, and Grand Street Convent, both in Negombo). In the Diocese of Kandy, there were 50 Professed Sisters of St Francis Xavier, with 3 Novices and 7 Houses. There was a Home for Elders at Mahaiyawa, as well as Boarding Schools at Matale, and Nawalapitiya. There were also 3 orphanages, one in Wahacotte, in Gampola and in Matale. That was, more or less, the ground situation of the Province of Ceylon on 22nd January, 1957.

All the Francis Xavier Sisters from both Dioceses, Colombo and Kandy, had been informed by their respective Diocesan Bishops, to assemble at their Mother House, on 23rd January, 1957, at 11.00 a.m.

4 Sr.Marianne gained her Eternal Reward in November, 2018, as this Story was being compiled. She joined the Province of Canada in 1990 , and opted to be there till her end .
5 They were, Srs.M.Stanislaus Vas, Christine Dias(RIP), Monica Fernando, Joan of Arc Rodrigo(RIP) Immaculata Silva(currently – 2019 - at St. Agnes' Community of Elderly Sisters) , and Norma Wickramasinghe (who was a qualified nurse at the General Hospital , Colombo. She later left the Congregation, as she was unable to cope with anything outside nursing!). Srs. Stanislaus, Monica and Immaculata celebrated their 60th Anniversary of Religious Profession in February, 2019.

There was much speculation as to what would ensue! All the Francis Xavier Sisters were eagerly awaiting the dawn of 23rd January, 1957, for the Breaking of the Good News ! Note the gradual unfolding of our Story of Good Shepherd Presence in Sri Lan-

ka! Through the various ministries of the sisters, the hearts of thousands of poor and neglected children, girls. women and families, are touched and healed by the sacrificial love of our dedicated sisters, in whom the people encounter the Divine Shepherd, in the Mystery of the Unfathomable Compassionate Heart of our Shepherd God! Profound and Heartfelt thanks to you, dearly loved and cherished Sisters of Yesteryear! Your footprints left in the sands of time , continue to inspire and invigorate us along the way ! All Glory and Praise be to our Shepherd God !!!

CHAPTER TWO : UNION

Amalgamation to Vatican II: 23rd January, 1957, to 8th December, 1965

Situating this period too in the wider perspective of the political, economic, social, cultural, religious and ecclesial background, both national and global, at the time, one notes that the National Leaders or Prime Ministers of Ceylon during this period were, the Hon.S.W.R.D.Bandaranayake, Hon. W.Dahanayake, Hon.Mrs.Sirimavo Bandaranayake, and Hon. Dudley Senanayake(1965-1969). This period(1959) witnessed the assassination of Mr. S.W.R.Bandaranayake, husband of the Hon. Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranayake. The introduction of Sinhala as the National Language, and Free Education in Government Schools; the curtailment of the inflow of expatriates including missionaries to Ceylon; the non-renewal of Visas for foreigners, the Nationalization of Schools (or the Schools' Take Over) and all the consequences of these factors were keenly felt, with their pros and cons, in the lives of the people and the lives of all Religious as well.

In the life of the Church, this memorable period spans the Papacy of three Popes, from Pius XII whose last year coincides with this era, Pope St. John XXIII(1958-1963), and Pope St. Paul VI(1963-1978). Vatican Council II was held during this period, with the tangible out-pouring of the Holy Spirit experienced by the Church as a whole, and by the Council Fathers and the Periti in particular. Firmly and consciously based on the Word of God, Vatican II set sail on the Waters of the Spirit, with passion and zest, touching every aspect of the life of the Church, in its mission and ministry to the People of God in particular, and to Humanity as a whole, as the 'Household of God'. In the Local Church, Rt.Rev. Dr. Thomas Benjamin Cooray, O.M.I. was the Bishop of the Archdiocese of Colombo. The Bishops of Kandy during this period were, Bishop Bernard Regno, O.S.B.(1936-1958),and Bishop Leo Nanayakkara, O.S.B.(1959-1972). Our Good Shepherd Congregational Leaders during this span of history,(1957-1965), were, Mother Mary of St. Ursula Jung(1940-1960), and Mother Mary of St. Thomas Aquinas Lee (1960-1973). The Province Leader during this historic epoch of the history of our Province, was Mother Mary of Good Counsel Mills (1955-1973), a "God-send" for the time of great challenge and turbulence !

AMALGAMATION, 23rd January, 1957 : This second epoch of our history commenced with the expectantly awaited day, 23rd January , 1957 ! "An eventful day in the history of the Good Shepherd Congregation in Ceylon", says the Annals , Volume I, of Good Shepherd Convent, Nayakakanda. What is written down here is not merely culled from the Archives. It is the lived experience and first-hand account shared by some of those presenting this history!

To all appearances, 23rd January, 1957, looked like a normal day, a bright and sunny morning. But in reality, it was a day fraught with Mystery Profound, with Wisdom Incomprehensible, with a Revelation Unbelievable ! It was indeed a day splattered with unanswerable questions! It was a day of Unfathomable Disturbance! Most of all, it was a day of Deep Faith, when the sisters stood up to the test of Upholding with Child-Like Trust, the Divine Master-Plan with all its profundity, while clinging in the simplicity of one's heart, and from the core of one's being, to the Divine Master Himself! Thus, this Story in Mystery proceeds!!!

ASSEMBLY OF SISTERS AND PROCLAMATION OF DECREE : Sisters dressed in the white Religious Habit, with black scapulars flying in the wind and black veils fluttering to and fro to the dance of the breeze; with a plain silver cross hanging on each scapular; a black cincture around each waist, with the tussle swaying to and fro ; the Rosary hanging on the right side of the waist.... All these Religious were none other than the Sisters of St. Francis Xavier under the Diocesan Superior, the Archbishop of Colombo, Rt. Rev. Dr. Thomas Benjamin Cooray, O.M.I.; nearly 390 sisters in all,(not counting the sick sisters who could not come), were streaming into their Mother House in Bolawalana, and finally converging at the Convent Hall, to meet their Diocesan Shepherd! Eagerness was high! Expectations were rife! The surroundings were calm and solemn! It was 11.00 a.m. of the 23rd January, 1957 !!

As the Archbishop, Dr.Thomas Benjamin Cooray, walked into the hall, smilingly greeting all the sisters, a tense silence prevailed. All stood up as the Archbishop solemnly invoked the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, intoning the Hymn, " Veni Creator Spiritus, Mentes Tuorum visita..." All the sisters joined in singing every verse of the Hymn, which was well known to all, Latin being the Liturgical language at the time!. Having greeted the sisters again with a broad smile and a nod of appreciation, conveying peace and calm, the Archbishop, without much ado, got down to business. He said he had a very important announcement to make, which was sent from Rome. He reminded the Sisters to listen intently to the Voice of the Spirit communicated through the Words of the Holy See, and to reflect and ponder on the implication of its content. Then, after a brief pause for Silent reflection, any questions or clarifications could be handled. Archbishop Thomas Benjamin Cooray then solemnly read out the Papal Indult, communicated by Pope Pius XII, to the Diocesan Congregation of the Sisters of

St. Francis Xavier, informing them and stating that, from the moment of the Proclamation of the said Indult, the Diocesan Congregation of the Sisters of St. Francis Xavier, Colombo, was no more a separate Congregation! It was One with the Congregation of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. Amalgamation had taken place !

In other words, the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Francis Xavier of the Diocese of Colombo, had been absorbed by the Papal Congregation of the Sisters of O.L.of Charity of the Good Shepherd. It was irreversible! All the Sisters of St. Francis Xavier were now, in fact and in reality, Sisters of the Good Shepherd! The Amalgamation had happened! For the Amalgamation to take effect in the life of each individual Sister, she had only to declare, by signing a form which would be given, that she accepts to be a Good Shepherd Sister, which she would affirm a couple of weeks later , by making public Profession of her Vows, with the fourth Vow added, according to the Constitutions and Charism of the Congregation of the Sisters of O.L. of Charity of the Good Shepherd of Angers.

IMMEDIATE REACTION TO THE DECREE : The communication came like a sudden bolt from the blue! This was a moment of deep Mystery! All the Professed Sisters of St. Francis Xavier, to a greater or lesser degree, were dazed and stunned! There was a moment of exterior silence in the midst of inner turbulence! One by one, questioning heads started turning gradually to one another! Then came a barrage of questions directed at the Archbishop. "Is it possible???.... Why???.... How??? ..... Can the Decree not be reversed??? ....Who made the decision.??? .... How did it all happen???? .... Can we write to the Holy Father?? .... We could have easily managed on our own. .... etc. etc." Archbishop Cooray remained calm and composed, in prayerful listening, in sensitivity, with understanding and empathy!.... The Spirit of God reigned, overshadowing the Assembly!! ..... The Uniting and Enlightening Power of the Lord was tangibly at work ; at work through all the darkness, bewilderment, confusion and incomprehension , expressed and unexpressed !

It is important to remember that this was before Vatican Council II! Consultation was not the order of the day! Only a bare minimum of consultation was deemed necessary at the time. Therefore, the explanatory response of the Archbishop was very simple and clear. He said that, after a long period of reflection, and prayerful discernment by the General Council of the Sisters of St. Francis Xavier, the four Ceylonese General Councillors had requested the Archbishop of Colombo and the Holy See, to permit the Diocesan Congregation of the Sisters of St.Francis Xavier, to be united as one with the Congregation of the Good Shepherd Sisters. Having consulted the Superior General of the Sisters of O.L.of Charity of the Good Shepherd, giving time for prayer and discernment, the General Councillors of the Sisters of St. Francis Xavier had made this request. The Holy See, having consulted the Archbishop of Colombo, Dr. Thomas Ben-

jamin Cooray, OMI, next consulted the Superior General of the Good Shepherd Sisters, Mother M, of St. Ursula Jung, and her General Council, as well as the Provincial Superior of the Good Shepherd Province of Ceylon, Mother Mary Good Counsel Mills, and her Provincial Council. It was after all this Canonical Procedure that the Indult of Extinctive Union was promulgated. This Indult was read out to the sisters by him, (Bishop Thomas Benjamin Cooray), as the Archbishop of Colombo and Ecclesiastical Superior of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Francis Xavier.

It was revealed much later, that the Superior General of the Good Shepherd Sisters, Mother M. of St. Ursula Jung, on her visit to Ceylon, in March, 1952, had expressed to Mother Solange and Mother Alphonse, Superior General and Novice Mistress respectively, of the Sisters of St.Francis Xavier, in the Convent premises of the Sisters of St. Francis Xavier at Bolawalana, her earnest desire, her Dream, in the form of a Prophetic Wish, that all the Francis Xavier Sisters of Ceylon, join the large world-wide Family of the Sisters of O.L.of Charity of the Good Shepherd!! Since then, pondering, prayerful reflection, sharing and dialogue had gone on among the members of the General Council of the Sisters of St. Francis Xavier. This was not communicated to any other Sister of St. Francis Xavier for the sake of prudence and confidentiality! That was how things happened in Pre-Vatican times! Consultation and Dialogue was not the norm of the day!!And so it was normal not to share, consult nor dialogue with others, especially when it was a matter of confidentiality with regard to a very grave decision !!

Archbishop Cooray added that the sisters had a choice, to be a Sister of the Good Shepherd, or to move out to another Congregation, or to leave Religious Life altogether. Any one of these three options could be chosen, and the Archbishop himself would assist in facilitating the smooth transition for the Sisters, whatever be the chosen option. Two weeks were given for the sisters, for consultation, if need be, as well as for prayerful reflection, pondering and discernment. At the end of the two weeks, each sister was asked to send to the Archbishop, one's written application, stating one's personal choice, duly signed. All the sisters who chose to remain as Good Shepherd Sisters (for at the reading of the Indult, all became Good Shepherd Sisters in the eyes of God and the Church), would pronounce their Vows, adding the Fourth Vow of Zeal, as Committed Religious of O.L.of Charity of the Good Shepherd , on 13th March of the same year, 1957. On the same day, they would also change their Religious Dress to that of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. Those who wished to change over to any other Congregation, Archbishop Cooray himself would assist them in the process of Canonical Transfer. For those who chose to leave Religious Life and enter the Secular Status, they will also be assisted by the Archbishop in the due process of Secularization. The position was very clear, and time was offered for one's personal decision. The Holy Spirit took over the situation, as was clearly seen by what followed.



AMALGAMATION IN KANDY

On this same day, January 23rd , 1957, all the Sisters of St.Francis Xavier of the Diocese of Kandy, had been requested by their Diocesan Superior, Bishop Bernard Regno, O.S.B., to assemble at Good Shepherd Convent, Kandy, at 11.00 a.m., "for an important communication", as they were told. All fifty Sisters were present, when Bishop Regno arrived. After the chanting of the Hymn, Veni Creator Spiritus in Latin, Bishop Regno very calmly read out the Papal Indult , whereby, it was stated that the Diocesan Congregation of the Sisters of St.Francis Xavier, Kandy, had been rendered extinct, having been absorbed by the Papal Congregation of the Sisters of O.L.of Charity of the Good Shepherd. The same three options offered to the Sisters of the Diocese of Colombo, were offered to the Sisters of St.Francis Xavier of the Diocese of Kandy. A couple of questions were asked by the Sisters. Bishop Regno answered them calmly and clearly. It must be remembered that the Kandy Diocesan Congregation of the Sisters of St. Francis Xavier, 50 Professed Sisters in number, did not have a separate Superior General or a General Council as such. They were in the various houses, six or seven of them, sometimes with the Prioress of the Good Shepherd Sisters of the said house, as their Superior. And so the transition was less of a shock. Thus it happened , that the two Diocesan Congregations of the Sisters of St.Francis Xavier, in Colombo and Kandy, by Decree of the Holy See, were Canonically Amalgamated into the Papal Congregation of the Sisters of O.L.of Charity of the Good Shepherd of Angers, on 23rd January, 1957.

The Annals of Nayakakanda says, on January 23rd , 1957, "An eventful day in the history of the Good Shepherd Congregation of Ceylon. This morning, when the Community assembled in Chapter, Mother Provincial read the Decree from Rome authorizing the Amalgamation of the Good Shepherd and the Francis Xavier Congregations. Immediately afterwards Mother left for Kotahena and St. Bridget's to announce the same good tidings."

A TRUE SHEPHERD OF THE CHURCH : All was not smooth sailing for the Archbishop of Colombo. The Sisters of St. Francis Xavier had been deeply involved in the life of the parishes, wherever they were. They were in over forty Parishes, and fully responsible for the parish schools , under the direction of the parish priest, as part and parcel of the Diocesan network. Quite naturally, the Amalgamation was a challenge for the parishes, to the concerned parish priests in particular, and so, quite obviously, there was murmuring in several parishes of the Diocese of Colombo, because the Sisters of Francis Xavier, now Good Shepherd Sisters, would no longer be under the jurisdiction of the Diocesan Bishop! Archbishop Thomas Benjamin Cooray had even been informed that the sisters themselves were rising against the decision of the Holy See. Therefore, Archbishop Cooray, being a very humble , holy and understanding man, a true man of God, instead of assembling the sisters again, personally went to each and



every sister, as a true Shepherd and servant of God, to the 393 Sisters, living in over 60 houses , who had freely opted to be Good Shepherd, living in over 60 houses . The Archbishop gave each single sister, the time she needed to lay bare her problems and difficulties, if any. And he found that the Sisters had accepted in the light of the Spirit, with freedom, docility and joy,

6 Local Chapter, in those early days, was the term used for the Monthly or Weekly Community Meeting, with a Conference, normally given by the Provincial or the Prioress , as the case may be.

to adjust and adapt themselves to the best of their ability, and move forward with hope and trust, as true Religious, along the path of the Good Shepherd, as was the Call of God.

BOUNTIFUL PRESENCE OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD, 13TH MARCH, 1957 :
Thus, on that memorable day, 13th March, 1957, the Sisters of St.Francis Xavier from both the Dioceses of Colombo and Kandy, four hundred and forty three in all, publicly Professed their Religious Commitment with the Fourth Vow of Zeal added on, according to the Constitutions of the Congregation of O.L. of Charity of the Good Shepherd of Angers, under the authority of the Superior General, and her representative, the Provincial Superior, Sr. Good Counsel Mills. This took place at the Eucharistic Celebration held in the various places that were pre-arranged, such as, at Nayakakanda, Kotahena, St.Bridget's, and Kandy. The sisters were all dressed in the White Habit of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd! The Amalgamation had come to be, and was evident from the external attire as well ! The Province of Ceylon, of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, expanded! Union was mysteriously set in motion, to the Praise and Glory of the God of History in Mystery !

PROCESS OF UNION IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH : 13TH March, 1957 to 1965
There had been many differences in the way of life , and traditions and practices of the former Francis Xavier Sisters and the Good Shepherd Sisters. For example, the Good Shepherd sisters prayed the Divine Office in Latin, and so now, all the local sisters had to learn to chant and pray the Divine office. This was not easy, especially for the senior Sisters! Then again, even culturally, there were certain practices that were irksome to the local sisters. To give one little example : the missionary Sisters wore shoes and stockings, even in the heat, while the Francis Xavier Sisters were used to wearing sandals! Now they were obliged to wear shoes and stockings! There were lots of other little customs and observances which were felt burdensome by the local sisters. They eventually got scrapped off in the process of Renewal and Adaptation of Vatican II. Of course, these small practices were mere accidentals and not the essentials of Religious



Life! On the whole it can truly be said that the Amalgamation or Union was certainly God's Dream, enshrined in His Mysterious Plan which was being gradually unfolded in Our Story !

7 Of the 395, one sister had chosen to join the Cloistered Carmelite Sisters at Mattakkuliya, while another sister had decided to leave the Congregation and be a secular person.
8 Matins and Lauds, Prime Terce, Sexte and None, Vespers and Compline, formed the Hours of the Prayer of the Church, or Divine Office. All these Hours were prayed in Choir by the Good Shepherd Sisters, till some time after Vatican II, when they were reduced to Lauds(Morning Prayer), and Vespers (Evening Prayer).
9 It was none other than Mother Solange. More about her in the ensuing paragraphs.

The Canonical Union that was accomplished had now to be a reality, in love, understanding and maturity, in Spirit and in Truth, in the life of all the sisters and their Communities in Mission.

To facilitate it, was the noble and weighty responsibility placed in the hands of the Provincial Superior of Ceylon, Sr.Mary of Good Counsel Mills. Steeped in the power of the Holy Spirit, and deeply rooted in her Shepherd God, this humble woman of truth, justice and integrity, filled with noble human qualities, while abounding in audacious zeal and magnanimity of soul, was indeed well prepared by God and chosen by Him for this tremendously sacred, sublime and delicate role! Furthermore, God, who can never be outdone in generosity, had made it crystal clear to Mother Good Counsel, as to who would be her visible Right Hand , in assisting her in this very delicate task of facilitating deep union among all the sisters of the Province of Ceylon. Sincere union in communion was the need of the hour.

MINISTRIES RE–ORGANIZED : Hand in hand with the delicate responsibility of the follow-up on the Amalgamation, enhancing the mission of the Good Shepherd, which was mainly to care for and uphold the dignity of abandoned, wounded or marginalized children, girls and women who were unloved and unwanted, or fallen and down-trodden, was also given priority by the Province, mainly through St. Euphrasia's Home for disturbed young girls, St. John Eudes' Home for single Mothers, and St. Joseph's Class for orphaned and destitute children. Our Missionary Sisters were skilled and proficient in these delicate ministries, closely bound with our Charism, and inextricably linked to the heart of each Good Shepherd sister. Every opportunity was afforded by Sr. Good Counsel for the renewal and vitality of this our main concern in mission. Re-organizing went on in full scale. "With the number of girls in St. Euphrasia's Home increasing rapidly, Sr.M.Good Counsel felt that the best way to give these girls a happy and relaxed environment, would be to break them up into smaller groups. Therefore she organized four groups , each with a House Mother. The result was so encouraging that the same method was adopted in our Orphanages as well.... The next step was that the girls were taken, from time to time, in groups by their House Mothers to our



Convents in other areas, where our sisters gave them a warm welcome and generous care, lavishing the Love and Goodness of our Shepherd God on them."

Furthermore, reaching out to the neediest margins, offering dignity and fullness of life to all, in keeping with the signs of the times, was also called for! The challenge faced by the Province was tremendous! It was certainly demanding! Nonetheless, the Spirit and Power of our Shepherd God was with the Province in this delicate task, while surmounting all obstacles !

TRAINING OF NURSERY NURSES : Another feature worthy of record is the Training of Nursery Nurses or House Mothers , which Sr.Good Counsel promoted. Sr. Colette Tanam was sent to England for a special Course of Training, after which she returned to Nayakakanda with great eagerness to start the Programme. With the assistance of Sr. Ambrose Sommers, Sr. Collette set about planning and organizing the Course. It was a very fruitful enterprise, as was seen by all the Akkas, or House Mothers or Care-givers, who were sent to our various Homes and Child-Care Centres, to assist the Sisters in offering our children and girls the best of Good Shepherd Care.

MAWNI : On 9th February, 1957,Sr.Mary of St Dominic,(French Sister), from the Community of Bolawalana, left on transfer to Nayakakanda. Then again, in the continued unfolding of the Mystery of God's Plan, on 16th February, 1957, Mother Solange, known and endeared as Mawni , (which means, our Beloved Mother), by all contacts , whether sisters, clergy or laity, great and small, rich and poor alike,(this our Mawni,) after over 47 years of responsibility for the formation, guidance, direction and progress of the Life, Mission and Growth of the Congregation of the Diocesan Sisters of St. Francis Xavier, and having officially functioned as Superior General of the same Congregation of Sisters, was called upon to go on transfer to Nayakakanda, to assist the Provincial Superior , Sr. Good Counsel Mills, to facilitate the gradual process of the smooth inner union, in concord and communion , of all the sisters, as One Province of the Good Shepherd sisters in Ceylon. Small-made in stature, this humble and saintly Mawni , in the midst of tears on all sides, pouring down the cheeks of Sisters, children, girls women, and even men, this our Mawni, smiling, cheerful, and prompt as she always was to accomplish God's Will even in its minutest detail, left Bolawalana courageously and with composure, saying to all who were sad, "God does not leave you, does He? He is with you ! So trust in Him and smile! " Then, joining her small hands in prayer, she said, "All for you, My God! All for the love of You!" Mawni left Bolawalana as an exemplary daughter of St. John Eudes and St. M. Euphrasia Pelletier, Founder and Foundress of the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd !

Incidentally, this history would be rather incomplete, if at least one little story from a plethora of interesting and life-giving anecdotes and events adorning the life of Mother Solange, is not recounted even briefly at this juncture, before her departure from Bolawalana! One day a thief entered the Convent at Bolawalana during day-time,

and somehow he had managed to enter the Office of Mawni. He was not able to pick up anything substantial, except a few Rupees (which was perhaps valuable enough at the time for him!). A Sister who had seen the thief coming out of the office, alerted the other sisters, who somehow waylaid him, and held him tightly down to a chair, so that he could not move. They informed the police, who made haste to come. Meanwhile, Mawni appeared on the scene, and saw the man , shivering from head to toe, held down by the sisters, who, being proud of their achievement, immediately explained matters to her. What was Mawni's response? "The poor dear, he has been frightened so much that he is shivering .... Have you offered him a cup of Milk or Nestomalt, or something to eat for that matter?" And then, turning to the thief very lovingly, politely and graciously, she inquired, " Would you like tea or coffee? Are you hungry too?... And what about your children?... Can we help them in any way?" Meanwhile the police arrived. Turning to the police, Mother Solange said, " Sir, do not harm him. He is hungry, and he came to get some help from us. We want to help him." The police were dumbfounded! Is this possible ?? ... That was the noble heart of Mother Solange, a Tender-Hearted and Compassionate Good Shepherd to the core, a true Mawni even to thieves and robbers !

"Mawni dear, you have left your footprints in the sands of time, inspiring us even now, to magnify the Holy Name of our Bounteous Shepherd God ! Thank you Mawni dear! We love you.!"

ENDEAVOUR TOWARDS UNION IN COMMUNION : Getting back to February, 1957, Sr. Good Counsel spared no pains in doing her utmost to facilitate union in communion in the Province. Meetings were held with the support of Mother Solange, in various places for open sharing and voicing of thinking and feelings, in the light of the Spirit. After such a sudden Amalgamation, Who but the Holy Spirit could bind diverse persons together, "as Graced Companions, in Covenantal Relationship", in Jesus the Good Shepherd! Covenantal community living involved selfless gifting and oblation in joyous living, needing to be consciously fostered and enhanced. Gradually, with the passage of time, the efforts of all concerned bore fruit in God's Kingdom, as has been experienced by the Province as a whole.

10 Mother Solange remained as a vibrant member of the Provincialate, assisting Mother Good Counsel at meetings with sisters, and also at Visits of the Provincial Leader to the various Convents, given as she was, to much Prayer and Contemplation, as well as Adoration in the Presence of the Blessed Sacrament. As time passed, she became feeble, and suffered from a heart problem. During her final years, Mawni's needs were attended to by Sr.Matthias , who was constantly beside her as an attentive caregiver. Mawni reached her Eternal Reward on 10th November 1965, at Nayakakanda, and was buried in the Cemetery of the Good Shepherd Sisters at Bolawalana.



Speaking of the Province as a whole, it is imperative to note that all the Missionary Sisters of the Good Shepherd in Ceylon at that particular juncture of history, went out of their way,(by word, deeds, expressions and actions),with such selflessness and sisterly love, to facilitate sincere and whole-hearted union in the Good Shepherd Province of Ceylon, even in matters physical and material. It is important to mention in particular the efforts of Mothers Philomena Mc'Cabe, Anthony Mulkeen, Columba Cullen, Euphrasia O'Conner, Finbarr Twomey , Andrew, Francis de Sales Veale, Joseph Deegan, Canice Kinsella, Ignace O'Toole, Cuthbert McCormack, Alban Roche, Francis Assissi O'Gorman, Isidore Conroy, Bridget Landy, Nativity O'Conner, Holy Redeemer, Holy Rosary Lee, Francis Xavier Farrel, Mercy Holms, Madeline Ryan, John the Evangelist, Holy Cross Cox, Cuthbert Mc'Cormack , Teresa Curley, Assumpion Biesty, Euphrasia Curley, Therese Daly, Michael Hanley, John Bosco Curley, Alphonsus Ligouri Burke, Irene Loyola, Nora Keaney, Colette Tanam, Francis Xavier Lewis, O.L. of La Salette, Brigid, John Chrysostom, Patrick Graham, Columba Mc'Cormack, Compassion, Benildus, Blessed Sacrament, John the Baptist, Benigna Reynolds, Paul Pilkinton, John Eudes Pilkinton, Ita Cleere, Holy Innocents Ryan, Albert, Agnes, Joseph O'Niel, Brenden, Alphonsus, Mark, Sylvester, Vincent de Paul MacNamara, Dympna Flynn, Noel Galvin, Catherine of Sienna Connoly, Ambrose Sommers, Cecelia O Byrne, Aloysius, Agnes and a host of other Sisters , who are all remembered with deep gratitude, love, affection and esteem by all the local sisters of Sri Lanka, to date(February, 2019). Your footprints speak loud in the sands of time, reaching out to us today! Thank you, dearly loved Sisters, one and all! Our hearts, in turn, reach out to you with affectionate love and warmth!

ARCHANGELS' BUILDING, 4th December, 1960 : The need in Nayakakanda for more living space for the Sisters, for Meetings, Sessions, Conferences, Retreats and Chapters, was realized as urgent, by Sr. Good Counsel Mills . The Annals of Nayakakanda records: "On September 29th, 1956, the first sod of the Archangels Building was cut .... Rev Fr. T Long, OMI., Australian, undertook to help defray the expense of this immense project ," in collaboration with the Good Shepherd Provincial Superior of Australia, Mother M of the Archangels, a very close friend of Mother Good Counsel Mills. The building , from thence was referred to as Archangels Building. In fact, Australia had been helping the Province of Sri Lanka in various ways, for quite some time. With the Amalgamation, she (Australia) felt all the more reason for extending the hand of Friendship to Sri Lanka at this particular juncture. Today Archangels' Building stands with wide-open arms, accommodating St.Euphrasia's Community of Sisters at Nayakakanda, where the Temporary Professed Sisters too have their quarters. Our heartfelt thanks reach out to Australia. Gratitude to Sr.M.Good Counsel Mills too, and all others concerned, who dared to embark on such a venture.

BONDS OF LOVE : Even though Sri Lanka is a small dot on the map of the world, a small Isle off the Southern tip of India, ever since the Sacred Inauguration of the Good



Shepherd Presence in 1869, our Province has never felt isolated, or left to journey alone as a dot on the map! On the contrary, Sri Lanka has been blessed to become part of a Large Family, embracing the whole world in mission, closely knit globally, together in sincere bonds of internationality and sisterly love, in spirit and in truth, caring and sharing, while encouraging and supporting one another in our Good Shepherd charism and legacy. This blessing of oneness in freedom and joy, has been tangibly felt by our Province at various times and in many ways. Beginning from the Mother House, or rather, from St.M.Euphrasia, our Province has enjoyed copious blessings! Spiritual sharing has gone on all the time, through love and prayer. The fact of being one with the whole world, has made us women with wide-open arms and hearts, fostering in us magnanimity of soul! Internationality is a Blessed Reality! Even material and financial sharing by Provinces has been a common feature from the beginning. Reference has already been made to our bonds with the Province of Australia. Sri Lanka is very grateful to God and to Our Congregation; to St. Mary Euphrasia and to all our Provinces and their Leadership Teams , for the bonds of love that bind us for Mission! May the Lord be Praised !

Outstanding mention needs to be made here of our Province of New York. From the very early 1960s , several of our sisters have been going to the Province of New York for Graduate and Post-Graduate studies, all sponsored by our Province of New York , whose Province Leader at the time was Sr. Mary Patrick Mulligan. Over and above the love and concern showered on our student sisters by the Province of New York, trunk loads of valuable and useful items were sent very frequently to our Province of Ceylon, especially for our children, girls and women. Our hearts filled with deep gratitude and appreciation are one with you, dear Sisters of the Province of New York! Thank you, dear Sister Patrick Mulligan and all the Sisters of the Province of New York to the present day! Blessings from our Shepherd God !

FORMATION : 1957 ONWARDS : A word on the Religious Formation - Initial and Ongoing - needs to be included here. After Sr. Anthony Mulkeen who was the first Directress of Novices in the Province, Sr. Euphrasia O'Conner took over as Directress of Novices and Postulants in 1957. Sr. Nora Keaney was the Assistant Directress.

When the Amalgamation took place, there were 47 Novices and 24 Postulants in all. They were certainly not a coherent group as such, since they were three groups joined as one, having begun in Kandy, or Bolawalana or Nayakakanda. They needed integration as a group, as part of their Formation Programme.

On 4th April, 1957, the three novices from Kandy were sent to Bolawalana to join their new batch mates. On 11th May of the same year, in order to facilitate matters at the beginning, some novices, postulants and their Mistress, Sr.M.Euphrasia O'Conner, went over from Nayakakanda for a couple of days to Bolawalana, to live with the novices there, who had entered Religious Life as Francis Xavier Sisters. During their stay togeth-



er, they came to know one another and got acquainted with one another. It also helped to ease out, if it was necessary, any tension or nervousness that would have remained in the minds and hearts of the novices and postulants who were in Bolawalana. Very many little attempts of that nature took place at all levels , very well thought out and psychologically balanced, which portrayed the good-will present all round. These were indeed very rewarding for the growth of the Province as one large family, without any discrimination or distinction. The last batch of novices from Bolawalana left for the Novitiate in Nayakakanda, where Sr. Euphrasia O'Conner was Directress of novices, and Sr. Nora Keaney was Second Mistress.

As for Temporary Professed(T.P) Sisters, about fifteen of them lived at Nayakakanda, while the rest remained in their communities. Sr. Good Counsel herself was their Directress, with Sr. Columba Cullen as Second Mistress. A very regular programme of guided study and reflection was held by Sr. Good Counsel, during the weekends. T.P. Sisters from other Communities gathered at Nayakakanda for these sessions , mainly on the Congregation and Spirit of the Good Shepherd, including Charism and Mission. Spiritual Nourishment was in no way lacking. Fr. Justin Perera, Fr. Cazughal,o.m.i, Fr. Philip Dissanayake,o.m.i, Fr. Benedict Silva, Fr.Michael Rodrigo,omi, Fr.Perniola,sj, Fr. Thomas Kuriacose,sj, were some of the priests who came regularly for Talks on Religious Life and the Sacraments, on Scripture, Theology and Liturgy, for Novices and Temporary Professed Sisters, and any others who were free at the time.

ON-GOING FORMATION : Nothing could deter Sr. Good Counsel Mills, not even the greatest of set-backs, from fulfilling her responsibilities passionately and courageously as Province Leader and Animator. She was very conscious of the need for deeper integration among the Sisters of the province. She was eager to see the Sisters living with one accord, in union of mind, heart and spirit. Being a woman of prayer herself, and deeply rooted in God as she was, while being so full of His Kingdom, her creative mind kept her busy for the good of the Province. One of the means of Spiritual Animation she used was "Tertianship". This was a method of On-going Formation - Spiritual, Biblical, Liturgical, Psychological and Congregational etc. Tertianship was for sisters who had completed ten years of Religious Life after Final Vows. The Annals of Nayakaqkanda records: " Mother Good Counsel, straightaway after the Amalgamation, from 1958 itself, provided the optimum opportunity for all the sisters to get to know one another, while growing as mature Religious, deeply rooted in God and in union with one another, engaging in the mission of the Good Shepherd.... By organizing Tertianships, Seminars, Thrust Sessions etc.."

VISIT OF SR. ROSE VIRGINIE WARNIG, July 1959 : In July, 1959, Sr. Rose Virginie Warnig, Provincial Superior of Rome, came as Visitor General, to meet all the Good Shepherd Sisters, across the country, individually and in groups. She was very happy with the smooth and steady progress of the Province of Ceylon, where three

Congregations had merged as one. She was impressed by the simple and humble life style of the sisters, who with Charity and Integrity of mind, heart and spirit, moved forward with deep self-sacrifice, tirelessly and courageously, along the path of true and sincere union in communion. As Mother Rose Virginie herself expressed, "The uniting Spirit of God has been hovering over here, and overshadowing the Province of Ceylon."

COUNTRY SITUATION, 1956 Onwards : In 1956, when S.W.R.D.Bandaranaike came to power as Prime Minister, one of the first things he did was to change the official language of the country from English to Sinhala . This caused a lot of disturbance and unrest in the country, sparking off racial discrimination as well. Bandaranayake was assassinated in 1959, even before his term of office ended. In 1960, Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranayake, the wife of S.W.R.D.Bandaranayake , became Prime Minister of the country. With her coming to power, many restrictions and regulations were imposed, which had a direct impact, not only on the national life of the people, but very directly on the Church and on the life and mission of Religious Sisters. The regulations such as curtailing Entry Visas for Residence Permits for foreigners, had a direct impact on missionaries.

TAKE–OVER OF SCHOOLS, 1960 : This was the next challenge. All Primary and Grade III Schools, including all Catholic Schools, had to be handed over to the Government. This was a big blow to an important Good Shepherd ministry, when they had a good number of Primary and Grade III Schools scattered over the country, most of them being Parish Schools, especially along the Western and South Western Coast of Sri Lanka. One of the consequences of the Take- over was that all Schools taken over would be Government managed, and our sisters who were running the Schools as Catholic Schools , would now become government servants! With this would arise the problem of transferring sisters! Furthermore, all school property belonging to the Church would be vested in the Government.

Sr. Good Counsel Mills, displayed her wisdom and stamina in this situation! In consultation with the Authorities of the Local Church, with parishes and their councils, with lawyers and educationists, and in close dialogue with her own sisters, and in collaboration with other Religious Congregations as well, she acted prudently, guiding the Province in the Spirit of the Good Shepherd, to fruitful ministry in God's Kingdom. She did not let the Province be bogged down by the national problem ! Rather, she inspired the Province in the Ways of God. "What we have to give up, we need to give up! What we may keep for the Mission entrusted to us by God, and for the good of the people, we try to keep! .... We need to educate our people too, to steer clear of violence and hatred! No ill-will do we retain! .... We need to move ahead, with 'a song on our lips and a song in our hearts', glorifying God all the while, with our hands lifted up in acceptance of His Holy Will! The Spirit of the Lord is our Guide, and the Good Shepherd

is our Only Way! " Through all the complications entailed, our Province braved the Schools Take-Over, with prudence and dignity, keeping back the Grade I and Grade II schools. A new era opened up for our Sisters , as they were now to bear witness to, and bring the Presence of the Good Shepherd into the State Schools, under strict Government authority and jurisdiction. It is important to note that the whole effort of the Province in this matter was meant to be " for the greater good of the people whom we serve,whatever the cost!"

VISIT OF SR. THOMAS AQUINAS LEE, 1963 : The Superior General of the Good Shepherd Sisters, elected in 1960 was Sr. Mary Thomas Aquinas Lee, from the Province of Great Britain. She was a humble woman of deep wisdom and foresight, a gentle woman of justice and integrity, a passionate, energetic and audacious woman with a global view, a woman steeped in God and zealous for the Kingdom. Her motto was, "In His Will is our Peace," which phrase was affixed on her letterheads. On 17th January, 1963, she came to Ceylon on Visitation, with Sr. Mary of Our Lady, who was a General Councillor. They met the sisters in groups in their various Communities. She encouraged the sisters to radiate goodness, kindness and gentleness to all around, especially in Community and in Mission; very specially, as she said, " radiate goodness, kindness and gentleness to the children, girls and women whom you serve. They long for it, because it heals wounds, and brings a smile to their faces!"

At this Visitation Sr. Thomas Aquinas Lee, seeing the large number of Sisters of the Good Shepherd in such a small country as Ceylon, (this was after the Amalgamation), and knowing the urgent need of missionary sisters for other Good Shepherd Foundations; and also being aware of the situation of restriction of Visas for foreign missionaries, very humbly requested the Irish missionaries for volunteers to other mission lands. After prayer and discernment, a number of our Irish sisters volunteered to be at the service of the Congregational need ! Thus, after a couple of weeks and months, some of our own Irish Sisters who were greatly loved and esteemed by the sisters and by the people of Sri Lanka, bade goodbye to the mission they loved; and with undaunted courage, yet tear-filled eyes, they left our shores for distant lands! Thank You , dear Sisters! Our love is with you! You were great! You were blessed! And you were a blessing as well! You were Shepherds after His own Heart, to the Praise and Glory of Our Shepherd God!

At the end of her Visit, Sr.Thomas Aquinas Lee expressed her joy and gratitude to all the sisters, for the progress in grace which she noticed in the Province, and for the vibrancy of their mission and ministries, through hard and tough times. She commented very specially on the prayerful living of the Sisters in the joy of Community life, which was the channel of power and energy for Mission. She said that "she felt the presence of St.M.Euphrasia in the Province."

Before she left Ceylon, Sister Thomas Aquinas Lee, Superior General, encouraged Sr. Good Counsel, Provincial Superior, to send sisters overseas, to Universities and Colleges of renown, for Postgraduate Studies in fields such as Psychology, Theology and Scripture, so as to be better able to respond to the signs of the times and the demands of the Kingdom. This was something new in the life of the Province, and Sr. Good Counsel was so happy to grab this opportunity , for this was her Dream as well! She had been biding her time to send her sisters for Higher Qualification and competency.

OUR CONTEMPLATIVE SISTERS

Our Contemplative Sisters too have their own story to relate. In the words of Sr. Callista Fernando,cgs, " When we speak about our Contemplative Foundation in Sri Lanka, we cannot forget our dear Mother Good Counsel Mills..... Also, with great gratitude we bring to our minds Sr.M.Therese Daly who sowed seeds among the group of Auxiliary Sisters at Nayakakanda. Sr.Therese Daly was then in charge of the Home . In 1958, one of the Auxiliary Sisters – Sr.Bernadette,(later Sr.Hilda,Rodrigo as a Contemplative) – expressed her desire to be a Magdalen Sister. In 1958 she was sent to Bangalore for her Initial Formation. She made her Vows on 22nd July, 1960. A few months later, another Auxiliary, Sister Dolorosa, and an aspirant, Dorothy Silva, were sent to Bangalore for Formation. Since Visas were curtailed by the Government of India, Mother Thomas Aquinas Lee , Superior General, asked the sisters to return to Ceylon and to begin a Community of Contemplative Sisters. And so it was that in 1963, 5th June, the first Community of Contemplative Sisters was established in Bolawalana, in the former Novitiate of the Sisters of St.Francis Xavier, the first community members being Sr.Hilda Rodrigo, Sr.Charlotte of the Dolours Fernando and postulant Dorothy Silva..... our first Local Leader was Sr. Euphrasia O'Conner, and our dear Mistress was Sr.M.Francis de Sales Veale, who were very affectionate towards us." Our Province extends her heart-felt and loving gratitude to you, dear Sr. Thomas Aquinas Lee, Sr. Therese Daly, Sr. Euphrasia O'Conner and Sr. Francis de Sales Veale, for guiding our Contemplative Sisters during their beginnings ! You were indeed a Blessing to all of us!

MINISTRIES AND INVOLVEMENTS, 1958-1965 : Filled with the Spirit of the Good Shepherd, and the energy, zeal and audacity of St. M. Euphrasia, Mother Good Counsel was a real fire-brand, setting Love ablaze all around her! A passionate woman that she was, steeped in God and giving generous time to Prayer and meditation, gifted with a penetrative mind, she had a wide understanding and perception of the needs of the people , and the Province was alert to respond to the signs of the times. A Day Care Centre was opened in 1958 as a response to the plight of many mothers from poor families in the area of Colombo, mainly shanty dwellers, who had found it impossible



to get employment out of their homes, due to the lack of care for their little children and babies. It functions to this date. Maria Nirmala Girls' Centre, Hunupitiya, 1960 : When the Hunupitiya Oil Mills in Negombo went up for sale, Mother Good Counsel promptly purchased the premises. On the 29th of December, 1960, the four pioneers took charge of the ministry. They were, Mother Ignace O'Toole, Sr.Therese Daly, Sr. Regina, and Sr. Bartholomeus. This was a Centre for young girls. The residential trainees were provided with free lodging and meals. The Training Course lasted two and a half years. The ministry flourished at its inception and years later too, where hundreds of young women who were earlier whiling away their time in the surrounding areas of Negombo, were provided training, and empowerment,being gainfully occupied and able to face the future as strong women with responsibility and dignity. Now, with the Garment factories all over the area of the Employment Promotion Zone, young girls go out to these factories. Thus, the ministry within the premises has gradually given way for the needs of the times. Halgashena Farm , 1965: The Good Shepherd Sisters had a farm at Badalgama. In September, 1965 this farm was sold, and with the proceeds, the farm at Halgashena was bought. A group of Sisters undertook this tough venture. Mother Euphrasia O'Conner was the first Superior. The other co-pioneers were Srs. Paul Pilkinton, Asumption Biesty, Joseph O'Niel, and Ramanie Silva.They faced a lot of hardship to get the Farm going effectively. Lay helpers were also engaged in this venture in various capacities. This skill-training and employment Centre was inaugurated for the total, holistic and sustainable Human Development and Skill Training of young women and girls, and for the Economic Empowerment of Women in the immediate surroundings, as well as from distant areas. It was indeed a response to the signs of the times.

VISITS FROM THE MOTHER HOUSE, 1869-1963 : It is interesting to note that from the time of the Inauguration of the Good Shepherd Presence in Sri Lanka, from 1869 – 1963, we have had the privilege of experiencing the Visits of 3 Congregational Leaders, Sr. Domitlla Larose in 1900, Sr. Ursula Yung in 1952, and Sr.Thomas Aquinas Lee in 1963. Furthermore, we were blessed by the Visits of two General Councilors, in the persons of Sr. Rose Virginie Warnig and Sr.Mary of Our Lady, in 1963. These visits promoted the furtherance of the Union as well as the Missionary and International vitality of the Congregation and of the Province. Furthermore, the Province felt the re-echoing of the words of St. Mary Euphrasia Pelletier, " .... a delightful panorama unfolds: a family whose members scattered over many different countries , are closely united in the bonds of true love; and who are all aiming at the same object --- the spiritual regeneration of sheep who were wandering far from the Good Shepherd's fold." The link with the Mother House and with the Congregational Leaders was a precious legacy bequeathed to us by St. Mary Euphrasia , which was (and still is!), greatly appreciated and valued by our Province. It adds essence and flavor to Our Unfolding Story, to God's Greater Glory!

VATICAN COUNCIL II, 1962-1965 : Vatican Council II , which was held from October 11, 1962 to 8th December, 1965,was inaugurated by Pope St.John XXIII, who did not live to see the completion and Closure of Vatican II. He died in June, 1963, and was succeeded by Pope St. Paul VI. Concluding Vatican II was no easy task. But the Spirit of the Lord was upon Pope St. Paul VI who was fully in the Spirit of Vatican II , and so was able to lead the Council to a Sacred Conclusion on 8th December, 1963. Our Province was very much with Vatican II, as the Sisters were constantly encouraged to be in touch with the proceedings as well as with whatever Documents that emerged from the Ecumenical Council. A sense of responsibility (through prayer and study), was felt by the Sisters, as members of the Universal Church, to make the proposals of Vatican II come alive in their personal lives, in Community, in Mission, in the Congregation, in the Church and in Society.

CHAPTER THREE : POST CONCILIAR ERA

Closure of Vat.II to Present Day : 9th December, 1965 to 15th April, 2019

The Church Leaders during this last epoch of our written Story were, Pope St. Paul VI, Pope John Paul I, Pope St. John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, and the present Holy Father, Pope Francis (2013 onwards.). The Congregational Leaders of our Good Shepherd Congregation were, Sr. M. Thomas Aquinas Lee, Sr. Bernadette Fox, Sr. Gema Cadena, Sr. Lilianne Tauvette, Sr Brigid Lawler, and Sr. Ellen Kelly (2015 onwards). The Province Leaders were, Sr. Good Counsel Mills, Sr. Joseph Deegan, Sr.M.Gonzaga Fernando, Sr Agnes de Sampayo, Sr.M. Nivard Senerath , Sr.M.Nora Keaney , Sr. M. Winifreda Perera , Sr.M.Anita Fernando, Sr.M.Rohini Mendis, and Sr.M.Francine Muthugala .

The background National picture of this period is sadly sullied by confusion and turmoil, terror and intimidation, division and rebellion, insurrection and war. All this meant disfiguring the nation with cruelty, torture, disappearances and killings, while splashing the land with blood! Beginning with the Youth Uprising of 1971, it was a tale of constant in-fighting between various groups and mobs, paramilitary or military, culminating in the Ethnic War of 30 years, affecting the lives of all citizens , including thousands of innocent children, women and families. The Presence of the Good Shepherd was absolutely necessary in these circumstances of division and cruelty.

EARLY POST-CONCILIAR ERA,1965-1973 : Our Province Leader continued to be Sr. Good Counsel Mills, when the universal Church was immersed in the Pentecostal Wave of Renewal, Adaptation and Updating that was unleashed by Vatican II. Chris-



tians all over the world, were inundated by the wealth of Catholic thought unearthed at the Council, calling for 'Aggiornamento' and 'Ressourcement', or the modernization of the Church after 20 centuries of life, in the light of its Sources. The rich content of thinking, spirituality and vision that emerged was formulated into several documents, which could be classified as Constitutions, Declarations and Decrees. While all the Documents, in one form or another, had a bearing on the life of the Church and her Mission, the Decree on 'The Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life' also referred to as, Perfectae Caritatis , and the four Vatican Constitutions were absolutely essential for the Conciliar Renewal and Adaptation of Religious Life. The Good Shepherd Life and Ministry in Sri Lanka thus needed to be revised, revitalized, updated and adapted to suit the needs and demands of modern day Mission in line with Conciliar thinking. Sr. Good Counsel Mills was all aglow in arranging Conferences, Sessions and Meetings for the sisters,(even at Inter-Congregational level at times), so that each and every sister could be an active participant in the process of renewal and updating. Groups of our Good Shepherd Communities gathered together in various places, for reflection and dialogue, to enhance greater participation and involvement, while promoting the responsibility of all in the process of Discernment for Renewal and Adaptation. The Spirit of Vatican II was fully alive and active in the Province. Special Renewal Chapters were also held at Province level, as at Congregational level.

FORMATION AT THE START OF THE POST-CONCILIAR ERA : 1965 - 1971 :

In the years 1965/66, Sr.M. Nora Keaney was the Directress of the Initial Formation of the Novices and Postulants. Sr. Marianne Wanaden was the Assistant Directress. From 1966-1969 Sr.Nora continued her responsibility as Directress, while Sr.Angela Fernando was Assistant Directress. There was a group of 15 postulants and 28 novices at Nayakakanda at the time. Our Province leader, Sr. Good Counsel Mills was very keen on renewing and updating the Novitiate Formation as a whole. Therefore, she encouraged the teaching and thrust of Vatican II , to be introduced into the Formation Programme, with wisdom and zest, bringing about true renewal and adaptation in Religious Formation. This was indeed a source of great encouragement for the Formators, who with eagerness and reflection, embarked on the adaptation of the Novitiate Formation Programme , to the best of their ability, in spirit and in truth. Formation was considered an all-round growth process, from every point of view. All gifts, talents and capabilities of each individual, needed a friendly atmosphere for full flowering. Freedom , integrity and authenticity needed to be some of the main human qualities that characterize every individual in formation.

With the assistance of a number of other Good Shepherd sisters and lay partners, keeping in mind the core teaching of the four Vatican Constitutions, (on Divine Revelation, The Church, Sacred Liturgy and the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World) and the Decree, Perfectae Caritatis on Renewal and Updating of Reli-



gious Life, every effort was made to use the participatory method of learning through dialogue and sharing. A wide spectrum of Biblical, Theological, Liturgical, Psychological, Social and Cultural reflection and activity was incorporated into the Programme, having recourse to a lively and meaningful Methodology, with song, dance, drama and individual 'feedback' presentations by the Formees. In this way, a process of adaptation and renewal was unleashed with the novices and postulants.

What was remarkable was that a tangible spirit of joy, buoyancy, enthusiasm, freedom and authenticity, rooted in Jesus the Good Shepherd, in the light of our Good Shepherd Charism, was noticed among the novices and postulants. Thus, the Conciliar winds of the Spirit brought greater depth and freedom to the lives of these young people, surfacing their God-Given talents and capabilities, to enrich humanity and mission. They began to look more at the unfolding of their lives as true disciples of Jesus the Good Shepherd, each in their own unique way, responding to their personal Call, while growing up to maturity as human persons, spiritually, psychologically and socially, as they journeyed along the Evangelical Way according to the Charism of the Good Shepherd. This process of Initial Formation in the Spirit of Vatican II, was consciously continued in the Formation Programmes that followed.

In 1970, Sr.M.Gonzaga Fernando was appointed Directress of Postulants. The Postulancy was shifted to our Convent in Bandarawela. Until that time the Postulants had been with the Novices at Nayakakanda, though, of course, they had a different Formation Programme from that of the Novices !

INTER-CONGREGATIONAL COURSE ON SISTER FORMATION : In 1966, in keeping with the spirit of Vatican II, and in collaboration with Rev.Fr. Tissa Balasutiya,omi, (the second Rector of Aquinas University College), Mother Good Counsel Mills together with the Conference of Major Religious Superiors, had the wisdom and the courage to initiate, organize and inaugurate the Sister Formation Course at Aquinas University College, a Two Year Course, for groups of Sisters at Inter-Congregational level. That was the origin of the present Sister Formation Course of One year. Sr.M. Joseph Deegan, who was Principal of the Collegiate School of Good Shepherd Convent, Kandy, was appointed as the First Dean of the Sister Formation Programme. Some of their Professors of renown during their two-year period, were intellectual stalwarts and spiritual giants such as Fr.Tissa Balasuriya,o.m.i, Fr. Vitus Perniola,s.j, Fr. Thomas Kuriacose,s.j, Fr. Michael Rodrigo,omi, and Fr. Mervyn Fernando, all of revered memory. The staff also included others such as Srs.M. Immaculate Conception de Alwis,rgs, Clare Fernando, h.f, and Angela Fernando, rgs. Thus the Good Shepherd Province took the initiative to work in collaboration with other Congregations, assisting the smaller Congregations with the resources of the larger ones.



REACHING OUT TO THE MARGINS, 1965 - 1971 : Responding to the signs of the times, and in line with the Spirit and teaching of Vatican II, new places of mission and ministry were opened during this period, by our Province Leader, Sr. Good Counsel Mills. They were, Tarala, Mankerni, Keerapathdeniya, Niripola, Mahalpe and Welcome House, Colombo. The Infirmary at St. Bridget's Convent also had its origin during this period.

PROVINCE LEADER FOR THREE MORE YEARS, 1971 - 1973 : At the Province Chapter held in 1971 , Sr. Good Counsel Mills was re-appointed for three more years. The members of her Provincial Council (Province Leadership Team , in modern terminology) were: Srs. Joseph Deegan, Margaret Mary Samarasinghe, Sabine de Croos, Maurice Lobo, Francis de Sales Veale, and Immaculate de Alwis. Keeping the Mission of the Province energized and highly motivated, while journeying forward with audacious zeal and zest along the path marked out by the Province Chapter, as Good Shepherd Sisters with our very special Charism, got top priority in the thrust of our Province Leader and her Leadership Team. In creative fidelity to the precious Heritage handed down to us by St. Mary Euphrasia and the Congregation, the Province of Sri Lanka embraced the unloved and the unrecognized children, girls and women, with wide-open arms reaching out to the margins, in simplicity of life, living with the smell of the sheep.

11 Srs. Nivard Senerath, rgs, and Hilarina Fernando,rgs, later on, in their turn, functioned as Dean of the Sister Formation Institute of Aquinas, Sri Lanka. They have both reached their Eternal Reward. At present, as this Story is being compiled (in 2019), Sr. Dhammi Fernando,rgs, is the Dean of the Sister Formation Institute(SFI) at Aquinas.

APPRECIATING SISTER GOOD COUNSEL MILLS : While Appreciating our Story of 150 years of Good Shepherd Presence in our Province, among the large number of outstanding names, shines forth the name of Sr. Good Counsel Mills.

There are to date, many Sisters who knew her personally, with her 'heart enlarged by the Spirit, embracing the whole world ! Sr. Good Counsel Mills was a uniquely inspiring Province Leader, a woman of warmth, with clarity of perspective and a penetrative Vision, a discerning mind and magnanimity of soul, " a Shepherd after God's own heart!' It could be said without exaggeration that "the spirit and charism of our Congregation seemed to be 'simply oozing out of her', emitting the fragrance, radiance and flavour of our Noble Call, which indeed, energized and invigorated the Province of Sri Lanka very effectively, fruitfully and tangibly, to the Glory of Our Shepherd God." After 18 years of responsibility as Province Leader, Sr.Good Counsel Mills ended her term of Office gracefully, as Province Leader in January,1973. Immediately after, she was named as Co-ordinator for Human Development Projects. During that period she



resided at Halgashena. Later she was named Local Leader of N' Eliya . As her Term of Office in Nuwara Eliya terminated, she was also getting weak, while her health too was deteriorating rapidly.

Thus, on the 6th of January, 1985, Sr.Good Counsel was transferred to "St. Bridget's Convent to live in retirement... All who associated her or visited her were greatly edified by her interest in each person, her cheerfulness, prayerfulness and her deep union with God." As time passed, Sr. Good Counsel's health deteriorated further, and no medication seemed to be available in Sri Lanka. Therefore, it was felt that it was good for her to return to Ireland where she could get the best of medication available. On 10th April, 1988 , our dearly loved Sister M.Good Counsel Mills left Sri Lanka,(which had become her second Home,) to her land of birth in Ireland. There too she received tender care, but now, with the needed medication as well, till on 27th February, 1991, at the age of 78 years, she returned to her God , " whom she loved with all her heart and strength, and with Whom she had lived all her life , in conscious Companionship." .... Mother dear, you have been a Treasure Trove of Blessings on us and on Sri Lanka! We are blessed to have had you, with your smiling eyes, making the whole wide world, a land of verdant pasture! (A Memorial Stone symbolizing the depth of love and gratitude of the Province of Sri Lanka/Pakistan, has been erected in her name, in the Cemetery at Nayakakanda.)

SR. M. JOSEPH DEEGAN, 4TH PROVINCE LEADER : 1973 - 79

Born on 17th September, 1921, Margaret was the third child in a family of six. Born in Glasgow, Scotland, Margaret and her family were able to return to Limerick, Ireland, only when she was 2 years of age. She grew up to be a bright and intelligent student, always reaching the top in her studies. To quote from her biography written by a Sister of her Community in Limerick : " .... There is in the Irish Christian psyche the call to leave all for Christ, and this growing girl, Margaret, was fully open to that inner voice. She later verbalized and recognized her unique call in the Scripture passage in the Book of Wisdom: 'The Wisdom of God reaches from end to end mightily with strength and sweetness ordaining all things.' This message guided her life and led her to unknown pastures, giving her a trust that set all obstacles at naught.... Margaret completed her Masters in Education with flying colours in 1944. She joined the Novices in Limerick, and having completed her Novitiate Formation, and taking the name , Sr.M.Joseph Deegan, she made her First Profession of Religious Vows on 26th Aug. 1947. By that time, since World War II was over, it was possible to travel to Angers, which she did.... In December, 1947 she arrived in Colombo, and was missioned to Kandy Convent. As she was shown round the school and the town , there were in particular two "inner signs", which she recognized as a personal message. First, in the School Hall, she was struck by the Logo of the School, displayed in a crest which read, "Fortiter et Sauviter". This message of strength and sweetness tied up with her favourite Scripture passage .



It held her attention! It was meant for her! As they visited the town, on February 4th , (the day Ceylon gained independence from British Rule!) there was a brilliant fireworks display, over the Kandy lake, and the British Flag was being lowered and the Sri Lankan Flag raised in public for the first time!" Sr. Joseph says that " she realized in a very poignant manner that now, she was Ceylonese! Later on, when she swore on Oath as at the conferring of Citizenship, she realized how deeply she had now committed herself to her new country of Mission!" She functioned as Principal of the Collegiate School of Kandy Convent for several years. In 1966, she became the first Dean of the Institute of Sister Formation at Aquinas University College, after which she also became the Directress of Temporary Professed Sisters, till January, 1973, when she was elected as Province Leader of Sri Lanka."

DELEGATE SYSTEM OF GOVERNANCE : Due to the large number of Communities and Ministries in the Province of Sri Lanka, at the Chapter that elected her in January, 1973, Sr. Joseph Deegan requested the Chapter Body to consider a more supportive and participatory mode of Leadership. To facilitate the animation and administration of the Province, the idea of two Provinces was mooted by some Chapter Delegates, but it was vehemently opposed by the Chapter Body. The next best was to have a Vice-Provincial as well as a few Delegates, named by the Province Leader, who would form an engaged Team working closely with the Province Leader. The official Province Leadership Team (Provincial Council) would function as stipulated by the Constitutions of the Congregation. The elected Councillors were, Sr. Good Counsel Mills, Sr. Sabine de Croos and Sr. Immaculate de Alwis. Sr. Sabine de Croos was named Vice-Provincial. There were to be two Delegates, nominated by the Province Leader, to assist her in leading the Province according to the thrust of the Province Chapter Direction Statement. The Chapter agreed to this modality of Province governance, which continued almost to the end of the century. The two Delegates appointed by Sr. Joseph Deegan were Sr Agnes de Alwis and Sr. Bernard Wanigasekera.

WIDENING THE GOOD SHEPHERD PRESENCE : Sr. Joseph Deegan's zeal reached out to open several new foundations, such as, Navanthurai in the Northern peninsula of Sri Lanka in January, 1974; Madawachchiya, reaching out to the margins in the Diocese of Anuradhapura, in January, 1974; Kalkudah, in the Eastern Province of Batticaloa, in 1976; Munnakkara, in Negombo, on October 11th , 1976; Valaichchenai, in the Diocese of Batticaloa, in 1977; Mankulam, in the Diocese of Jaffna, in 1977.

CROSSING NATIONAL BORDERS : A very striking feature in the Leadership of Sr. Joseph Deegan , was her thrust to Cross National Borders! " An appeal had come from Bishop Boland of Multan, Pakistan, begging the Good Shepherd Sisters to open a house there. ..... To answer Bishop Boland's request, Sr. Joseph Deegan visited Pakistan to see first hand the situation there. After extensive preparation, on 17th Sep-



tember, 1975, the first batch of four Sisters left their beloved native land, to begin the new Mission of Pakistan, to the poor village of Fatimapur." And from that date, our Province took on the name, PROVINCE OF SRI LANKA /PAKISTAN. Thus, the dream of St.M.Euphrasia to 'cross borders' to make the Good Shepherd Presence felt and experienced in distant lands, became a reality.

At the request of Bishop Armando Trinidad, a second group of Sisters left for Pakistan. They arrived in Lahore - a big city, to open a house for girls and women in crisis situations. The pioneers to Lahore were Sr. Nirmala Abeyasinghe,(Local Leader) Sr. Monica Bastiampillai and Sr. Lucy Murugesu. Sr. Nirmala reminisces , "I started my missionary service in October 1976 when I went with Sister Lucy Murugesu and Sister Monica Bastiampillai to begin the new foundation in Lahore, Pakistan. We began the foundation there and in 1979 I moved to Fatimapur, in the Multan Diocese after finishing my second term as superior. This was a wonderful time of mission when the three of us, after having lived in a rented house, were able to buy the house in Gulberg which is still ours. Monica working in the Bastis with the poor people; Lucy began a Centre for the girls and women. I was able to work in a Private School run by the some religious brothers, and hence assured a little income for the community; I was also involved in the small English speaking community of the Parish, besides giving some tuition classes in English."

VISIT OF SR. MARIE BERNADETTE FOX : June, 1974

Sri Lanka has been blessed with the Visits of our Congregational Leaders, from time to time. In June, 1974, during the Province Leadership of Sr. Joseph Deegan, Sr. Bernadette Fox visited our Province of Sri Lanka /Pakistan . Every Congregational Visit brings with it, new energy and vitality to the Province, linking ever more deeply the Congregational bonds that bind us in our Noble Charism. And so, the Visit of Sr. Bernadette Fox meant a new boost of energy to the Province.

APPOINTED GENERAL COUNCILOR , 1974 : In December, 1974, at the Congregational Chapter held in Rome, Sr. Immaculate Conception de Alwis was appointed Asian Councilor for 13 Asian Countries , from Pakistan to Japan. She functioned in that capacity till 1980.

FORMATION, 1973-1978 : Formation was given top priority in the Province thrust, in line with the ongoing process of Renewal and Adaptation of our Religious Life in the light of Vatican II. Sr Joseph Deegan was able to get the expert services of Fr. Rex Ochersz,sj, for the deeper animation of our Sisters on our Good Shepherd Calling and Mission. His main thrust was, " Go to the Sources of your Good Shepherd Calling. Look at your Constant Model, Jesus the Good Shepherd, and at your Dynamic Models, St. John Eudes and St Mary Euphrasia. The more you delve into these Sources, which are Treasuries, the more you will be able to be rooted deep in your Noble Good Shepherd

Calling for Mission, with zest and zeal."

SISTERS ENGAGED IN THE ANIMATION OF RETREATS , 1976 : Sr. Joseph Deegan had another Dream within God's Great Dream! Her dream was to see Sisters guiding Retreats! This was not the order of the day! Women were not recognized as Retreat Guides! The implicit taboo had to be broken! The capacity of Sisters needed to be surfaced. Sr. Joseph Deegan would quip, "What has to be done, has to be done!" Much study, prayer, reflection and organization was called for. With her guidance and that of Fr. Rex Ochersz,sj, a Retreat- Team of our Good Shepherd Sisters was formed. The Team comprised of Srs. Agnes de Alwis, Bernard Wanigasekera, Vincent Dabare, Hilarina Fernando, Stella Fernando ,Cyrilline Fernando , Kamala Sreenathan and Christina Fernando. This first team of our Sisters underwent training under the guidance of Fr. Rex Ochersz. They were trained to guide Retreat Reflections, to start with. Eventually each were to take on the responsibility of a whole Retreat! Fr. Rex Ochersz gave his wholehearted support to this venture. The maiden Retreats for our own Good Shepherd Sisters, were held in 1976. This Team functioned for a couple of years, guiding Retreats for Sisters. When Sr. Immaculate returned from Rome, after her term as Asian Councilor , she was in charge of this group known as the Spirituality Team. Later on, some of the sisters switched over to conducting Retreats for children and lay people, till the team finally fizzled out in dribs and drabs.

SR. JOSEPH DEEGAN ENDS HER TERM AS PROVINCE LEADER : In 1978, Sr. Joseph Deegan completed her service as Province Leader. Since there was a need for a Community of sisters for the new foundation in Karachchi, Sr. Joseph volunteered to go to Karachchi where she served as Local Leader till 1982. "Tired but happy, Sr. Joseph returned to Ireland in May, 1982, and spent a Sabbatical year in her native Limerick, after which she was transferred to Belfast, Sussex Place, where she became involved in Parish Ministry, helping in the Parish Choir. Again, this was not to last. In 1988 Sr. Winifred who had been Novice Directress of Ireland/Ethiopia, moved to Addis Ababa, and Sr.Joseph replaced her as Novice Directress in the Community of Clifton, Cork. This appointment too was short lived, as an Appeal for a Formation Directress in Kenya rekindled her missionary zeal, and from October, 1989 until the beginning of 1994 Sr. Joseph devoted her talents effectively to the training of the growing number of Kenyan Sisters. Sister Joseph always liked a hidden life, and at this juncture she asked to spend a year with our Contemplative Community in Belfast. She followed their life of prayer for the next year and a half, when she was again called to be part of a little Community in Ballybeg, Waterford. .... After following this Missionary, Sr. Joseph Deegan, for 60 years, moving from continent to continent, she retired to the Community of Clifton, Cork where there is a Convalescent Home attached. Later, when that house was closed, she chose to return to Limerick where it all began many long years ago. Surely she yielded to that initial message of Trust in Providence, 'with strength and sweetness

ordaining all things'. Sister Joseph is now (Feb. 2019), a member of the Good Shepherd Community at Pennywell, Limerick, Ireland." Blest are you, O faithful Daughter of Ireland! Sri Lanka hails you, dear Sister. The fragrance of the Good Shepherd that emanated from your life when in Sri Lanka/Pakistan, continues to be a sweet perfume and a balm of solace to all those who knew you and loved you! We thank you with love and affection !

SR. GONZAGA FERNANDO, 5th PROVINCE LEADER :

August, 1978 – April, 1984 The journey of the Province moved on uninterruptedly according to the master-Plan of God! Thus far, our Province Leaders were Irish Missionaries. It is to be noted that Sr. Gonzaga was the first Sri Lankan-born, Province Leader of Sri Lanka/ Pakistan. Born on 8th February, 1934, in Nagoda, Kandana, she entered the Postulancy in the Congregation of the Sisters of St.Francis Xavier on 29th June, 1952, in Bolawalana, Negombo. On 20th December, 1952, Sr. Gonzaga began her Novitiate with the reception of the Holy Habit. On 21st December, 1954 she made her First Commitment. She completed her Teachers' Training, and was involved in the Teaching Ministry till 1969, serving in several Government Schools. In 1969 she was appointed Directress of Postulants when the Postulancy was shifted from Nayakakanda to Bandarawela. In 1974 she was appointed Directress of Temporary Professed Sisters till 1978, when she was elected as Province Leader at the Provincial Chapter.

OPENING OF NEW VENTURES : During her tenure of office as Province leader, Sr. Gonzaga with her Leadership Team initiated the opening of a couple of new Convents in various areas , when and as requests were made by the relevant Bishops. Our Convent in Valaichchenai was opened in 1979, the pioneers of this new mission being, Srs. Assumpta Maria (Local Leader), Monica Fernando, M. Shiela Perera, and Paschal Fernando. The ministry of Kalkudah was also included in the community ministry. The Convent was opened for the purpose of serving the poor and neglected girls, women, children and families of Valaichchenai and Kalkudah, while supporting and keeping in touch with our Mission in Mankerny as well. The present Community(March, 2019) consists of Srs. M. Sumithra Eliyaspillai,(Local leader), Ranjana Kurusumuttu, Nirmala Sebastiampillai,Sahayamaria Arulrasa, and Marie Benita Lambert David. The Community ministries are, Teaching in the Government School, Child Development Centre, Parish ministry and Community Based Child Protection Programme at Mankerney. The Mankerny Mission, which came to a sudden halt with the bombardment during the Ethnic Conflict in the 1990s, was re-started on 23rd October, 2017, with Srs. Nirmala and Sahayamaria being involved in the Programme. Karachchi , 1982: Cardinal Joseph Cordeiro (Archdiocese of Karachi) made a request to Sr. Gonzaga, the Provincial, to open a house for single mothers and young girls in Karachchi. By that time our Sisters had made a lot of progress in Fatimapur and felt that they could move to another place. Therefore a new foundation was established in Karachi and the Sisters

moved out of the village of Fatimapur. Srs. Joseph Deegan, Catherine of Sienna Connelly and Paulinus Jeyachandran were the pioneers . Marawila , 8th February, 1983 : Invited by Bishop Frank Marcus Fernando, to open a Home for Single Mothers as well as a Crisis Centre for women in need, our first House in the Diocese of Chilaw was opened in 1983, by Sr.Gonzaga, Province Leader,who was accompanied by Sr.M. Euphrasia O'Conner, First Councillor. The pioneers were,Srs. Christine Dias, Scholastica Fernando, Janet Muthugala and Jayantha Meepala. Our Marawila Centre functioned extremely well with the whole-hearted support of the Bishops concerned. Both Bishop Dr. Frank Marcus Fernando(RIP), who invited the Good Shepherd Sisters to his Diocese, and Bishop Dr.W.W. Devasritha Valence Mendis, who continues his concerned assistance to the sisters, have taken pride in the presence of the Good Shepherd Sisters in the Diocese of Chilaw. At present, the Centre is open only as a Crisis Centre, with trained Counselors in the Community.

VOCATION PROMOTION, 1979 : It was at this time that the effort at Vocation promotion came up. The Provincial Chapter of August, 1979, gave a special mandate to the Province Leadership Team to work on Vocation Promotion, due to the dearth of Vocations in the Province. Sr.Gonzaga appointed three Sisters as full-timers for Vocation Promotion. The three members were Srs. Hilda Fernando, Kamala Sreenathan, and Marie Patricia Ferdinandez. Sometime later, two more full-timers were appointed , they being Srs. Constance Gunaratne and Doreen Epitawala. A group of 40 Sisters were chosen to serve as part –timers on the Recritment Team. A general Plan was mapped out to facilitate the efforts of Vocation Promotion. Evaluation of the progress made with reference to the Plan mapped out at the beginning, was a main feature of the Meetings. The Province Leader and the Vocation Promotion Team felt very strongly that "it was for the Love of the Church and the Congregation that we served the Cause of Vocation Promotion."

SECOND VISIT OF SR. BERNADETTE FOX , 1982 : In July, 1982, the Province of Sri Lanka/Pakistan, had the blessed privilege of a Second Visit from our Congregational Leader Sr.Marie Bernadette Fox.

12 Sr. Marie Bernadette Fox expired on 19th December, 2018 , having given of her best to the Congregation, to the Church and to the people at large.

This time she was accompanied by our Asian Councillor, Sr. Peter Jacintho. Each General Visit meant for the Province a greater sharing in the riches of the Congregation, and a deeper oneness with the Good Shepherd Fold in Mission, to the Glory and Praise of our Shepherd God !

SR. GONZAGA IS CALLED TO ROME, 1984 : As Sr. Peter Jacintho, the elected Asian General Councillor from the Province of the Phillippines, got very ill with cancer, she was obliged to resign from her post in 1984 . In fact, she had visited our Province of Sri Lanka/Pakistan in 1982. Here is what Sr.Gonzaga herself has said. "The General Council elected me to replace Sr. Peter Jacintho . I accepted the appointment, and went to Rome on 10th May, 1984.... From 1984 to 1997 I was in Rome at the Generalate, taking the responsibility as Asian Councillor. This responsibility increased immensely my love for the Congregation. It increased my love for the Congregation for it was the heart of the Congregation.... At our General Chapter in 1985, Sr. Gema Cadena was elected from South America. During her time of office, the Congregational language was Spanish. Hence all of us learnt Spanish. It was a beautiful experience. Another language meant you were entering into and welcoming another culture. During this period I was appointed First Councilor of the Congregation. In 1991 Sr. Lilianne Tauvette was elected Superior General. Once again I served for another six years as Asian Councilor on the Congregational Leadership Team. Thus I had the blessed privilege of serving the Congregation with three Congregational Leaders!!... I thank God for these years of many blessings. Experiencing the beauty and richness of the Congregation with its diverse cultures and the reality of the Church, and the way all of us Sisters live out our precious Charism as a lived experience; in face of this experience, all trials , problems and difficulties faded away, making me fully alive. I thank St. Mary Euphrasia for her Courageous Vision handed down to us!"

SR. AGNES DE SAMPAYO, 6TH PROVINCE LEADER , 1984 - 1990 :
Born in the year 1931, Mary Agnes Antoinette had her Primary and Secondary Education at the Convent of Our Lady of Victories in Moratuwa. After her studies, in 1948, she served as an English Teacher at Little Flower Convent at Kadalana. In 1959 she entered the Postulancy of our Good Shepherd Sisters. In 1960, Sr Agnes was sent to Angers in France to complete her Novitiate Training, after which she made her First Profession in Angers. " She engaged in her teaching career as Principal in Kandy Convent from 1967 – 1970, in Matale, 1971 – 1972, and in Kotahena, 1973 – 1984." In 1984, when Sr. Gonzaga was called to Rome to take on the role of Asian Councillor in the Congregational Leadership Team, Sr. Agnes de Sampayo was appointed Province Leader by the Superior General, Sr. Bernadette Fox.

PROVINCE CHAPTER IN AUGUST 1984 : Till the Chapter was held in August, 1984 , Sr. Agnes worked in close collaboration with her Province Leadership Team which had already been functioning during the time of Sr. Gonzaga. The Delegate System started by Sr. Joseph Deegan was also functioning at the time, making the responsibility of the Province Leader, less heavy than before the 1970s. At this Province Chapter, a new Province Leadership Team was elected by the Chapter Body. They were Srs. Nora Keaney, Immaculate de Alwis and Nivard Senerath.

HOUSE OF FORMATION IN KARACHCH, 1988 : When Sr. Agnes Sampayo was Province Leader, Pakistan was gradually growing , and the need arose for a House of Formation in Pakistan. In 1988, a House of Formation was opened in Karachi. The Novitiate was opened on 7th December 1989. In 1989, the Good Shepherd Sisters established a Convent in Multan.

SR. NIVARD SENERATH, 7th PROVINCE LEADER, 1990 – 1994 :
At the Province Chapter held in 1990, Sr.Nivard Senerath was elected 7th Province Leader of the Province of Sri Lanka / Pakistan. Born on 2nd April , 1938, in the village of Yattovita, which belonged to the Parish of Hanwella, she was the third in a family of seven children. Her Baptismal name was Francisca. Since her two sisters were already school hostellers at St Anthony's Convent, Mutwal, Francisca too was sent by her parents to the same boarding school. There, Sr. Margaret Mary Samarasinghe saw a latent vocation to the Religious Life in this little school boarder. Francisca completed her studies as a candidate for the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Francis Xavier, before the Amalgamation. Francisca entered the postulancy at Bolawalana in December 1956. But it was not to last long. The Amalgamation occurred in January, 1957. And so, gradually all the Novices from Bolawalana moved over to Nayakakanda , till finally, the postulants too left Bolawalana for Nayakakanda. Thus it was, that on 5th September, 1957, Francisca too left Bolawalana to continue her Postulancy Training at Nayakakanda. Francisca began her Novitiate Training with the reception of the Holy Habit, taking on the name of Sr. Nivard Senerath.

13 Sr. Gonzaga returned to the Province in 1997... In 2001 she was elected a member of the Province Leadership team. In 2009 she terminated all leadership responsibilities, and was transferred to Munnakkara. Sr. Gonzaga fell ill with an infected leg. After undergoing very severe suffering , with both legs amputated, she entered her Eternal Destiny on 29th July, 2013. She was buried in our Cemetery at Bolawalana.

She made her First Profession in 1960. As a Temporary Professed Sister,she was sent to the EAPI(East Asian Pastoral Institute) for further Training and Skill Building. She also did a course on Education in India. She made her Final Commitment on 21st December, 1965.

In 1966, Sr. Nivard was one of first batch of Temporary Professed Sisters to follow the Sister Formation Course, with Sr. Joseph Deegan as Dean, at Aquinas. In 1969 she served as Second Mistress of Novices for a short time. She then went to St. Aloysius Seminary at Borella to teach English at the Seminary. In 1973 she became the Dean of the Sister Formation Institute at Aquinas. When she moved out from the role of Dean of the Sister Formation Institute at Aquinas, handing over the role to Sr. Hilarina

Fernando, she was assigned to the Teaching Ministry, at St. Bridget's and then at St. Lawrence's School at Wellawatta where she served as a very popular Principal. It was while she was Principal at Wellawatta, that she was elected Province Leader at the Chapter of 1990. Her Province Leadership Team consisted of Srs. Winifreda Perera, Nora Keaney, and Vincent Dabare. She nominated as her delegates, Sr. Lawrence Perera and Sr. Solange Fernando, who did most of the visiting of the Communities. Sr. Nivard was indeed a charmingly welcoming person, with a smiling face and eyes. She was constantly emanating joy from her very being, to all around her. She was very approachable to all, be they clergy or laity, rich or poor She was amiable and humble. She was a woman of vision and determination, a very energetic woman spiritually, psychologically and socially. However , physically, she was not very strong. Without her knowledge, the deadly disease, cancer, had stealthily taken grip of her physical being. She fulfilled her role as Province Leader to the best of her ability, with Sr. Nora Keaney, first Councillor, shouldering the major burden of Province Leadership.

MISSION AT AMANDOLUWA , 1993 : In May, 1993, the need for a Service Centre for Women Factory Workers which had been mooted a couple of years ahead, became a reality. The Employment Promotion Zone needed decent hostels for young women who were exposed to the various hazards of the exploitative system of Factories. Sr. Immaculate Conception de Alwis was appointed Local Leader and Directress of the Hostel for young girls. Sr. Bathilde de Silva, and Sr.Christina Fernando were the other members of the Community. This was the only new Mission that Sr. Nivard could inaugurate.

SR. NIVARD SENERATH TENDERS HER RESIGNATION :

By this time Sr. Nivard's health was beginning to wane rapidly. For nearly one and a half years, Sr. Nivard suffered immense pain and anguish, as was testified by Sr. Anne Marie who was her nurse for one and a half years, during which period she moved between Bolawalana and St.Bridget's for rest and convalescence. She was under heavy medication for cancer. Sr. Nivard realized that, in spite of all her will power, she could not carry on any farther. She then requested the Congregational Leader, Sr. Lilianne Tauvette , to relieve her of her responsible role. This request was granted her in May, 1994. Eventually, after enduring much suffering very calmly and cheerfully, Sr. Nivard went to her Eternal Reward on 18th October, 1994. Her funeral service was packed with Clergy, Religious, and lay people, rich and poor alike, testifying to her beautiful Good Shepherd life , which was energizing and life-giving to others. Nivard dear, we remember you with fondest love! You were a true Daughter of St. Mary Euphrasia ! All those who met you, surely encountered the Good Shepherd, in His gentleness, kindness, joy, goodness and compassion, giving Glory and Praise to Our Shepherd God! Thank you, Nivard dear ! Thank you !



SR. NORA KEANEY, 8TH PROVINCE LEADER (INTERIM) : 1994 - 1995

Sr. Nora was born on 11th July, 1933, in Connemara, Ireland. Her Teacher in school had remarked that she was the most brilliant student they ever had! After her Profession of Final Vows, she arrived in Sri Lanka as a missionary on 15th December, 1957. She was named second Mistress of Novices till 1965, with Sr. Euphrasia O"Conner as Directress of Novices. In 1965 she was Appointed Directress of Novices , with Sr Marianne Wanaden as Second Mistress. Sr. Nora was thus involved in the Novitiate Formation of Sisters till the year 1969. Thus, for twelve years, from 1957 to 1969, her ministry was in the field of Formation. Between the years 1969 to 1984, Sr. Nora served at Lama Gramaya, Niripola for one year, after which she went to the National Seminary , Ampitiya, for Philosophical and Theological Studies. Her next assignment was at the Spirituality Centre of the Mother House in Angers. After her service at the Mother House, Sr. Nora returned to her Province of Sri Lanka/ Pakistan. From 1984 to 1994 she served mainly at the Provincial Secretariat, while being a member of the Province Leadership Team as well. When Sr. Nivard Senerath resigned, in 1994, Sr.Nora was appointed Interim Province Leader till February, 1995. At the Province Chapter held in February, 1995, at Nayakakanda, the 9th Province Leader was elected by the Chapter Body.

THE LAST THREE IRISH SISTERS WHO LEFT OUR SHORES : With the end of the Chapter of 1995, the last three Irish Sisters who were still very vibrant and active, Sr. Nora Keaney, Sr. Euphrasia O'Conner and Sr.Dympna Flynn, felt that God was now telling them to return to their native Ireland. And so, they made the humble and courageous discerned-decision, to terminate their missionary endeavour in Sri Lanka and return to Ireland, which they did in 1995. They were the last three Irish Missionaries to leave the shores of Sri Lanka. After one hundred and twenty six years of humble, gentle, loving and caring Good Shepherd service by Irish Missionaries, from 1869 to 1995, their gentle ministry came to an end. During this period they handed down to posterity , the rich heritage of the Good Shepherd Charism, with the Tender Touch of the Good Shepherd, making vibrant His Presence in our Province of Sri Lanka /Pakistan. Sr.Nora rendered , in her own lowly way, very high quality Good Shepherd service, after God's Own Heart! She spent her last years in Ireland, from 2002 to 2004. She was less involved in activity, as her physical weakness was getting the better of her. Eventually she became very ill and suffered immensely. Day by day her health was failing her, till finally, in peaceful calm, she returned to her Creator God on 26th October, 2004. Thank you , Nora dear! You have handed down to our Province, very faithfully, our Rich Good Shepherd Heritage, with our ennobling Charism, for future generations to relish and live ! Thanks so much, Nora dear! We continue to love you, as you continue to smile down on us!

Sr. Euphrasia O' Conner: Born on 8th February, 1923, Margaret O'Conner was the 6th girl in a family of ten children. Peggy as she was endearingly called, was very keen on her studies so as to pursue her Calling. Providentially she met Sr. Ailbe Cosgrave, who at one time, had been in Sri Lanka, but later, due to ill health returned to Ireland, and



was there entrusted the Ministry of Vocation Promotion. "Already Peggy's heart was turned towards Religious Life; moved by the Spirit she spoke of her desire to Sr. Ailbe. Sister was in charge of an Apostolic School in new Ross, Co. Wexford, and now, this was to be Peggy's home for the next three years. She went to New Ross in 1940. There she made her First Religious Profession in November, 1945, and in June of next year she had the happiness of arriving in Sri Lanka. Her first Mission was Kandy and she spent 10 years there, in education and Child Care services. ... In 1957 she was named Directress of Novices, and was responsible for the inflow of Novices from Bolawalana with the Amalgamation. There were only three Good Shepherd novices at the time of the Amalgamation.... While in Kandy, Sr. Euphrasia had passed the GCE O/L in Sinhala. She was thus ready for her responsible role, which she held till 1962. ... Her next challenge was as Local Leader of Bolawalana, when the Contemplative Foundation was established in 1963..... From Bolawalana Sr. Euphrasia was called to take over leadership at the Development venture, Halgashena Farm Training Centre. Her next appointment was leadership at St. Bridget's which she took on in 1971.... She was moved to Hunupitiya in 1974 and appreciated the wonderful work among the poor of the coastal regions.... In 1976 she was named Provincial Treasurer, which responsibility she held till 1995, when she left Sri Lanka to her native Ireland..... On 8th January, 2007, she became suddenly ill... She passed away in peace to her God , who surely welcomed her with wide-open arm, on 16th February, 2010 ." Dear Sr. Euphy, we thank God for your beautiful life! You were a wonderful daughter of St. Mary Euphrasia! Thank you, Sister dear, thank you!

Sr. Dympna Flynn had been serving as a zealous missionary, especially in the ministry of Child Care. She ministered for long in St. Joseph's Cottage, Nayakakanda , always upgrading it for the benefit and welfare of our children and girls. These girls who are now grown-ups, still speak of Sr. Dympna with love and gratitude. Sister was also involved in finding reliable and responsible foster parents who would adopt our babies who were abandoned. Foster parents were mainly from Switzerland, Holland, Germany and Denmark. Her follow-up on these adoptions was outstanding. Most of our babies who have now all grown up, are married and doing very well in life. These Sri Lankans (our babies given in adoption), still thank and bless Sr. Dympna for the great service she has rendered to so many hundreds of them. Dear Dympna, we thank you! Sri Lanka thanks you, for all you've been, and done for the Lord and His Kingdom in Sri Lanka!We love you! We pray for you.

SR. WINIFREDA PERERA, 9TH PROVINCE LEADER, 1995 – 2001 :

At the Province Chapter held in February 1995, Sr. Winifreda Perera was elected as the Province leader. Born on 25th October, 1941, Winifred was the 9th child in a family of 13 children. She had her Primary Education at St. Paul's Convent , Waragoda, and started her Secondary Education at St. Anthony's Convent , Mutwal, Colombo in 1953.



However after 2 years, due to ill health, her parents removed her from the hostel in Mutwal and had her admitted to Ave Maria Convent, Negombo, where she continued her studies up to SSC. Here she was guided by Sister Margaret Mary Samarasinghe the then Principal of the school, to discern her vocation in life. Already in her family there were four Religious Sisters, namely, Srs. Flavia, HF, Gemma,HF, Francoise,AC, and Angel Guardian,RGS. On 21st January, 1959 she entered the Novitiate at Nayakakanda, and was Professed as a Good Shepherd Sister on 28th August,1961. Almost immediately after Profession , she was sent to Bangalore for Teacher-Training and Graduation. From January, 1964 to December, 1966, Sr. Winifreda taught in the Collegiate School of St. Bridget's Convent, Colombo 7, after which she was appointed Principal of the Primary School of Good Shepherd Convent, Kotahena, in which capacity she served from January, 1967 to September, 1968. From October 1968 - June 1969 she completed an Advanced Diploma Course in Montessori for Grades 1-7, in Italy. From July to December , 1969 she taught at Our Lady's School in Nuwara Eliya. From January, 1970 to February, 1973, she was the Principal of the Primary School of St. Bridget's Convent. She was appointed Directress of Temporary Professed Sisters in February 1973, and in September 1973 she was appointed as Directress of the Novitiate. Again from 1978 to 1985 she was appointed Directress of the Temporary Professed Sisters.

From 1985 to 1991 she was Local Leader of Kandy Convent. From May 1992 to April 1994, Sr.Winifreda was at Lama Gramaya, Niripola, caring for less privileged children. In May, 1994 she was appointed Local leader of the Community in Bolawalana. During the period 1991-1995,she was a member of the Province Leadership Team,with Sr.Nivard, and after her death, with Sr.Nora Keaney who held the post of Province Leader. In February, 1995, she was elected Province Leader at the Chapter that was held in Nayakakanda. The theme of the Chapter based on a Scripture text from the Book of Revelations was " Choose Life. " The elected members of her Leadership Team were: Srs. Rohini Mendis, Stella Fernando, Laetitia Cooray, Christina Fernando, Geethani Mallawarachchi(For Pakistan), Callista Fernando, CGS, and Rita Sellambaram,CGS. (Sr.Nora Keaney who was first elected as a Councillor resigned immediately as she had decided to return to her native Ireland.). Two sisters , namely, Srs.Janet Muthugala and Lawrence Perera were appointed by Sr.Winifreda as her delegates to assist her in the administrative affairs of the Province with the mandate given by the Provincial Chapter.

It is important to remember that during this period of our Province History, the Ethnic War was raging in the North and East of Sri Lanka, and lives were lost daily, including innocent lives, causing much suffering and damage to family life and property. It is in these circumstances that the Province had to make a reality of the Theme, "Choose Life," promoting Reconciliation and Racial Harmony which leads to life.

SECTOR COUNCIL IN PAKISTAN, 1995 : In 1995, norms were approved by the General Council in Rome , to establish a Sector Council in Pakistan. Sr. Winifreda Perera, Province Leader, gathered all the Sisters in Pakistan, and inaugurated the



Pakistan Sector Council on 27th October, 1995. This was to facilitate more effective administration in Pakistan, with decisions taken within the country itself, rather than wait for responses from Nayakakanda. The Sector Council in Pakistan was meant to be collectively responsible for the forward journey and growth of the Good Shepherd Presence in Pakistan.

MISSION AT DUMMALSOORIYA, 1996 : At the invitation of Rev. Dr. Raymond Pieris , Bishop of the Diocese of Kurunegala , our first Good Shepherd House in the Diocese of Kurunegala was established on 8th February, 1996. It was specifically to be a Home for single mothers. In November, 1998 a Crisis Centre was also opened in the same premises. At present the ministry is mainly for Pastoral Service.

OUR GOOD FRIEND, FR. ALOY : That's how we referred to him, our good friend Fr. Aloy! An erudite Jesuit, an intellectual stalwart and a spiritual giant! Such was Fr. Aloysius Peiris, sj, brother of two of our Senior Good Shepherd Sisters, Angela and Hermine. Nay more, this great Jesuit, with a wealth of knowledge and contemporaneous thinking, had been, and still is, internationally held in high repute for his lived expertise on Sacred Scripture, Contextual Theology, Consecrated Religious Life, Ecumenical Solidarity, knowledge and links with Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam, Eastern Culture, etc. A great admirer of Vatican II, his penetrative vision, clarity of thinking, and understanding of Social Justice and his remarkable analysis of situations in the light of the Word of God, has made him, one of the most frequently sought Consultants of our time. This, our good friend Fr.Aloy, has been for some time, especially after Fr. Rex Ochersz, sj, the Scriptural, Theological, Contextual and Spiritual Guide, of our Province. When lost in a maze of situations, Fr. Aloy would give the guidelines to follow, or the choices before us in line with our Good Shepherd Charism and Heritage. Heeding the enlightenment received from our good friend Fr. Aloy, meant being rooted in the Word of God, effectively in touch with the modern world and the cry of the poor, alert to the signs of the times, and immersed in our Good Shepherd Charism and Heritage.

SUMMING UP 1995 - 2001 : In the power of the Spirit, and one with our Shepherd God, Sr. Winifreda led the Province with vision and determination, with zeal and vibrancy. She accomplished her Role as Province Leader together with her Leadership Team who supported and strengthened her with wisdom and understanding, working hand in hand with her in leading the Province towards the fulfillment of its mission, engendering fuller life for all. Thus, the Province journeyed on as zealous and dedicated Good Shepherd Sisters, true daughters of St. M.Euphrasia, making the Good Shepherd Presence in Sri Lanka loving and life-giving. Sr. Winifreda terminated her role as Province Leader in 2001.



SR. M. ANITA FERNANDO, 10th PROVINCE LEADER, 2001 – 2007 :

Sr. Anita was born on 12th August, 1947, in Mukkuthoduwawa, (today known as Semuthuthoduwawa), in the Diocese of Chilaw. As she hails from a devout Catholic family, when her wish was to become a Religious Sister, her mother sent her to the Boarding School at Weliveriya to continue her studies. It was there that she met the Good Shepherd Sisters. With the blessing of her mother she entered the Novitiate at Nayakakanda, and made her First Profession of Religious Vows on 29th September, 1970. Sr. Joseph Deegan saw her capabilities as a young Sister, and sent her to Bopal, India to obtain a Bachelor's Degree in Social Sciences. Sr. Anita was appointed Local Leader of the Community at Panadura from 1982 to 1983. Desiring to move towards new horizons, she was commissioned to Pakistan as Local leader of Lahore , Good Shepherd Convent, in January 1984 to replace Sr. Sabine de Croos who terminated her period of service. In Lahore Sr. Anita engaged very zealously in missionary endeavour. She extended her ministry of compassion and love to all around. In 1989 Sr. Agnes Sampayo, Province Leader at the time, opened the Novitiate in Pakistan. Sister Yolande Fernando was the Directress of Novices. On 11th January, 1992 two Pakistani Sisters, Srs. Nuzrath Marie and Sr. Josephine Marie made their First Commitment. Sr. Anita was appointed as the Directress of Temporary Professed Sisters. After fifteen years of loving and dedicated service in Pakistan, Sr. Anita returned to Sri Lanka in the year 1998, and assumed responsibilities as Directress of St. Euphrasia's Home. In the year 2000 she was appointed Local Leader of the Community at Welihena. She assumed responsibilities in January 2000, and in the same year, the Province Chapter was held from 11th to 21st November at Nayakakanda, Sr. Anita was elected by the Chapter Body as the Province Leader from 2001 – 2007.

SECTOR SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT : The members of the Province Leadership Team elected by the Chapter Body were, Srs. Gonzaga Fernando, Irene Madurawela, Cecelia Anthonypillai, Jacintha Maria de Silva, Francine Muthugala, Doreen Epitawela (for Pakistan), Annette Perera, CGS, and Francina Yesiah, CGS. At the Chapter held in November, 2000, it was decided that the Delegate System of Province administration , which was introduced in 1973, during the time of Sr. Joseph Deegan as Province Leader, would be dropped. A new System, which had been discussed and discerned during a couple of years, was officially introduced as the SECTOR SYSTEM , that prevails to date, in the administration of the Province of Sri Lanka / Pakistan. The Province was divided into four Sectors, namely, Colombo Sector, Negombo Sector, Up Country Sector and Pakistan Sector. The Pakistan Sector was already functioning from the year 1995.

FRONTIER MINISTRY AT SINNAPADUWA , 2003 – 2006 :

When Sr. Anita was Province Leader, Sr. Inigo Joachim from India had been invited by the Province Leadership Team to re-think, evaluate and renew our Good Shepherd Mission and Ministries. A broader perspective of the life of the people whom we serve,



while understanding and becoming aware of the socio-economic political and religious reality of life in our time, and responding to the cry of the poor, were the main aspects of Sr. Inigo's thrust. As a direct consequence of the insights received during Sr. Inigo's Sessions, in the light of our mission in Sri Lanka, and with due discernment, we had the inauguration of our frontier mission in Sinnapaduwa.

It is interesting to note that our Mission in Sinnapaduwa, in the Dioceses of Chilaw, did not originate as a Canonical Community. The concept followed was a 'Mobile Community.' This facilitated movement from one place to another, by-passing Canonical encumbrances pertaining to Opening and Closure of a Religious House, etc. On 21st May 2003, the Community of Sinnapaduwa was inaugurated. The pioneers were Sr. Irene Madurawela, who was a member of the Province Leadership Team, Sr. Marie Angela Cooray who served as a member only for three months , and Sr. Sarojini Ranawaka. There was no Local Leader as such. The Community was attached to the Provincialate at Nayakakanda. The main ministries undertaken were: living with and among the poor, house visiting, education of children, support services to mentally weak children, (80 children had been detected in the village), socio-economic and spiritual upliftment of the people etc. Sr Wilma Costa joined the Community in 2004, and has been serving there since then, to this day, February, 2019. On 1st. June, 2006, the Community moved over to Dostarawatta, the members being Srs. Irene Madurawela, Wilma Costa, Shirani Bernadette and Chrishanthi Basil. The ministry was more or less similar to that of Sinnapaduwa. It has been remarked that the Sisters in the Community were very much involved with the people and were one with them, making their own the joys, the tears, the hopes and aspirations of the people. Theirs was an open house, where people could freely enter, just as the sisters were welcomed into all the houses at any time of the day or night.The Sisters were being real Shepherds after God's own Heart.

CONSTRUCTION AND RENOVATION OF ST. AGNES' CONVENT :

It was during Sr. Anita's tenure of Office as Province Leader that our House for Elderly Sisters, at St. Agnes' Convent, got the long-needed upgrading and face lift! Sr. Anita's Dream was to see the Elderly Sisters comfortably housed and delicately cared for, as a mark of gratitude and appreciation of the valuable life and service of our dear Elderly Sisters. And it did happen with the assistance of several persons, including Sr.Evelyn Paul who shared her expertise in this field of construction and upgrading. The beautiful Home for our Elderly Sisters bears witness to their Faith and Determination, and Audacious Zeal, and most of all, the concern for the well-being of the Sisters, in providing comfortable and homely living for our own in their sunset years of life! Praise the Lord!

NATIONAL CHALLENGES - ETHNIC WAR AND THE TSUNAMI :

During the period of Sr. Anita's Leadership of the Province, two very grave national chal-

lenges had to be faced. The first was the Ethnic War, which was at its height during this period. The second was the catastrophic Tsunami that devastated our country, taking full toll of thousands of lives in a day, not to mention the vast destruction of buildings and property. How did the Province face these challenges? The Tsunami of 26th December, 2004: This tragic disaster had become a great opportunity for the Province to experience the strength of our internationality in universal solidarity. Sr. Brigid Lawlor, then Congregational Leader and her Council created a globalised network of action, so that the Province received the immediate support from sisters and the lay partners of the whole world. The overwhelming financial assistance that poured in helped the Province to reach out to North, East, South and West irrespective of race and creed, to alleviate the suffering of the people, bringing hope into their lives. The services rendered were in three stages. First was the immediate relief which included supplying basic necessities and serving those in Refugee Camps. Second was the support to victims to re-start their livelihood. Self- help programmes were implemented, tools for their trades were provided. The third stage was the resettlement of the families which included renovation, re-building, purchase of land and housing projects,purchasing household equipment etc. The Ethnic War: The military settlement of the Peace Process had given some opportunity to be at the service of the war victims. There were many refugee camps and resettlement areas that needed guidance and protection. In collaboration with the government officials, security forces and the Jesuit Refugee Services which was well known as JRS in the Dioceses of Jaffna and Mannar, the needed services were rendered. Empowerment through education and Skill training enabled the women, children and youth to safeguard their dignity.

During Sr. Anita's tenure of office, a few new Foundations were established in the Province. Innuvil, 2001: Responding to the invitation by Right Rev. Dr. Thomas Savndranayagam, the Bishop of Jaffna, to our Good Shepherd Sisters, a home for Single Mothers was opened in war- torn Jaffna on 27th March 2001. It was a great need of the time for the north of the country. Since new construction was an impossibility at that time, the mission began in a rented house in Inuvil with the hope to move later to our land in Anaccoddai . During the war it was not possible to continue our ministry there, and so it was eventually closed down. Poovarasankulam , 2004 : The late Bishop, Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Rayappu of the Diocese of Mannar invited our Good Shepherd Sisters , once again to his diocese. We were already at Rambakulam in Vavuniya, when his next offer was extended to us . This was an interior rural village in war stricken Vaunuya in the Diocese of Mannar. This village was surrounded by refugee camps, re-settlement areas, and widows' colonies etc. The people lived below the poverty line and were under constant threat of attack from both LTTE and the government Forces. The House was inaugurated on 22nd November 2004 for the needs of single mothers. On that day , it was a privilege to have with us at the opening ceremony, Sr. Evelyn Fergus who was a member of the Congregational Leadership Team. The present ministry at Poo-



varasankulam , together with the Single Mother's Home , includes a Child Care Centre for children of war victims, as well as the teaching ministry in a government school. Padaviya, 2005: At the invitation of Rt. Rev. Dr. Norbert Andradi another frontier village, in the border of the LTTE and Government controlled area, Padaviya, was accepted as a mission station of our Province. On the 12th of March, 2005, commissioned by the Province Leader, Sr. Anita Fernando, our mission in Padaviya commenced. The ministry was mainly pastoral services. Education -Pre-School, Extra Classes for children in the border villages, teaching of Religion in schools as well as empowering groups of women with various programmes including Skill Training. Over and above the ministries mentioned above, the Sisters serve in Kokilai, which is a seasonal fishing village.

SUMMING UP 2001-2007 : Concluding the period of Leadership of Sr. M.Anita Fernando, it could very well be stated that it was undoubtedly a very challenging time in the history of our Province, as it was a challenging time for the history of our country. It was a time when all our Good Shepherd Communities arose to the occasion, setting aside their own projects and programmes of service, to respond to this national call, which came in the form of the war, and more especially in the form of the Tsunami, the very first tsunami experienced by our native Isle. Immediate relief services, where all pooled their little mite in the form of material requisites, and most especially in sacrificing one's time, was generous and widespread. In fine, through all the challenges and unexpected demands of this period, it could truly be said that it was an exhilarating period, vibrating with energy , zeal, love and compassion, while responding to the needs and cry of the poor, giving up comfort zones in genuine self-sacrifice, flowing from the Heart of the Good Shepherd, to the greater Glory of God! Thus came to a fruitful end, the period of Leadership of Sr. Anita Fernando in April, 2007, at the Province Chapter that was held at Nayakakanda.

SR. M. ROHINI MENDIS , 11TH PROVINCE LEADER , 2007-2014 :

Manel Mendis born in Kandana was the 3rd in a family of eleven. She received her education at St. Sebastian's Convent, Kandana, where her mother too was a member of the staff. Her school Principal was Sr. Albert Perera, during whose time, a number of the students of St. Sebastian's Convent entered the Novitiate at Nayakakanda. Sr.Rohini often admits that she was naughty and mischievous, while in school as a student and did not apply herself seriously to her studies. Because of the great love Sr. Rohini had for her Gift of Vocation, she changed and turned out to be a completely different person. Manel Mendis entered the Novitiate in 1966, January. She received the Holy Habit and began her Novitiate, in October, 1966, with her new name Sr. M. Rohini Mendis. It was in October, 1968 that she made her First Profession of Religious Vows at Nayakakanda. At the Province Chapter held in April, 2007, Sr. Rohini Mendis was elected as Province Leader. The Leadership Team elected consisted of Srs. Josita Corea, John Baptist Storey, Geethani Mallawarachchi, Lucina Ekanayake, Anita John, Stella Fernando (for



Pakistan), M. Callista Fernando,CGS, and Rita Sellambaram, CGS. Sr. Josita Corera was appointed First Councillor, and she remained in Nayakakanda so as to assist Sr. Rohini with all official matters. The words of St. Mary Euphrasia: "Oh, how much love and compassion we must have for these souls entrusted to our care. Love them, love them very much; comfort them, strengthen these suffering sheep, make them happy, very happy. Never forget that you will win hearts only by love." (SME) led Sr. Rohini and the Province leadership team to "look at our commitment as women called to a mission of reconciliation after the footsteps of Jesus the Good Shepherd." The PLT accepted the challenge to heal the wounded and violated humanity by empowering and energizing the Sisters with great enthusiasm.

MEMBERSHIP IN CONGREGATIONAL COMMITTEES : During this period,the Province was privileged to share the resources of the Sisters, as they held membership in Committees at Congregational and Asia Pacific Level. They are, Sr. Anita Fernando (member of the Missionary Commission of the Congregation), Sr.Josita Corera (Chairperson of the Asia Pacific Intercontinental Assembly), Sr. Francine Muthugala(Core-team member of the Asia Pacific Spirituality Committee and Asia Pacific Formation Committee), Sr. Niluka Perera(Core-team member of the Good Shepherd Asia Pacific Justice and Peace Commission) and Sr.Sadhani Walmillage,(Member of Blessed Maria Droste Committee). Their participation and presence in these committees enriched our Asia Pacific Region, our own Province and the Congregation at large.

PROVINCE COMMITTEES : With a view to nurture potential, and encourage participation in leadership and collaboration in ministry, a structure was set up during this period. Twelve Committees were formed to ensure effectivity in the ongoing journey of the Province. The Committees were for, Vocation Promotion, Initial Formation, Ongoing Formation, Justice and Peace, Child Care, Education, Pre School—Montessori, Day Care , Nursery; Media, Conservation of the Environment, Plantation Workers, Response to War-torn Situation, Building and Finance. These committees were mandated to bring alive the Direction set by the 17th Province Chapter. A member of the PLT served as the Link Person between these committees and the PLT. INFIRMARY RECONSTRUCTED , 2008 : On assuming duties, the Province Leadership Team realized the importance of having a Building with facilities for the sisters who come from all parts of the Province for treatment from Hospitals and for accommodation during the time of convalescing. The few rooms in the existing building, lacked facilities and was dilapidated. Therefore the PLT made the decision of accepting the challenge to find funds to build twelve spacious rooms with all facilities, attached bathrooms, a spacious Veranda around, and a Chapel in the centre. Accordingly a major section of the existing building was demolished and construction work was begun purely trusting in the Providence of God. Major repairs and renovations too were done to the rest of the building. Finally this project as planned was completed as a result of the generosity



extended by the Generalate, our Province as well as Foreign and Local Donors. The opening was on 8th November 2008.

SETH- SEVANA, IN BOLAWALANA , 2009 : Seth Sevana is a Vocational Institute which provides One Year Free Residential Holistic Development Program through Vocational and Professional Training. This was one of the first significant ventures of the Province during the time of Sr.Rohini's Leadership. This was inaugurated in 2009 and was registered with the Tertiary and Vocational Educational Commission in Sri Lanka as a Vocational Training Centre. Sr. Prasangika Fernando was appointed as the Principal of this Institute. This Institute was the realization of a long felt need to equip young girls who reside in our Child Development Centres who are not qualified for higher studies but are more competent and skillfully talented rather than academically inclined. However other than girls from our own Good Shepherd Development Centres , Institutions founded by Mary's Friends Foundation and from many other children's homes and remote villages, who cannot afford to follow such a demanding program by themselves, also received the privilege of becoming participants. Seth Sevana helps the girls who have completed the Vocational Training Program to find suitable employment, thus empowering them to be self-sufficient and energized to build up a fruitful future for themselves. By the end of Sr. Rohini's tenure of leadership, 500 girls had completed the program successfully and found suitable employment. This project commenced and continued with the collaboration of the Funding partners of Mary's Friends Norway and Chance EV Foundation Germany, and continues with their assistance.

MISSION AT KAHAWATTA , 2009 : A remarkable feature during Sr. Rohini's period of Leadership was the interest shown towards the Plantation Sector. On 2nd February, 2009 the mission in Kahawatta commenced. The ministry was, Pastoral Work, Estate Visiting, and Pre -School Education. The Pre-School was begun on 16th February. Later on, the building where the Sisters were, was renovated and a hostel for the estate children was inaugurated on 15th October. The ministry in Kahawatta has expanded with the passage of time. The present services are, Estate Apostolate, Pastoral Work, Community-Based Child Protection Programme, Income Generating Programme for Estate Women, and Pre-School Education.

RE- OPENING OF MADAWACHCHIYA CONVENT, 2009 :

Madawachchiya Convent which was first opened in 1974, was discontinued in 2002. In 2009, once again in response to a earnest request made by Bishop Andradi, the Bishop of Anuradhapura, the PLT consented to re-open the convent and to be at the service of the people of Madawachchiya. The ministries that the sisters engaged themselves in, were the same as before. THE ETHNIC CIVIL WAR: The civil war prevailed in our country for more than 2 decades. The "height of the war" as well as the "Post War" was seen during Sr. Rohini's period

of Leadership. The Province Leadership Team was challenged to take bold steps. The Province set out to be in solidarity with those in the war affected areas. At the peak of the war, our sisters came forward with openness, trust, willingness and commitment to serve the wounded who were brought to the hospitals and IDP camps. In this distressful situation we experienced the capacity of our sisters to respond to very challenging situations, taking risks with the audacity of St. Mary Euphrasia.With the end of the war on 19th May, 2009, the focus of the Province was on Post War activities and projects which again involved risk taking.

MANKULAM, GANESHAPURAM, KOOLAWADI - 2010 : As already mentioned , a spacious Home in Mankulam was first built in 1976 for single mothers during Sr. Joseph Deegan's tenure of office as Provincial. In 1990 June the war destroyed the building completely and the ministry in Mankulam was terminated . "In 2010, a new building was put up to serve as a safe home for our school-going children, especially those who had lost their parents during the war. The two sisters who were engaged in this ministry with commitment and great zeal were Sr. Rajes Swampillai and Sr. Rani Agnes Roque. At this time Fr. James Pathinathan who was assigned to be the Parish Priest of Mankulam who was very influential and resourceful, supported the ministry very much." On 19th March, 2010, Ganeshapuram too was opened,at the invitation of the Bishop of Mannar, Rt. Rev. Joseph Rayappu. A Skill Training Program for Ex-combatants (Those young Girls who had connections with the LTTE Movement) ,was commenced. If not for the Financial Assistance received from Portcus, Gnanam Foundation, our own Province and other Local and Foreign donors, putting up the Buildings needed, and carrying out the Programs successfully, would have only been a dream. The new house at Kulawadi, Annaicoddai which was built by the Province, was opened on 13th April, 2010. The land for this building was donated by Late Ms. Pushparani Raja, a Past Teacher of Good Shepherd Convent, Kotahena. The house was meant to be a Home for Single Mothers. The pioneers who commenced work at Kulawadi were Srs. Nirmala Sebastian, Pathmini Santhiyapillai, Patricia Rajes Emmanuelpillai, and Virginia Peduruppilai. In December, 2018, the ministry at Kulawadi has changed into a Centre for the Rehabilitation of young girls under 18 years of age. Pastoral Ministry is also included in the services of the Sisters.

SERENE PASTURES, October, 2013 : After the Amalgamation, the former Novitiate building of the Francis Xavier Sisters was used by the Contemplative Sisters. Thereafter, it was used by the Province for Retreats, Sessions, Conferences, Meetings, etc. Since the facilities were inadequate , various adjustments and additions had been made from time to time, especially when Sr. Hilarina Fernando was Co-ordinator of the Spirituality Centre , as it was called during her time, right down to the year 2006. The need had been felt for some time for reconstructing the Spirituality Centre, renovating and upgrading it to suit international standards. However, it was only during

the time of Sr. Rohini's Leadership that these ideas materialized and the upgrading was done. Our Generalate helped us very generously for this venture, and our communities too contributed their mite towards the cost. The Renovated centre was called Serene Pastures, which has been refurbished and further upgraded in later years, with full facilities for comfortable and relaxed gatherings. It was opened in October, 2013.
Summing Up 2007 - 2014 : Looking at the period 2007 – 2014, when Sr.Rohini was Province Leader, while moving forward along the path marked out by the Chapter Directives, it could be said that special attention was focused on 5 particular aspects, as Rohini herself remarks. They are, "Participative model of Leadership (Circular model) in all spheres of the life of the Province especially in community living; Conducting on a regular basis , orientation programmes for those sisters who were assigned as Local Leaders, or Sisters –in-charge of satellite communities, for the first time; Paving the way for the Centralization of Funds ; Building Life-giving Communities; Deepening of the Spirituality of the sisters." Having served the Province with great dedication and devotion, Rohini and her PLT did their utmost for the Province, the Congregation and the Church with joy-filled hearts! When the need arose, as a team they ventured out to new paths with audacious zeal. In 2014, Rohini terminated her responsibility as Province Leader, having accomplished her role to the Glory of our Shepherd God!

SR. FRANCINE MUTHUGALA, 12th PROVINCE LEADER : 2014 - 2019

Born in the year 1957, Sr. Francine had her Primary Education at St. Mary's School, Welivita, her home town. She had her secondary studies at Good Shepherd Convent Kotahena. After her studies she entered the Postulancy in Bandarawela in 1976, joined the Novitiate in 1977, made her First Profession in 1979, and her Final Commitment in 1984. "She engaged in her teaching career at Good Shepherd Convent Kandy and Good Shepherd Convent Panadura from 1984 to 1990. During this period, she completed her Degree and post Graduate Diploma in Education. Then she served as Principal of St Lawrence's Convent from 1991 to 1995 and of St. Bridget's Convent Collegiate School from 1995 to 2003. She was appointed as a Member of the Province Leadership Team in 2001 and due to her being appointed as the Sector Coordinator for Colombo, she had to take leave from St. Bridget's for 2 years. While being the Sector Coordinator, she served as Principal of Good Shepherd Convent, Panadura from 2006 to 2007. Then with the new Leadership Team she was appointed Principal of Ave Maria Convent, Negombo from 2008 to 2012. " Sr. Francine was appointed as the Directress of the Temporary Professed sisters in 2011 while she was still Principal at Ave Maria Convent. After retirement from School in January, 2013, she moved over to Nayakakanda , to the Juniorate quarters. She followed the Formators Training Course held in 2011 and 2013 for all Asia Pacific Formators in the Philippines.

PROVINCE CHAPTER, November 2013 : At the Province Chapter held in November, 2013, Sr. Francine Muthugala was elected as the 12th Province Leader . The Chapter theme was, "Ablaze with Compassion set the Universe afire." The elected members of the PLT comprised of Srs. Anita Fernando, Prisca Perera, Euphrasia Anthonipillai, Selinta Fernando, Doreen Epitawela, Sr.Patricia Perera, CGS and Sr. Francina Yessiah, CGS. Sr Madonna Wimaladasa was the nominated member of the PLT. Sr. Francine , with her team assumed responsibility on the 2nd February 2014.

The Sector Coordinators appointed were, Sr. Doreen Epitawela – Pakistan; Sr. Celinta Fernando – Colombo; Sr. Euphrasia Anthonipillai - Up Country; and Sr. Madonna Wimaladasa - Negombo. Sr. Prisca Perera was appointed Province Treasurer and Sr. Roshanthi Fernando, Secretary to the Province.

ONGOING FORMATION : The new Spirituality Centre - Serene Pastures. was almost completed by the previous Leadership Team of Sr. Rohini. From 2014, the Spirituality Centre and the surroundings were further furnished to suit the Evolving Spirituality, so that the place would be conducive for the deepening of the spirituality of our sisters and other Congregations. A new team was appointed to the Centre under the Leadership of Sr. Josita Corera. She was also responsible for the Ongoing Formation of our sisters. When Sr. Josita was elected to the CLT, Sr. Maryanne Perera was appointed as the Leader for the Spirituality Centre and Ongoing Formation. At present many programmes and retreats are being held at Serene Pastures for the spiritual growth of our sisters. Other Congregations and groups too avail themselves of the facilities of Serene pastures.

REVIEWING OUR EXISTING MINISTRIES : INTRODUCING BEST PRACTICES

With commitment and enthusiasm the New Leadership team took up the Directions set out by the Province Chapter 2013 and the Congregational Chapter 2015. One of the major issues that needed to be handled was "to review our ministries to make them relevant according to today's concept of our Charism and to have best practices. Sr. Clare Nolan who was the training facilitator of Justice-Peace Commission of the Congregation was invited to review our ministries – especially, the social service ministries regarding children, girls and women." Sisters who handle these ministries were given a training to update themselves to work from Charity based approach to Rights based approach. Some sisters were given training in Anti-Trafficking work at Asia-Pacific level. For the first time A Child Protection Manuel was compiled for the Province of Sri-Lanka/ Pakistan and it is introduced to all Religious and Lay Partners who care for Children.

FINANCES : After many years of struggle, for the first time our Province was able to arrive at a Centralized Financial System. Community Funds are all now centralized. Further all our Ministries follow the same accounting system and are able to consolidate

all ministry finances. A well-equipped Finance Team has been appointed to the Province together with a number of book-keepers and community treasurers. This system helps to bring equality among all sisters as a support to live our vows conscientiously.

A NEW STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE PROVINCE : A mid-term review was conducted through an outside consultant, Ms. Manuela Collette, on the implementation of the Chapter Directives of 2013 and Congregational Chapter Directives of 2015.The participation of most of the individual sisters was through answering of the review Questionnaire. As a result of the review, the leadership team together with the Congregational Link Councillor came up with a New Strategic Plan. 13 new Commissions were formed to carry out this new plan. All commission members numbering around 100 together with the leadership team came up with a New Vision Mission Statement and Five Co-Values for our Province to move forward with our Good Shepherd Mission.

OBJECTIVES 1 : After introduction of the new Strategic Planning, a number of programmes were organized to deepen the Spirituality of Sisters and Mission Partners.

OBJECTIVE 2 : In order to strengthen the life in Communities a Session of 4 days, on Covenant Communities was held with Sr. Rekha Cennattu from India as the Resource Person, in February, 2017, with about 250 sisters from all communities, participating . Subsequently, community level sessions on Vibrant Life-Giving Communities were conducted by the Ongoing Formation Team with the Formators and few other resourced Sisters.We handed over 3 houses - Katuwapitiya, Kolonnawa and Slave Island to other Congregations in order to strengthen our community life and have more sisters to direct Good Shepherd services.

OBJECTIVE 3 : Following GSSL Child Protection Programme Review in 2015-2016, our Child Protection Programmes were redesigned in order to deliver a Community Based System Approach by bringing about a TRANSITION OF OUR CHILD PROTECTION CENTERS TO A COMMUNITY BASED APPROACH with the support of Funding partners at Sinnapaduwa, Mankerny, Kahawatta (Hallinna Estate), Balangoda (Waleboda Estate), Balangoda (Walawa Estate). With the guidance of the GS International Foundation in Rome, a Mission Development Office (MDO) has been established in Sri Lanka to cover our social work helping in the training of sisters and lay partners and for the raising of funds for the existing ministries.

OBJECTIVE 4 : A centralized accounting system has been introduced with a dedicated and skilled Finance Team, and a Finance Manual has been introduced. All accounts in the Province including ministry accounts have been brought under the same accounting system so that monitoring became easier.



COMMITTEES : For the fruitful functioning of the above Strategic Plan, 15 Committees were formed to cover every area of involvement, with a leader for each one of them. The Committees are, Mission Development Office, Ongoing Formation, Initial Formation, Vocation Mission Promotion, Lay Partnership, Rehabilitation and Child Development, Community Based Child Protection, Gender Based Violence, Education, Education Review Committee, Early Childhood Development, Professional Counseling, Pastoral Outreach, Estate Apostolate, Finance Committee.

SUMMING UP, 2014 - 2019 : In summing up the period 2014 – 2019, one could truly say that Our Province of Sri Lanka /Pakistan, with Sr. Francine and her team leading the way, has been heavily involved in updating and renewal, in line with Congregational and International standards, and imbued with our theme, "Ablaze with Compassion Set the Universe Afire", in every aspect that was recommended by the Chapter Directives of 2013. As seen from what is recorded above, Sr.Francine and her Leadership team, with all our sisters, have been fully alive and alert to the guidelines set before them. In the midst of challenges and obstructions, with dauntless courage, much thinking and planning has gone on, in this process of modern technological and spiritual upgrading of our approach to Mission and Religious living.

Before winding up Chapter 3 of Our Story, it is imperative to make special mention of all our Lay Partners and Benefactors, who have supported us throughout the past 150 year period, at various times and in various ways . All the families of our own Good Shepherd sisters , are remembered in our Story of 150 years, with deep appreciation and heartfelt gratitude.

MISSION PARTNERS : Speaking of Mission Partners, we are very happy to record with appreciation and sincere gratitude, their committed participation in our Good Shepherd Mission. Right from the beginning of our history, Mission Partners have been very much a part of our journey. Although, it was only in 1988 that intentional formation of mission partners was initiated by Sr. Immaculate de Alwis, who was Local Leader of our Convent in Kotahena at the time, under the guidance of the then Province Leader, the late Sr. Nivard Senarath. The first group was trained by Sr. Genevieve Fernando . The Lay Associates, as they were called at that time, made a Commitment on 31st July 1992, at Good Shepherd Convent, Nayakakanda after a Discipleship Retreat of 3 days in March 1992, in Kandy, guided by Immaculate de Alwis. The 16 members who followed this retreat were from Good Shepherd Convent, Kotahena, St. Bridget's Convent, Kandy, Nuwara Eliya, Tarala, Niripola, Weliveriya and Tammita. A Good Shepherd sister was assigned to accompany each group of Lay Associates, on their journey of life and mission in the Good Shepherd fold.

Special mention needs to be made here, of Ms. Crescentia Corera. She was a teacher

in our school in Good Shepherd Convent, Kotahena. She began working with us as a young woman, and then when partnership was beginning to be developed in the Congregation she as one of the pioneer members has been a very vibrant and zealous Good Shepherd Associate right from the time of her Commitment. As a member of the staff in Kotahena, and later of St. Bridget's Collegiate School, she imbibed the Charism of the Good Shepherd from our sisters of yester-year. She has attended several of our Province Chapters, as well the "Good Shepherd Asia Pacific Partnership Gathering (GSAPPG)" held in Malaysia in June 2008 with another lay partner Ms. Primrose Kumarasena from Matale, at which gathering this concept of Mission Partners was sealed. Two other Mission Partners also participated in International Assemblies and Chapters. Subsequently after the 2015 Congregational Chapter all who work in collaboration with the Good Shepherd Sisters in different capacities were called MISSION PARTNERS. This group is an umbrella that upholds members belonging to different categories – volunteers, helpers, paid workers, those working in our Institutions as well as the teachers in our Good Shepherd Schools. It is a privilege to place on record that some of our Mission Partners take leadership roles in our different commissions giving their unstinted support in our ministries. At present 3 of the Mission Partners Ms. Charmaine Akmeemana, Mr. Charith Fernando and Ms. Crescentia Corera serve in the Mission Partnership Team in our Province. With the generous co-operation and benignity of our Mission Partners, the Province has moved forward graciously, through barriers and obstacles, in reaching our Sesquicentennial(150th) year of Good Shepherd Presence in Sri Lanka. We value very much their participation and contribution towards the fruitfulness of the Presence and Mission of the Good Shepherd.

HAPPY TO RECORD , March 2019 : It is of great significance, that at this juncture of Our Story, March, 2019, we are extremely happy to record the fact that there are eight of our Irish Sisters who had been missionaries in Sri Lanka, known and loved by us, now living in Ireland or in England. All eight of them are Irish. Seven of them are in Ireland.They are Srs. Joseph Deegan, Dympna Flynn , Catherine Veale, Catherine of Sienna(Kay) Connelly, Noel Galvin, Teresa Cormac and Emily Byrne. Sr. Ambrose Sommers, now known as Monica Sommers, has joined the Province of Great Britain. They remember Sri Lanka with love and joy. For those readers who did not have the privilege of meeting or hearing of these eight sisters, a brief introduction follows.

Joseph Deegan, our 4th Province Leader, who is now 97 years of age, is at present extremely feeble and unable to communicate. However, details of her life and service have already been recorded above, in the period 1973 – 1979 of this History. Information received from Ireland states that she opens her eyes and smiles sweetly whenever she hears the word 'Sri Lanka!'On 25th January, 2019, Kay Connelly wrote, "I visited Sr. Joseph yesterday. She is very weak and unable to talk much, but squeezed my hand when I spoke to her about the 150 year celebrations of Good Shepherd Presence in Sri Lanka... She is sweetly lying THERE, physically frail and feeble, while waiting in Love,

Peace and Joy, for God's Final Call!" We love you, dear Sr. Joseph. We remember you with profound gratitude and affection! We are one with you in prayer and in God's loving embrace! Blessings on you!
Dympna Flynn, now in her eighties, is also very feeble and not in a position to communicate. Nonetheless, this Story has already presented a picture of her, stressing her life and ministry in Sri Lanka, under the Sub-theme THE LAST THREE IRISH SISTERS WHO LEFT OUR SHORES. Dympna dear, you are greatly loved by us, and are very dear to us.Thank you for all that you have been and meant to Our Province, to the people of Sri Lanka, to our sisters, children, girls , women and families. We embrace you in God's loving embrace! Blessings on you!

Sr. Catherine Veale, now 94 years of age, known to us in Sri Lanka as Sr.Francis de Sales, "was born on 17th October, 1925 in Dunhill in Co. Waterford. She grew up as a vivacious and determined girl," living on a the farm of their own, and enjoying nature. "She went to a Boarding School where all her sisters had received Secondary Education. She loved school and was bright at her studies. During the holidays she loved to swim , to dance and to play the piano." With difficulty , Catherine got permission to answer her Call which had been in her for some time. In 1943 she left home... Filled with the Spirit of the Good Shepherd , Sr. Catherine made her First Profession in Limerick in 1950, and came to Sri Lanka in 1951. She spent 27 years of her life in Sri Lanka , serving in different ministries, such as Teaching at St. Bridget's Collegiate School, Formator of our Contemplative Sisters, Local Leader of the Community at Nayakakanda , and Directress of the Rural Farm Training Centre at Halgashena. One of our sisters once remarked, "If ever I went to Sr. Francis de Sales Veale, with tear-filled eyes and a heavy heart, I would invariably return with a smiling face and joy of heart, filled with the Spirit of God !" Wherever she went, or whatever she did, Sr. Catherine Veale was exhaling the sweetness, tenderness and gentleness of the Good Shepherd as an exemplary daughter of St. Mary Euphrasia, whose Spirit she had imbibed copiously and in depth, making it her very own.

In 1979, Sr Catherine Veale left the shores of Sri Lanka , as a missionary to Madagascar. Having served the people there with much love and dedication, she was named Province Leader of Madagascar, Mauritius and La Reunion from 1988- 1994. Spending her Sabbatical Year at a Renewal Course on Pastoral Catechesis at Lumen Vitae, Belgium, Sr. Catherine returned to Ireland where she ministered among Refugees and Asylum Seekers. In 2002 she returned to the missionary field, this time in Ethiopia, from 2002-2003. Eventually she was transferred back again to Madagascar from 2003-2004, from whence she returned to her native homeland , Ireland. Catherine says, " After news of the tsunami reached me in 2007, I was privileged to spend two months back in Sri Lanka. My home parish helped me with funds. Memories are still alive as I met Sisters, and what a WELCOME I received! My heart is filled with joy and gratitude as I think of SRI LANKA! You will always be in my heart and prayer! Loving Jubilee wishes for the past 150 years! I will be there in spirit!" Thank you, dearest Sr.Catherine ! What

a wonderful daughter you are, of St. M. Euphrasia! Enduring the smell of the sheep, you have spread the fragrance of the Good Shepherd far and wide, giving Glory to God! We remember you and think of you with fondest love! ! You were an affectionate sister to us, while being a mother to all our children! Choicest Blessings!

Sr. Catherine of Sienna Connolly, whose Baptismal name was Kathleen , now known as Kay, was also a much loved missionary Sister of Irish origin, who is remembered in Sri Lanka as a buoyant and energetic person who could put her hand to anything, including innocent pranks, making everything effective and fruitful! Born on 26th July, 1934, in Buncrana, Co. Donegal, Ireland, she entered the Novitiate on 11th February, 1954, and made her First Profession of Religious Vows on 29th September, 1956. She went to London to follow a Course on House Mothers' Training, and then arrived in Sri Lanka in October, 1957. " I was privileged to arrive in S.L. just after the amalgamation in 1957. It was a time of great change and blessings for the Province. I was privileged, because it meant being plunged into the rich Sri Lankan culture and mores immediately on my arrival. "

She made her Final Profession of Religious Vows in January, 1960. Kay was appointed House Mother of Nelum Cottage where she ministered for fifteen years , with such tender love, delicacy, gentleness and efficiency, portraying, reflecting and upholding all the Good Shepherd Values one would have wished to see! Kay was also involved in setting up a Machine Knitting Project for the Mothers in our St. John Eudes Home and Creche. Later, Kay was transferred to Mahalpe , to be involved in the Sericulture Project there. Next, she was commissioned to extend the Project to Halgashena. With Pakistan as part of the Province of Sri Lanka , Kay volunteered to serve in Pakistan, joining Sr. Joseph Deegan and Sr. Paulinus in the new House at Karachchi. Following on Pakistan, Kay was offered a one-year Diploma Course in Maynooth University in Ireland. When she returned to Sri Lanka, after her Course in Maynooth, she spent just one year more of missionary service in Sri Lanka . At the request of our Congregational Leader, Sr. Bernadette Fox, in March, 1983, Kay left the shores of our Island , having spent the most youthful and vibrant part of her life in our country, a little more than twenty five years, giving of herself to the fullest in love , joy, gentleness , compassion and zeal, as a true Shepherdess, in the likeness of Jesus the Good Shepherd, to the Praise and Glory of God!

From Sri Lanka, Kay went to Khartoum , Sudan in Egypt to open a new house there with two other Egyptian sisters. She worked there for 19 years in the Province of Egypt. "When I was expelled from Sudan I went to Guam for three more years, and then returned to the Egyptian Province at the request of the Province Leader. I finally came home to roost in 2006, worked in the Sharing Fair Project in Derry for ten years, and then moved here to our House in Waterford, where I am Eucharistic Minister in a near-

by residential Home, while waiting for my Lord's Last Call !! .... Happy and joyful memories race across my mind as I reflect on my years in Sri Lanka, and I thank God for the privilege of having lived with dedicated women, both Sri Lankan and Irish. I remember with love all the children, girls and women who were all so wonderful people! May God continue to bless each one of you as you strive to make His Compassionate Presence felt in your own beautiful Island and across the world. Always united in love and prayer. Jubilant Jubilee Blessings." That was Kay, the loving and amiable Kay, sprightly and bubbling, lighting up everyone's life with joy and delight ! Thank you, Kay ! We remember you with charming love and gratitude. We meet you in prayer. Blessings on you!

Sr. Noel Galvin, well remembered by the senior sisters of today, was an Irish missionary who served in Sri Lanka, with zest and zeal. She is currently in her eighties , and feeble too. However, when asked about her experience in Sri Lanka, she has shared with great joy and enthusiasm whatever she could remember of her life in Sri Lanka. She says she is very happy to talk about that time and has happy memories of the teenagers who came to the Sewing Work Room. She recalls the friendly relationship between the girls and the sisters. They were very happy at the centre and cried when they were leaving to go home. Noel loved this work. She was helping the poorest of the poor and she would visit past pupils who had gone back home and kept in touch with them."Noel's memories of the country itself are very positive .... The fishermen would bring fish to the sisters fresh from their morning catch. She kept emphasising how close the sisters were to the children/teenagers they were helping. She said that talking about her experience in Sri Lanka made her very happy." Thank you, Noel. Sri Lanka is blessed to have had you with us in mission. We reach out to you with love and Blessings!

Sr. Gabriel Byrne, now known as Emily Byrne, also another Irish Good Shepherd Sister who was a missionary in Sri Lanka, though for a very short period, is living in Ireland even as this Story is being compiled,(March, 2019). She came to Sri Lanka in 1948, and was transferred to Singapore in 1949. This was when Singapore was part of the Province of Ceylon and Sr. Emily was still a Temporary Professed Sister. She served for one full year in Sri Lanka, and was then transferred to Singapore. She returned to Sri Lanka in 1952 to prepare for her Final Vows. On January 6th , 1953 , she made her Final Profession of Vows, and after a short stay in Sri Lanka, she returned to Singapore. She is now in Ireland, in a Nursing Home for Elderly Sisters. Emily says, "I was only a short time in Sri Lanka, but the memories I treasure are immense. I was commissioned to Singapore , which was part of the Province of Sri Lanka at that time. But Sri Lanka I carry in my heart, and I send you love upon love, as I greet you on your Jubilee of 150 years! ! What a wonderful Province you have! What a blessing that it is part of our Congregation! May God be Praised!" Thanks, Emily!Your message is greatly appreciated.

With love we say, Blessings on you!

Sr. Teresa Cormack, born on 2nd January, 1931, in Tipperary, Ireland, entered the Novitiate in 1951, and made her first Profession in 1952, soon after which she arrived in Sri Lanka on mission. Her ministry was at the Montessori in Nayakakanda till she left for Singapore in 1961. She served in Singapore till 1966, when she joined the British Province. In 2002 she returned to Ireland. Teresa says, " Dear Sri Lankan Sisters, I have happy memories of Sri Lanka – Pearl of the East and Palm-Fringed Isle -- which I cherish with love and joy." Dear Teresa, we love you too! Blessings on you!

Monica Sommers : She was known in Sri Lanka as Sr. Ambrose. Monica was born in Ireland in 1934. Her initial formation was in Angers and after studies at the University of Cork, Ireland, she was missioned to Ceylon and arrived in 1961. Her mission was at Nayakakanda, in the Creche which is the Mother and Baby Home.

She too has happy memories of Sri Lanka. Monica was also involved in the Nursery Nurses Training Programme, being on the team with Sr. Collette Tanam. Many young girls were trained at this programme. Monica says, " The Home itself was a lovely place to work in – so much preparation had been made for the children – lovely cottages spread among the trees – all shapes, and sizes and colours.

The whole atmosphere was welcoming and inviting for Mothers and Babies and for us as well. ... We all set out to work together to do everything possible to help all the occupants of the Mother and Baby Home, adults and children alike. Like in all residential places 24-hour care had to be provided, daily routines fell into place and so all of us, Sisters and Nursery Nurses and other Helpers were working together towards our common goal."

Monica returned to Ireland in 1971. She spent a few years in Ireland and Rome, where she was responsible for statistics and archives. In 1976 she was transferred to the Province of Great Britain. Monica dear, thank you for your loving ministry in Sri Lanka, especially with the babies, the girls and the women. We were happy to hear of your memories! With much love we say, Blessings on you!

THE MOMENT TO SALUTE !

This is the Moment! This is the Momentous Moment, given by God, for the Province of Sri Lanka/Pakistan, to pour out in torrents, the deep and sincere sentiments of Gratitude and Love that gushes forth from her heart! " Gratitude is the memory of the heart! ... Thankfulness gives birth to great and noble thoughts! ... Tell it over and over to future generations! Speak about it among yourselves ! " (St. M. Euphrasia) . As a

Province , we now turn to each and every one of our dear Sister Missionaries, who at one time or another , brought to our native Isle, Sri Lanka, the Rich and Precious Heritage of our Congregation , with our Charism and all the bounty of Treasures that flow from the Good Shepherd Presence!!

With deep affection and heart-felt gratitude, we address you, dear Sister Missionaries from Ireland, England, Belgium and France, starting from the first five pioneers, Srs. Marie Euphrasie Goughs, Sacred Heart Masi, Annunciation Marandi, Suzanne Cardiff and Seven Dolours Joly, of 1869, right up to 1995, when the last active missionaries from Ireland , Srs. Nora Keaney, Euphrasis O'Conner, and Dympna Flynn, left the shores of Sri Lanka , and when the last Irish Missionary was laid to rest in Sri Lanka in 2007! A total of 138 years!!! Eight of our dear Missionary Sisters are still living in Ireland and England, as mentioned in the paragraph above, listening to our voice of Salutation!!

Dearly loved Sister Missionaries of Yester-Year, from 1869 down the line! We Salute You! We Salute You with Love, Joy and Gratitude! We Salute each and every one of you!

Do you realize that you have been a Wondrous Blessing to our Province, Sri Lanka / Pakistan!!! Blessings of the Good Shepherd have gushed forth from you in torrents , providing verdant pasture to the poor and the weak, to the lost and the lonely, to the unwanted and the unloved , to the broken and the wounded....You have " embraced the world" with wide –open arms! You have walked in the likeness of Jesus the Good Shepherd, being exemplary daughters of St. Mary Euphrasia! As the saying goes, " The Fragrance of those who endure the smell of the sheep, endures forever!" The Fragrance of your life felt in our Province, will endure forever, since it is the Fragrance of the Good Shepherd!! The Brilliance of the Love you have spread in our countries, Sri Lanka and Pakistan, will continue to radiate the Goodness of our Shepherd God throughout the world!! You have rresponded to the Call of our Shepherd God, with His Grace and Bountiful Blessings, to leave footprints in the sands of time!

They magnify the Name of our Bounteous Shepherd God!, for His unfailing Faithfulness in His Steadfast and Unconditional Love, Mercy and Goodness towards His Children. Thank You, our dearly loved Sisters, who were Missionaries in our country! We salute you from the exuberance of our heart, as we salute St. Mary Euphrasia Pelletier too, and all the Congregational Leaders along the line, to the present day, for the rich Legacy we have received , the Charism of the Good Shepherd, which has spread far and wide in our land , showering Mercy and Love on all God's loved ones! All Glory to You, Our Shepherd God!

CONCLUSION

The Appreciation of Our Story of 150 years of Good Shepherd Presence in Sri Lanka from 1869 to 2019, has been woven thus far, in its multifaceted global setting, high-lighting the life , thrust and impact of the Good Shepherd Province of Sri Lanka/ Pakistan, with the vast number of persons and events that form the bulk of this Story. It has been divided into three unequal epochs, namely, The Beginnings,(1869 to 1957), Union (1957 to 1965), Post Conciliar Era(1965 to 2019).

The course followed has been the tenure of office of each of our 12 Province Leaders in succession. As the writing of this Story draws to a close, portraying the fruitful ministry of our missionary sisters from overseas, as well as all our Sri Lankan sisters serving within the country, gradually unfolding itself in a process of Mystery in History, it would be sadly incomplete if adequate mention is not made to the response of Sri Lanka, the largest Province of the Congregation, to the cry of the poor from overseas, beyond national boundaries!

Appreciation of our Good Shepherd Story , meant appreciating all our sisters and their families, all our helpers and benefactors, as well as all our people to whom our sisters were committed in service. Our sisters have been on fire, in their own humble way, to reach out and save, embracing the whole world, while restoring dignity and Fullness of Life to all, especially to the most unloved and abandoned girls , women and children of our country.

As already mentioned, this fire had been first sparked off and set ablaze by the passionate and audacious zeal of St.M.Euphrasia, whose magnanimous heart "embraced the whole world ." Imbued with the zeal and spirit of St. John Eudes and of St.Mary Euphrasia , which was vibrant in our Missionary Sisters, over hundreds of them, as already recorded in this Story, in a gradual and generous Good Shepherd Journey, from 1869 to 1960, have entered our country to set aflame the Presence of the Good Shepherd in Sri Lanka. The last three Irish Sisters left the shores of Sri Lanka in 1995. The very last Irish Sister to be laid to rest in Sri Lanka was Sr. Madeline Ryan in 2007. Thus, Sri Lanka enjoyed and experienced the Shepherding Presence of the Good Shepherd Missionaries for 138 years, from 1869 to 2007!

CALLED TO GIVE IN SUPER - ABUNDANCE

"You have received in abundance: give, then, in super-abundance!" Sri Lanka has been very mindful of this saying. As true daughters of St. John Eudes and St. Mary Euphrasia, when our Province found that the time was ripe to reach out beyond her national borders to far distant lands, making the Presence of the Good Shepherd vibrant, she responded generously with passion and zeal to the fullness of that Call, reaching out with open arms to the whole wide world!



Pakistan was the first distant land from where the cry was heard! Far away beyond boundaries, spanning 2,769 k.m. across India, Pakistan is a totally different country in every way; politically, economically, socially, ethnically, culturally, in climate, language, dress, religion etc. Several of our Sri Lankan sisters, over 25 of them, have served in Pakistan , since 1975 to date(2019).

However, after the Founding of our mission and ministry in Pakistan, she became part of our Province , as Sri Lanka /Pakistan. Therefore, no more are our sisters serving in Pakistan, referred to as missionary sisters. But , let it not be forgotten that, that was the beginning of the missionary giving, and since 1975, several of our sisters have already zealously ventured out to Pakistan, and it is highly appreciated ! Let us listen to just one of them.

Sr. Doreen Epitawela, the present Sector Coordinator of Pakistan, says, "I have been in Pakistan for thirty eight years.... To further the mission of the Congregation in this land, and to spread the fragrance of the Good Shepherd is a blessing, and I am happy that I am a part of it. Today as I reflect on the growth of the Church and the number of priests and religious in Pakistan, I am very grateful to God for letting me be a part of this growth. And we Good Shepherd Sisters too have spread ourselves into four Dioceses of the country with ministries that are very specific to our Charism, with a dedicated group of Good Shepherd Sisters, twelve of them being Pakistanis with four Sri Lankans."

SRI LANKAN G.S. WHO HAVE SERVED OVERSEAS : Between 1976 - 2019

This group of our Sri Lankan Missionary sisters , with service beyond national borders, could be classified into two groups, namely, those who have already completed their missionary service in other countries and now are back,(in March, 2019), and those who are at present in missionary service overseas. To the former category belongs those who have been laid to rest in the Peace of Eternity. They are Srs. Sabine de Croos, Bernard Wanigasekera, Monica Bastiampillai, Marianne Wanaden, and Catherine Arlando.

In St. Agnes' Convent for Elderly Sisters, there are 6 sisters at present who had been missionaries, some for several years . They are, Sr. Hermine Pieris in Kenya, Sr. Agnes Sampayo in Czech Republic, Sr. Teckla de Silva in Rome, Belgium, and Albania , Sr. Immaculata Silva in Canada, Sr. Yolande Fernando in Pakistan, and Sr. Chitra Wijewardena also in Pakistan.

There are sisters who have completed their missionary service in other countries, and

who are now(2019), over 75 years of age , serving in other Communities of our Province. They are, Sr. Lucy Murugesu (over 92 years of age), who has served in Pakistan and Madagascar for several years. She is at present at Wellawatta. Sr. Joseph of Jesus Joseph,(86 years of age), has served in Pakistan. She is now at the Provincialate Community of Nayakakanda. Sr. Angela Fernando (84 years), has served in Lebanon, with migrant domestic workers from 14 countries. Sr. Dominic Silva (83 years), has served as a missionary in Pakistan. Sr. Paul of Christ Wavita,(8o years of age) has served for 30 years in Pakistan. Sr. Paulinus Jeyachandran (77 years), who has served in Pakistan and South Africa.

There are several other sisters, below 75 years of age (in 2019), who have ministered in mission countries overseas, who are now serving in Sri Lanka. For the sake of greater clarity and brevity, as well as to emphasize the importance of the sheep of Our Good Shepherd service, the list of the countries which have been served by our SL sisters since 1976, is listed thus in alphabetical order. They are, Albania, Angers (Mother House), Angola, Belgium, Caen France), Cambodia, Canada, China, Czech Republic, Ethiopia, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Kenya, Korea, Lebanon, Macao, Madagascar, Malta, Mauritius, Pakistan, Rome (Generalate), Senegal, Singapore, South Africa, Sudan, Toulon(France), and other places.

Among our Contemplative Sisters, those who have returned from mission overseas are, Srs. Lalani Ekanayake (Mid North America), Patricia Perera (Korea), Annette Perera (Malta), Regina Fernando(Ireland. Regina awaits her Visa to return to Ireland again, after her vacation, Jan.2019) .

SRI LANKAN SISTERS NOW IN MISSION OVERSEAS : in 2019

Ten of our Sisters of the Good Shepherd, and three of our Contemplative Sisters are at present engaged in Mission, in countries outside our Province. Then again, there are three of our Sisters vibrantly involved in the Generalate in Rome, in responsible ministries at different levels. The following paragraphs will present a bird's eye view of appreciation of the ministry of these sixteen sisters engaged in Good Shepherd service abroad, to the Glory of our Shepherd God!

OVER 40 YEARS IN MISSION, BEYOND BORDERS.

Sr. Nirmala Abeyasingha first left on mission beyond national borders , to Lahore, Pakistan, in October, 1976. On her return from Pakistan in 1982, she served for one year at Wellawatta, and then left for Senegal, West Africa, in 1983.When her youngest brother entered the Jesuits,(her elder brother was already a Redemptorist priest!), she came home for a short time, and then returned to Senegal where she served from 1983 till 2004, in two places, first in Thies and then in Dakar. At first she was involved in helping in the Centre for girls, while learning the two languages, French and Wolof.



Next, she was involved in recruitment and formation and took on the roles of Postulant Mistress and Novice Mistress. Later, in 1997 she was responsible for mission, and a new foundation in Mbour. In December, 2004, she was sent to Mauritius and served in the parish, "especially with the Creole people who are 25% Christians or Catholics, who are considered the descendants of the former slaves.

I worked with the youth and began the Associates of the Good Shepherd in the country." In 2007 she was appointed Province Leader of the District of the Isles, and then she moved to Madagascar in January of that year. From the Isles, in December, 2013, Nirmala was sent to Hungary in April, 2014. Hungary had been under Communist rule for 40 years, and all our sisters had been sent out. The Congregation re-started in 1993. " I served in a village called Gyongyosoroszi, 80 kilometres from the capital.

There I worked with the Gitan population.... They were formerly known as gypsies, but now are sedentary, with a culture very different to the Hungarian people.... The biggest challenge was the language, but it was a good experience to realize one's poverty and believe that God can do great things with our little efforts." In January, 2018 , appointed by Sr. Ellen Kelly , Congregational Leader, Nirmala took over her responsibility as Coordinator of the Spiritual Centre in Angers. Nirmala says, "I believe that what we have received we must now share with others. All peoples of all nations are called to be missionaries in their own land but also 'AD GENTES' . For me it has been an experience that God can do a lot with the little we have. My greatest joy is to have been a little instrument to begin or nourish Religious Life in the different countries I have served.

When I think of the Congregation today, the biggest number of our sisters are from the Southern Hemisphere, and in ten years time the future will be in their hands. If we are called to be faithful to the Spirit and vision of St.M.Euphrasia , we cannot neglect her missionary zeal. After all, we are here because of her desire to reach the whole world."

Sr. Agnes Marie : On 14th January, 2018, Agnes Marie went from Sri Lanka to the Mother House on mission. She has been one year in service in Angers. She says, " My experience in the Mother House in Angers has been one of God's abundant blessings for my life and ministry.

I am truly happy to be here, on this 'Holy Ground!' What a privilege it is to be called to live in the spirit of St. M. Euphrasia, offering my humble service to all whom I meet here! My heart overflows with gratitude to God, to our Congregation, and to our Province, for this precious blessing I have receved , to serve at our Mother House , where the spirit of St. M. Euphrasia is so alive and tangibly felt! Oh, What a joy it is to be here!"

Sr. Marie Josephine Fernando : In 1983, responding to God's call, Marie volunteered to go to Thies, in Senegal, West Africa. She then returned to Sri Lanka , after which, again, she went to Senegal, this time to Dakar, from 1992 to 1996. From 2001 to 2004 she served in Anuradhapura after which , in 2004, she was sent to Belgium Andrelecht, followed by Belgium Dour in 2007 where she was involved in the opening of their new house .

In the year 2013 she was commissioned to Brussels in Belgium where she is stationed now, at Rue au Bois 363. She works with women and children in difficulty at at the Home for Mothers with children who speak French and Dutch.

She also works in the Red light Street, and some other Streets where there are women sexually exploited. Marie is also engaged in working against Trafficking and Exploitation with SAWA. She represents Belgium in RENATE (Religious in Europe Networking). Marie also visits our sisters once a week in the Home for Elders. Sr. Marie Josephine says: "Appreciate the different cultures around us, with respect and humility. Learn to speak different languages. Be friendly at all times. Positive, creative thinking, with a big smile, promotes the Mission of Jesus. Be Jesus the Good Shepherd to all around you."

CANADA : Three of our Sri Lankan Sisters are currently (January, 2019), in missionary service in Canada. They are Srs. Gilda Fernando, Felicita Thuraisingham and Juliet Fernando.

Sr. Gilda Fernando : Gilda was sent to Canada as a missionary in 1995. She is now (Jan. 2019), the Leader of the Toronto Region which is English speaking Canada of the Province of New York/Toronto. She says, "Wherever I am and whatever I do is for the sake of the Mission of the Congregation." Sr. Felicita Thuraisingham: Felicita started her missionary service across borders on 29th of November 2002. She works for the homeless, (feeding the hungry and clothing the naked.) She also gives compassionate care to the residents at Providence House which is a House for Seniors. She says, "At the beginning I found it hard to adjust to the winter climate, the different cultures, and the food; but I was able to adapt myself quickly.

I have faced challenges , while I enjoy my mission here.Wherever I am, I belong to the Good Shepherd family and I wish to keep my zeal alive till my last breath." Sr. Mary Juliet Fernando: On 13th April, 2017, Juliet set foot on her missionary post overseas, Canada. She belongs to the Nativity of Our Lord Parish in Etobicoke, Toronto. Hers is a caring ministry, where she visits the sick and the elders of the parish. She also serves the homeless people in Toronto. She says, "I have the opportunity to show compassionate love to the people, whether they are poor or rich."

SOUTH AFRICA : Two of our Sri Lankan Sisters are at present (January, 2019), missionaries in South Africa. They are Srs. Catherine Francis and Ramanie Silva.
Sr. Catherine Francis: Catherine started her missionary activity in South Africa in the year 2007 where she served from 2007 – 2010, and then from 2012 up to the present day(January, 2019). At the beginning she served as a Religious Social worker, and then she was engaged in the Teaching ministry. In 2012 she served as centre manager, in two places, while being the coordinator of the Community called Hebron. She is now the Province Leader of South Africa.
She finds the role as Unit Leader quite challenging, but with God's grace she does her best. Catherine says, " Being a missionary involves letting go of one's own culture and habits, and becoming part of one's mission land and peoples. It is a beautiful experience. It is extremely challenging when one is a Leader of another Province. But one is never alone. Our Shepherd God leads us. I am proud to be a member of our Sri Lankan Province, and of the Congregation of the Good Shepherd, called to embrace the whole world."

Sr. Ramanie Silva : Sr. Ramanie has been out in Mission countries for over 35 years! On 13th March, 1982, Ramanie began her missionary service in South Korea, one of the 5 countries of the East Asia Province, (S.Korea, Myanmar, Thailand, China, Hong Kong and Macao). Ramanie says, " Due to Difficulties in getting visa for my extensive travelling in different countries of our Province, I changed my citizenship to Korean in 2005. Still I hold a Korean Passport and when I come for my home visit I get visa to Sri Lanka.

After 27 years I was missioned to South Africa in 2009. I am the Community Coordinator of our small Community in Port Elizabeth, and I am engaged in the ministry with marginalized people.... Different Provinces are at different stages of development. When one enters a new culture, one starts learning the language of that country. Language gives a deeper understanding of, and connection with the people one serves or comes in contact. It is a powerful instrument of closeness, enabling one to touch the hearts of people who are otherwise distant.... At all times remember, a missionary is sent! This is an essential aspect of our vow of zeal... Wherever I am, or am sent, PEOPLE ARE PRECIOUS"

ALBANIA :
Two of our Sri Lankan sisters are at present serving in the missionary country of Albania. They are Srs. Lalini Gunawardena and Ita Fernando.

Sr. Lalini Gunawardena : Lalini who had been teaching at St. Bridget's Convent, while being Principal as well, for 10 years , was sent on mission to Belgium, to the Community of Bruxelles, in March, 1992. She worked with girls and women, victims of trafficking , mainly for the sex trade. Lalini says, " I worked in a centre where all these

girls were sheltered , helping to bring them back to normal life, while trying to integrate them into the society, by empowering them and training them to begin their lives anew. I Served in this mission for 18 years, being Sector Leader for Belgium for a few years, till I was asked to be one of the pioneers in the Albanian foundation.

I came to Albania on the 25th of October 2009...In Korce, we were 4 sisters, from 4 different countries, Ireland, Lebanon, Germany and Sri Lanka... We had to learn the Albanian language which was no easy task. It was one of the most difficult languages I have learnt. To all of us it was a struggle and a big challenge , but gradually, by the help of the Holy Spirit , we can manage to talk to ordinary people, especially to our street children. We visit the very poor people... We visit the terminal cancer patients too." Lalini further states, "We Good Shepherd Sisters are in a very Blessed Congregation, where we can bring healing and God's mercy to all."

Sr. Ita Fernando : Sr. Ita's first mission outside the country was in Belgium, in 2007. In 2016 she was sent to Albania where she is at present engaged in ministry, visiting the poor, and receiving the very poor who come to our house. She also teaches English to the children and young people of the village, while sharing Gospel Values with them. She is also involved in household chores. Ita says, " My mission here is very enriching and I am very happy to work with the marginalized people, enabling them to encounter the Good Shepherd. ... It is my wish that more of our sisters will volunteer for missionary service overseas."

AT THE GENERALATE

From 1966, Sri Lanka had at least one representative at the Generalate, even when the Generalate was in Angers till after Vatican II. The first one from the Province of Sri Lanka to serve on the Congregational Leadership Team was Sr. Columba Cullen (Irish), who was called when she was Local Leader of the Community at Nayakakanda in 1966. A number of sisters had served in Rome, since then, in different capacities. Srs. Immaculate Conception de Alwis and Gonzaga Fernando have served as General Councillors. At Present (2019), three of our sisters are engaged in missionary service in Rome. They are, Srs. Josita, Pramila and Gratia.

Sr. Josita Corera : Josita was elected a General Councillor at the Congregational Chapter of 2015. She was installed as a member of the Congregational Leadership Team(-CLT), on 14th Nov. 2015, when she began her responsible ministry in Rome and outside. This is how Josita refers to her role: "Together with the other members of the Congregational Leadership Team, I accompany the Congregation in being faithful to the Constitutions and Congregational Direction Statement, in responding effectively and relevantly to our mission of Reconciliation in today's world."

Then again, speaking of her experience, she says, " I am blessed to be part of an International Congregation. I experience the joy of our interconnectedness as we risk together for mission." She continues, " May we continue to live the questions of our time and witness to all people that we are women at home with God and filled with hope for a shared future of oneness and love."

Sr. Pramila Fernando : Talking of her service in Rome, Pramila has this to say: "I came to Rome on 1st November 2009 and my role was personal secretary to Sr. Brigid Lawlor who was the Congregational Leader at that time. In 2015, I was very happy to continue serving in this ministry to Sr. Ellen Kelly, our present Congregational Leader." With reference to her experience as a missionary, Pramila says: " To be honest, I haven't considered myself as a "missionary" but as one being blessed with an experience of being 'home away from home.' Blessed too, in the journeying together with others in the Generalate Community; as we welcome and extend hospitality to all who visit and spend time in our very International Community."

Gratia Fernando : On 20th November, 2007, Gratia was called to Rome mainly as The Coordinator of Liturgy and Music. She is also involved in welcoming sisters to the Generalate Community. She says, " I take part in the JPIC in Rome when possible.I am also involved with Sri Lankan migrants who live in Rome. I spend time with them on Sundays in two parishes (Counselling, and also helping them to find jobs.etc.). Living in an international community (17 nationalities), has been very enriching. We experience a wonderful spirit in community." Gratia adds, " Life is a challenge. We need to be flexible according to the needs of the community and the individual persons."

OUR CONTEMPLATIVE SISTERS SERVING OVERSEAS: On 21st February 2009, Sr.Vivienne Fernando was sent to "Lys Marie" Convent in Belfast, Northern Ireland. In April of the same year she was commissioned to the Community of Waterford, for 6 more months. From the beginning of 2009, she has been in Ireland. Vivienne says, "I am very grateful to the Irish Sisters for bringing the Good Shepherd mission to Sri Lanka.

I am now privileged to engage in ministry as a contemplative in Ireland. In living my contemplative life responsibly, with love and commitment, I give my life to God in contemplative mission... I experience great joy and energy in sharing my talents and creativity in community."

Manel Liyanarachchi: Manel went first to Korea in 2007, where she was in Mission for 1 ½ years. From Korea she was sent to Angola where she has remained in mission from

November, 2008 to January , 2019. “During these years I have experienced the richness of cultures as well as the challenges to be faced when living in an international community... At present I am vocation promoter , while also journeying with prospective candidates.

Furthermore, I am doing a 9 months Course on Formation. From 2017, I have been a member of the Province Team. With all these experiences I strongly feel the Zeal of St.M.Euphrasia giving me energy whereby I continue to embrace my mission with joy.”

Sr. Regina Fernando : Regina has been in Ireland as a missionary since 2009, in the community in Belfast. Sr. Vivienne Fernando is also in the same community. She says, “During this period, living with our elderly Irish sisters, I have been enriched in prayer, contemplation and community living. The sisters have been very supportive, encouraging us to go forward with confidence, enabling us to be more and more positive in our thinking. I have grown to appreciate and treasure, ever more deeply, our Good Shepherd Charism, and our Contemplative way of life.” Currently, (Jan.2019) , Regina is back in Sri Lanka for a short holiday. She eagerly awaits her visa to return to Ireland.

Two of our Sr. Lankan sisters, **Rajeswari Johnpulle and Tania de Jong**, Professed in Sri Lanka in 1966, joined the Provinces of Canada and Australia respectively, several years ago.

Following this Good Shepherd Story unfurled thus far, it is evident that Sri Lanka has been blessed with the precious Treasure of our Good Shepherd Charism and Heritage, to be shared by all others, spreading the radiance, fragrance and flavor of the Good Shepherd Presence in Sri Lanka and worldwide ! We remember with deep respect, appreciation and gratitude, our holy Mother the Church, and all Church authorities who have been down the line, linked with our story, though, perhaps, not mentioned in particular!

Our Province recognizes and appreciates the presence and service of our sisters and mission partners, and all associated in this Story, in our own country and in distant mission lands! So much of God’s unspeakable wonders have taken place! So many benefactors have participated silently in this astounding Story. So many committed persons have been vibrantly on the scene. The poor and the downtrodden, the lost and the lonely, the wounded and the unloved , the abandoned and the unwanted, especially children, girls and women have all been the main focus of our Good Shepherd Presence.

SORRY !

However, very important facts and figures, persons and events, appreciation and esteem, may have been overlooked or skipped over by the compilers, due to inadvertence or inefficiency! For all that has not been duly recorded, persons, places, events, dates etc., we are sorry! For the under-estimation and lack of sufficient appreciation expressed in this Story, we humbly say, 'we are deeply sorry!' For any other deficiencies, we say, 'we are extremely sorry.'

OUR HEARTFELT THANKS !

Finally, with hearts overflowing with gratitude for all that has happened,
Whether recorded or unrecorded,
Including all the persons, authorities, institutions, places, events and situations, linked with

Appreciating our Good Shepherd Story of 150 years,

"Reaching Out With Open Arms",

we joyously offer, from the depths of our hearts ,

PRAISE, THANKS AND GLORY TO OUR SHEPHERD GOD !

Let St. Mary Euphrasia have the final word !

"May your heart be an altar,
from which the bright flame of unending thanksgiving ascends to heaven ."



"Blessed are you who see what you see; blessed those who hear what you hear."
"Doesn't it seem to you , dear daughters, that those words are addressed to you
as you experience the various good works of our Institute?
Surely God will, indeed, bless our feeble efforts abundantly!"

How true that 'our portion has fallen on good ground!' (Ps.16:15)"...
"O my God, I cannot understand how so many houses have come from this poor house of Angers!.... We are the children of miracles !"
(St. M. Euphrasia)



"Remember, you are the instruments God has chosen, to cooperate in this great work. It is given to you to cultivate the mus tard seed which God plants to make into a great tree. Direct all your efforts to this. It is up to you to make it possible that those exhausted and lost....should find strength in the shade of this healing tree."

(St. M. Euphrasia)

Compiled By Sisters Frances Of Rome (Archivist), Lucina Ekanayake, Thomas Aquinas De Cruz And Angela Fernando With Information And Inspiration From Several Good Shepherd Sisters And Others.



Prayer, Reconciliation, Solidarity and Working Collaboratively...

Our Vision, Mission & Values

" Gratitude is your inheritance. Engrave it on your heart. "

St. Mary Euphrasia



Our Vision is :

A just world where women, girls and children enjoy their rights with dignity, freedom and fullness of life.

Our Mission is :

Energised by the spirit and charism of Good Shepherd we engage ourselves to end all forms of violence and discrimination against women, girls and children working in prevention, rehabilitation and reintegration work through:

- Child protection programmes based on best practice
- Value based education towards the betterment of the society
- Promoting economic justice
- Eradicating gender based violence
- Advocacy for the change of unjust structure and promotion of ecological justice through networking with like-minded organisations.
- Effective pastoral work

We are committed to prayer, reconciliation, solidarity and working collaboratively to bring about a just world.

Our core values guide us in the work we do :

- Human Dignity
- Justice
- Partnership and Participation
- Transparency and Accountability
- Excellence

Mission Evolvement In Sri Lanka

“ Gratitude is your inheritance. Engrave it on your heart. ”

St. Mary Euphrasia



Mission Evolvement in Sri Lanka And Pakistan

The Good Shepherd Sisters in Sri Lanka and Pakistan have a long history of serving the poor and the marginalised in these countries. From the beginning, the Sisters were called upon to devote themselves to education, and set up a number of schools.

Over the next century, sisters also developed :

- Residential Re-education Centres for socially vulnerable girls.
- Children's Village to create living conditions for children deprived of parental care or family support..
- Homes for single mothers and babies.
- Child-care centres for poor and destitute children.
- Day-care centres to help working mothers in urban areas.
- Crisis intervention Centres for young girls and women in crisis.
- Centre for empowerment of women (Women's Desk).
- Ministry to families living in slums or working on estate plantations.
- Homes for Elders.
- Parish Schools for teaching of religion and the National Catechetical Apostolate.
- Support for migrant workers.
- Development of families in fishing villages..
- Non-formal education to children who drop out of mainstream schools.
- Visiting prisoners and care of their children.
- Care of families displaced by the civil war.
- Poverty alleviation programmes.
- Networking with NGOs and other Religious congregations in issues of Justice and Peace.
- Hostels for working girls.

In 2017, the Good Shepherd Province of Sri Lanka/Pakistan, (GSSL&PK) conducted a mid-term review of the progress made in addressing the priorities in the Directives of the Province Chapter of 2013. The purpose of the review was to have wider consultation in the province so as to: assess progress; set new targets for the remaining three

year period; and to work out a strategic Plan which would outline the operational focus for the period 2017-2019, in order to set clear goals and objectives for our Mission and ministries..

This plan is a road map for the work of the congregation as we focus on moving towards a more responsive and sustainable approach to our ministry based on a common vision, which calls us to work zealously for **"a just world where women, girls and children enjoy their rights with dignity, freedom and fullness of life".**

Based on the Vision, Mission, and values, under the Strategic Plan, we have developed a programme with the overall goal of making our GS Charism vibrant and alive in Sri Lanka/ Pakistan.

The objective 3 is to **"Increase the impact of Good Shepherd ministries through needs-based planning, best practice based on today's, effective project management, monitoring and evaluation".**

It sets forth GSSL&PK's vision of providing programmes that are based on best practice and with the highest level of professionalism. Activities under this objective highlight the need to change our current programmes to those based on best practice that confront the root causes of violence and abuse against women, girls and children and offer services that bring lasting change to their lives.
This Objective challenges us to invest our resources for the professional development and technical skill training of Sisters and Mission partners in order to give best quality programmes and services to women, girls and children we seek to support.

The PLT have the support of 13 working teams in Sri Lanka and 4 working teams in Pakistan. These working teams are responsible for implementing their component of the strategic work plan. This means working in collaboration with other working teams in order to achieve the intended results under each objective laid down in the Strategic Plan. The working teams are guided and supported by a co-ordinator. They are as follows.

- Child Protection Monitoring Team (CPM)
- Community Based Child Protection Committee (CBCPC)
- Child Care Team
- Education Review Team
- Initial Formation Team
- Continuing Formation Team
- Montessori and Pre-school Team

- Education Team
- Pastoral Outreach Team
- Gender Based Violence and Economic Justice Review Team
- Vocational Training Review Team

As GSSL&PK is committed to best practice Ministry, the Strategy sets out our work on the review and restructure of our current programmes and priority areas of work which include:

- Child Protection
- Education
- Eliminating of Gender Based Violence and promotion of economic justice
- Advocacy
- Pastoral outreach

Following the GSSL child protection programme review in 2015-16, we redesigned our child protection programme in order to deliver a community based systemic approach to our work in elimination of all forms of violence, abuse and neglect against children.

Our existing work in the elimination of gender-based violence and promoting economic justice will be reviewed, consolidated and the scope of work outlined in order to ensure a systems approach to confronting violence against women and girls.

While we focus our efforts on programmes that tackle violence, abuse and exploitation of women, girls and children, we also continue our work in education.

This work includes:

- Private school education
- Education in state schools where our sisters serve as Principals or members of the staff.
- Montessori Houses of children.
- Pastoral Outreach



Child - Focused Community Development

The Good Shepherd Apostolate in Sri Lanka dealing with Child-care, took a drastic turn from institutionalized care to community-based care. We were successful in in-augurating community-based centers at Mankerni, Waleboda, Walauwa, Hallinna, and Sinnapaduwa.

The project at Sinnapaduwa was the first venture which adopted the child- focused community development with the rights-based approach. The other projects adopted the approach of child-centred, community-based development. All these projects gave precedence to children and women. Hence much effort was made to reach out to them in their own respective community set up.



Sinnapaduwa took the approach of creating a safety net for children through the creation of women's Self Help Groups (SHGs).
"Empowering a woman is to empower the whole society".
We believe that when the women are educated and empowered to protect their children, then the children in their community will be safe and the whole community will have a safe space for children. The Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and well-being Analyses are the guiding techniques to enter into the community and to form SHGs. Forming the SHGs were a bit challenging at the beginning as it required motivation and collaboration.



There are many other programmes organized for women, such as : on parenting, child protection, existing social issues in the community etc. all of which have given a new awakening to the community as a whole.

SHGs have different income generation programmes with the support of a sub-committee working on a Business Promotion Module.





This gave a new awakening to the whole community, adding many more learning - skills and group spirit to their lives. They were able to develop business management skills in this process. It is their further desire to uplift their families through micro to macro savings and to have a good future for their children.



The women state, ”As women in this community, we experience that we are moving towards our goals, contributing our own talents and capabilities for this objective. We are always mindful of the fact that all our efforts are for nothing else but for the protection of our own children”. Their dream was made a reality in this process. Along with the SHGs different programs have been initiated for our children, focusing on child protection and holistic development of the child.

Child Friendly Safety Space (CFSS) is a fresh experience to our province. Groups of children gather on five days a week and they play, read, dance, study, draw, and sing. Life education programmes, aesthetic activities, rights-based education programmes, and outings are provided regularly. Through these programs most vulnerable children have been identified, making it possible for us to journey with them, giving more focus to the individual child.



SR. RASANGI FERNANDO

Evolving Justice And Peace In Good Shepherd Sri Lanka Pakistan Province



The Congregational Chapter of 1985 "urged new responses in relation to Social Justice and declared "justice is an integral part of our mission of reconciliation". Hence forth all congregational chapters paved the path to incorporate justice as part of our lives. Good Shepherd became affiliated with the United Nations (UN) as a non-government organization (NGO) with consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in November 1996. The purpose of this affiliation is to further our mission of reconciliation, particularly in its orientation toward girls and women. It is a means of collaboration through which we work to bring about change in whatever condemns others to live a marginalized life.



Through our affiliation with the goals of the UN, we seek to extend mercy to the poor, to the oppressed, awakening in our world the dignity and value of each person.

In response to the congregational chapter directives Province of Sri Lanka Pakistan laid its foundation to incorporate JP to its work by establishing Justice Peace commission. The visit of GS training facilitator capacitated the skills required to organize JP activities in an organized way and gave a new out look to our ministries. The commission organized peace building and reconciliation programme for the youth of Northern and Eastern part of the country which was very much needed in post war era.

GS actively take part of the campaigns organized by civil societies, faith based organizations, Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka with related to the issues of women and children.

Shifting the ministry work from charity based approach to right based approach is a milestone of JP initiatives. This effort compelled GS to let go of irrelevant methods of working with women and children and to standardized the existing work. The notion of child rights and women's rights entered into the ministries. Introducing Good Shepherd Child protection policy made known GS Sri Lanka as Child friendly organization. Awareness racing on different issues such as trafficking, safe migration, rights of women and children, political situation of the country, interfaith dialogue, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are some of the areas to be mentioned. When Sri Lanka affected with resent past natural calamities GS Justice Peace Sri Lanka was able to work in flood relief.





GS networks with Talitakum , AMRAT, that work towards ending human trafficking. Good Shepherd Sri Lanka amplify the voice of the children and women of the country

by making use of international treaties and provisions; Convention on the Rights of Children, CEDAW, Universal Periodical Report (UPR) and Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP). Justice Peace Commission of Sri Lanka shapes its work to respond to the present day reality of our society.

Sr. Niluka Perera

Elimination Of Gender-Based Violence And Promoting Economic Justice

Good Shepherd sisters of Sri Lanka and Pakistan, work zealously with women and children. We worked to address the most pressing needs of today including: poverty, human trafficking, forced migration, refugees, gender inequality and violence. Among these ,Gender Based Violence (GBV) was not taken into consideration.

This led us to realize the felt need of GBV programs having limited impact and relevancy. In response to the 18th Sri lanka Pakistan Province chapter Directive 2013 was stated: "Inspired by the Spirit of St M. Euphrasia who said, 'be courageous and go forward' to be fruitful in Good Shepherd Mission in today's context – We were inspired to pay more attention to these programmes.

Our target was to achieve and strive to enhance sustainable programs that leads to the reduction and discrimination against women, girls and children. Therefore two programs namely Nisaladiya Sevana, and St Euphrasia safe Home was taken into consideration. In this manner Good Shepherd Sri Lanka strive to maintain GBV program relevancy. As a result the Good Shepherd Sri Lanka require a dedicated advocacy desk which will be the focal point for all advocacy initiatives in the province.

In this comportment, we as Sri Lanka Pakistan province strive together to create a just world where women, girls and children enjoy their rights, with human dignity, freedom and fullness of life... May the Shepherd God lead us to the so correct path...

Dream Becomes a Reality

"I belong to all nations ... Embrace the whole world with zeal says our dear mother founders, St.Mary Euphrasia. Keeping these sentiments, and her aspirations in mind, the sisters in the teaching ministry planned to reach out to the needy people















Good Shepherd Mission During War And The Post War Situation

When there are Multi ethnic groups, problems are inevitable. This was evident in Sri Lanka during the last three decades when there was an ethnic conflict. During the war the northern and eastern parts of the country were destroyed. Though Sri Lanka hoists the flag indicating the eradication of terrorism, the consequences of war have shaken lives. People of the north and the east have been scattered and families and communities destroyed.

Civil war also led to systematic damage of the infrastructure, land and property. Furthermore the psychological trauma among men, women and children has been immeasurable. The vulnerability is most evident among women especially the widowed, wives of the disappeared, and those women heading households.

During this vulnerable situation, with the guidance of the leadership team, a group of sisters began their service with the war victims. The activities carried on in the IDP camps were focused on the following:

- Mediation with the Government on behalf of the people who were in various camps, hospitals and detention camps and hospitals
- Organizing pre-school activities in Dharmapuram and Ramanathan Camp.
- Providing boiled fresh milk for the pre-school children who were in vulnerable conditions, as they were disturbed for a long period of time and had not got proper food.
- Conducting classes for Scholarship students and helping them to get the books and necessary things to sit for their exam.
- Organizing classes for O/L and A/L students.

It was disheartening to see the children who were had to do O/L and A/L without any books or notes. Though there was restriction of movement, the effort we made to bring s teachers from Colombo to help about 407 children in noteworthy. Notes and other educational items were provided.

The few of the teaching sisters from the schools also provided their services to prepare the children for the exam.



The adults of the camps had to be focused on. They did not have any entertainment facilities or job opportunities. Tailoring classes were organized for the young girls, women and men. After the training they were given the opportunity to earn something by stitching school uniforms. Income generating projects were started for the people who completed the training programme.





We felt that the young girls who were in the liberation movement were side lined by everyone. They were the lost sheep who had to be guided. We rented a house and started Skills Training Programme. Some of the girls who came for the skill training, wanted to continue their education and they were given the necessary incentive to do so. Soon after the war one girl gained the University entrance. English classes and computer classes were also organized.





After completing the training programme the young girls were given the chance to do so. They stitched various kinds of bags and earned an income. Some of them were able to involve in small garment factory too.



Female headed families and the Good Shepherd sisters.

During the post war situation, the female headed families were given priority and we felt that these are the women who struggle to attain many needs. Twenty five women from Mullaitheivu district are involved in this project. They were given a loan to start a self-employment. Some of them have extended their own business.





Cultivation was another source of income.





By Sr. Remoshini Fernando

Good Shepherd Institutes of Vocational Education.

Good Shepherd Institute of Vocational Education, previously known as "Seth Sevana", denotes "Haven of Well-Being", keeping up the mission of uplifting and empowering young women. GSIVE has been generous in uplifting and empowering every girl, making the wish of our foundress's dream come true. "One person is of great value than the whole world" and enlivening the values of the gospel "I came that they may have life & that abundantly" (Jn 10:10).

As the young generation is challenged immensely with a multitude of possibilities before them, career guidance has become a need of our times. As we all know, most of the girls staying under our care are unable to complete their academic studies due to family problems and emotional setbacks. As this was a felt need of our Province for a number of years, we needed to equip our children with various skills, and hence this was premeditated by the former Province Leader Rev. Sr. Rohini Mendis & the leadership team to initiate a one-year Residential Career Development Programme in the Nazareth building at Good Shepherd Convent Bolawalana.

It was one of the newest ventures of our province for our needy children in the year 2009.



Under privileged young women realizing their potentials with empowered creativity, equipped with NVQ, craft skills and other life skills, being able to lead Productive, Independent and Empowered lives was our ultimate objective. Also becoming efficient, productive entrepreneurs and empowered housewives and mothers in the years to come& leading healthy lives, making a positive impact in their communities, was our vision to come true.

GSIVE is a Vocational Training Institute, which provides a One Year Free Residential Holistic Development Programme through Vocational & Professional Training, especially for Orphans, Destitute & Underprivileged girls from our Child Development Centers. Currently we have open edour doors for girls from low economic groups all over Sri Lanka and it mainly emphasises on Professional & Integral Personality Development. Good Shepherd Sisters in Sri Lanka are able to shepherd this project efficiently because of the generous contribution of the funding partners of Mary's Friends Foundation Norway& Chance Ev Foundation, Germany.

GSIVE also provides the students a growth promoting environment where they are inspired and empowered to become strong and creative leaders in their communities. GSIVE provides relevant vocational training programmes, life skills education and Holistic Personality Development Programmes that equip girls of low economic groups of Sri Lanka and girls who are preparing to move out of our children's homes with the necessary skills to find suitable employment or even begin self-employment ventures. A few other short courses conducted by GSIVE are deemed useful for securing employment or self-employment. It helps girls settle down economically, and generates a group of entrepreneurs/ self-employed women from GSIVE, flexible to the Labor Market, and also to effectively explore the world of work, with renewed confidence and empowered creativity to face the future with a possibility of self-sufficiency thus energized to build up a fruitful future for themselves. GSIVE provides financial help for students who are ready to do higher studies in their respective specialized fields or assist them with micro credit facilities from the funding partners to operate their own Salons, Bakeries, Tailor shops etc.

Every year 40–45 students are enrolled for the Vocational, Professional and holistic Development Training Programme and 90% of students pass out successfully. At least 75% of the40 students are in jobs in their respective fields. And 70% of the 35 – 40 graduates matched with jobs by the GSIVE. No less than 60% alumni report that they are able to move up the social ladder and improve their standard of living by contributing to the living cost of the family by realizing our project's Key Performing Indicators a success.

From 2009 GSIVE is Registered & Accredited its' Six NVQ courses to the Tertiary & Vocational Education Commission and our programmes have received National Compe-



tency. Students who are successful in this programme are awarded Nationally and Internationally recognized NVQ certificates, which is a good opportunity for those who discontinue schooling at an early stage. From 2007 GSIVE is graded with ISO 9001/2008 certification from TVEC by installing the Quality Management System.

Hence passing all these mile stones GSIVE has completed its' 10years of successful service with 10 batches and a total of approximately 500 young women, out of which almost 80% of passed out students are presently settled in their respective career paths.

Mosvold Educational Center in Balapitiya

In the year 2013 while productively completing the 5th year of GSIVE/Seth Sevana Rt. Rev. Dr. RaymondWickramasinghe,Bishop of Galle invited the Good Shepherd Sisters to branch off from Bolawalana, utilizing the building at Balapitiya constructed after the tsunami devastation, which was isolated fora few years, for the purpose of Vocational training& to make use of the equipment originated overthere, as the Good Shepherd Sisters have already made a name for the Holistic Professional & Personality Development through GSIVE /'Seth Sevana' Bolawalana, Negombo.

In reverence to the invitation made by Rt. Rev. Dr. Bishop Raymond Wickramasinghe, the newly elected Province Leader Rev. Sr. Francine Muthugala and the Leadership Team decided toreplicate the same system of GSIVE /Seth Sevana Bolawalana in Balapitiya too.The branch provided the same facilities, theNVQ coursesconducted as same for about 35-40 students especially from the Southern Province.

In responding to this need Mr. Kurt Mosvold & Mosvold Martinus Trust with the thoughtful facilitation of "Mary's Friends" came up generously in funding the project and named the institution as Mosvold Educational Center,which was inaugurated on the 19thof March 2015 passing out the 4th batch by now.

Oneco "VAIGARAI" Vocational Training Centre in Ganehspuram...

During the resettlement period, The Good Shepherd Sisters began the Skill Development Project 'VAIGARAI', meaning New Dawn, in Vavuniya, for war combatants who were longing to build up their future after the painful war in a temporary shelter,from March 2010 . From April 2011an income generating programme commenced as the second phace for the girls completing the tailoring course. At the beginning the main beneficiaries were mostly the ex-combatants of war and those who were badly affected by the war.

Girls from the war torn areas, internally displaced, school dropouts, orphans, destitute, under-privileged girls from the low economic Tamil families of Northern Province, girls under the Good Shepherd Sisters care & girls from the local community.

When the war ended, the service expanded to accept young women from all over Sri Lanka who may have been, physically, psychologically and emotionally broken, or orphaned due to the war, living in unhealthy and unsafe environments, having lost their homes and property and those experiencing economic crisis.

Initially, the project had been conceived as a skill development center but in year 2014 it eventually evolved into a recognized Vocational training center registered in 2016 with the Tertiary Vocational Education Commission (TVEC) of Sri Lanka and offering NVQ courses obtained accreditation for 5 NVQ courses from the same in 2019. Replicating the Project at GSIVE Bolawalana.



In such an environment three Good Shepherd Institutes of Vocational Education has become a blessing to our young girls, a preparation ground for them, before they face society with its challenges &struggles. We too need to remember the compassionate love of our shepherd God, to bring back the needy sheep back to the pastures of life or Career path, providing them not only with just life but it in abundance until it overflows. We need to be alert to raise the fallen sheep not once but as many times as it demands. Besides that, we need to appreciate with grateful hearts the generous assistance of our foreign &local funding partners who support all the three centers financially so as to be more efficient& productive.



In order to be more effective in a mission such as this is demanding & priceless. We need to be fully strengthened by God's abundant graces & blessings & the continued guidance of the Holy Spirit, as we are handling the lives of our broken& vulnerable youth in the country. There is also a collective mission as we cater to the girls who come from our child development centres & convents all over Sri Lanka.

All the sisters/parents who are responsible for these students need to get passionately involved to build a productive group of citizens. Hence we can journey towards the mission of our mother foundress as a province. Finally, my wish & prayer is that the students who come to study in our Good Shepherd Vocational Training centres may find life and it in abundance and live as an Integral person bearing much fruit to the world.

Sr. Mary Prasangika Fernando

Principal, GSIVE – Sri Lanka
Project Coordinator, Skill Development Centers- Sri Lanka.

Evolvement in Education

"Through Value Based Education in our Good Shepherd Schools we make a better impact on the society at large to make it a better place for all to live".





The History of Good Shepherd involvement in schools and reasons for Good Shepherd running the schools:

On 30th March 1867 His Lordship Mgr. Hillarian Sillani OSB, wrote to Mother Euphrasia (now St. M. Euphrasia) inviting some of her religious sisters to serve in his Vicarate. Mother Euphrasia replied to him saying "***It is with sentiments of deep gratitude that we received your esteemed letter of 30th March and hasten to reply immediately and to thank your Lordship for the confidence with which you honour our Congregation by inviting it to your Diocese....We shall spare no pains to cooperate with your kindness...***" Therefore Bishop Sillani commenced the work on 4th November 1867 on the building and wrote to Angers in October 1868 saying "***thank God, the monastery is finished... Therefore come reverend Mothers and occupy it soon and begin your useful works, by means of piety, good morals and good education".***

On 1st of May 1869 the Good Shepherd Convent School was solemnly opened in Kotahena. Soon after, a day school for the vernacular – Sinhalese poor girls was opened. Within a few months, an Orphanage was established for the care and protection of destitute girls. The Parish Priest presented some young ladies to them who would help with teaching in the Sinhalese School.



On 9th June 1869, Sr. M. Seven Dolours Joly, the first Superior of the Convent arrived at Kotahena and also took over work in the school as Principal.
Thereafter St. Bridget's Convent, Colombo 07 and Good Shepherd Schools in Nuwara Eliya, Naykakanda, Kandy, Wellawatte, Panadura and Yatiyantota were opened.

In 1962 all Catholic Schools except a few were taken over by the Government. At present we run 10 Vested Schools (GS schools taken over by the Government with a Good Shepherd sister as Principal) , one fully Private School – St. Bridget's Convent, Colombo 07 and 7 Assisted Schools (schools under GS management assisted partly by the Government through payment of salaries – of registered teachers).



The 10 Vested Schools are :

Good Shepherd Balika, Nayakakanda

St. Sebastian, Kandana

St. Anthony's Mutual

St. Joseph's Balika, Grandpass

St. Anne's Hill Street

Good Shepherd Balika (Tamil) Kotahena

Good Shepherd Balika Primary, Nayakakanda

St. Anne's Primary, Wattala

St. Sebastian Maha Vidyalaya, Sea Street

Good Shepherd Balika Vidyalaya, Nuwara Eliya

The Seven Non Fee Levying Schools – Assisted Schools are :

Good Shepherd Convent Kotahena

Ave Maria Convent Negombo

St. Lawrence's Wellawatte

Good Shepherd Convent, Panadura

Good Shepherd Convent, Kandy

St. Tomas Girl's School, Matale

Our Lady's Convent, Nuwara Eliya

Good Shepherd Sisters are involved in the lives of about 30,000 students all over Sri-Lanka, with about 45 Good Shepherd Sisters working in collaboration with 1300 Good Shepherd Lay staff in these schools.

The schools have been for us a means of reaching out to thousands of children and young women. Our purpose is to inculcate Good Shepherd values in our students and empower them to face the challenges of society. Further we endeavour to spread Good Shepherd Values by reaching out to the parents of our students and other link associations.







Good Shepherd Education has been reviewed from time to time to be more effective in our ministry with the support of internal and external consultants.

The purpose of these reviews is to evaluate our witness in the Mission of Compassion...

- how effective is our Mission with the lay staff, Students, Parents and Link Associations?
- as Good Shepherd people can we make a better impact on the society at large to make it a better place for all to live?
- the quality of people we produce from our schools... are they learned people empowered by compassion?...will they be Good Shepherd people in the society because of the Good Shepherd Education received from our schools?



The recent Strategic Plan, prepared with a consultant from the Congregation, helped our sisters in formal Education to review whether they honestly reach the following goals.

- Are we on the right track...
- Are we relevant for today's' society...
- Is the methodology used to inculcate values still relevant / meaningful...
- If this ministry is to be continued what changes could we make...

The following main objectives have been set with our new Strategic Plan for Good Shepherd Education in Sri-Lanka.

- Development of a Good Shepherd culture based on Good Shepherd Ethos and Philosophy,
- Implementation of Rights Based Approaches in Education such as the right to access to education, the right to quality education, the right to respect within the learning environment. Sharing Good Shepherd Charism with teachers, staff, parents and children.
- Personal transformation of Good Shepherd Sisters.
- Building relationships – external and internal.
- Capacity development in Charism and skills.
- Common operating system in all Good Shepherd schools.

Finally an action plan has been drawn up to be implemented from 2019 in all our Good Shepherd Schools.

- Development of a Good Shepherd culture based on GS ethos and philosophy.
- Adopt the Province's Vision, Mission (adapted) and Core Values for all GS Schools.
- Strengthen and deepen the Charism in all the GS Schools.
- Create a GS atmosphere in our schools' environment.
- Inculcate GS values in our students.
- Establish a communication system to share the GS Culture

- Ensure that all G.S. teachers, staff and supportive staff have the right quali fication and skills
- Ensure that all schools are equipped for quality education.
- Ensure that adequate facilities are available for extra-curricular and co-cur ricular activities
- Provide a safe and healthy environment within the school, including the im plementation of the Child Protection Policy.
- Children from under-served communities be supported in their right to ed ucation
- Strengthen existing student organizations to participate in the formation of a rights based school.
- Good Shepherd Administrative system.
- Construction of Building/Renovation Policy and Proceedings.
- Common Finance Policy for all Good Shepherd Schools.
- Schools Mission Effective Team to be established for Monitoring and Evaluation.



Pre School / Montessori & Day Care

From the beginning as Good Shepherd sisters we had been engaged ourselves in early childhood education. We run about 30 centers at the moment.

The recent Strategic Plan, helped the sisters in Early Childhood Education to review whether they are achieving following objectives in our ministry

- Is the Good Shepherd Spirit existing in our early childhood development centers?
- Am I still carrying our identity as GS Sister
- Are we clear of our direction?

A work shop was held in July 2018 with Ms. Theresa Semons to review the Day care / Pre -school/ Montessori ministry. It helped the sisters to concentrate on the above questions .

After all the discussions and evaluations sisters came up with following outcomes. Main focus was to get all the pre schools , montessories and day care centers under one umbrella which is GOOD SHEPHERD.



Outcome 1: New Governance Structure for GS Schools for ECD

Outcome 2: Establish Good Shepherd Branding for Early Childhood Development

Outcome 3: Ensure Quality Standards for GSSL ECD schools

Outcome 4: Transition GS ECD Schools to lay partners

Outcome 5: Closure of GS ECD schools

In order to achieve these, an action plan was formulated which is to be carried out from year 2019

- Set up an ECD Committee (Early Childhood Development)
- Formulating policies and procedures such as human resource policy, standard operating procedures for operating GS school for ECD
- Ensure compliance with Government requirements
- Estabilish a monitoring and evaluation procedure
- Ensure quality education by having a proper standardised curriculum for ECD Center
- Ensure the Competant teachers and staff,
- Create a GS atmosphere in the Montessori environment.
- Inculcate GS values in our children.
- Ensure child friendly environment
- Promote authentic GS Partnership among sisters and lay partners



The Story Of 'Friends Of Prisoners' Children'

The children of prisoners are a forgotten group suffering for the crimes of their parents. They are ostracized by society and neighbourhood, rejected by classmates. They live in a negative environment.

Good Shepherd Sisters and Mission Partners in Sri Lanka set up this project 'Friends of Prisoners' Children' to help the children of prisoners studying from Grade Six to the end of University.

The parents of all these children must be in prison – originally they must be in the "Welikada" – the largest prison in the country. However, if they are transferred to another prison, or released from prison we still continue to help them. We consider that our commitment is to the child and not necessarily to the prisoner.











Nayakakanda & Kotahena

Good Shepherd centres





Kotahena Good Shepherd centres





Nayakakanda Good Shepherd centres

Prayer, Reconciliation, Solidarity and Working Collaboratively...

Mission Evolvement in Pakistan

“ Gratitude is your inheritance. Engrave it on your heart. ”

St. Mary Euphrasia



Mission Evolvement In Pakistan

"My soul is filled with delight and consolation at the thought of the good that is being done through our weak efforts sustained by the grace of God. "

St. Mary Euphraisa

1975 was the year that marked the beginning of the missionary endeavor in Pakistan by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, following urgent requests from the Bishop of the Diocese of Multan for support in reaching out to marginalized children. The first community was established on 10th January, 1976 in Fatimapur- a poor village in the diocese of Multan- providing education, especially for girls.

The mission which began in very humble and trying circumstances have spread its wings into far flung areas of the country. Today the Sisters are witnessing to the merciful love of God in four Catholic Dioceses of the country. In 1982, our sisters established a Crisis Centre for unwed mothers and vulnerable girls in Karachi, followed by Lahore in 1993 and Quetta in 2006.

The ministry of the sisters includes:

- Home for single mothers and girls.
- Pastoral support for women.
- Family Counselling.
- Visiting Prisons.
- Crisis Intervention Centre for girls and women.
- Child Development Centre for the girls - especially for the poor in Multan.
- Faith Formation and Skill training for boys and girls of a colony in Waris Road, whose parents are working as unskilled laborers in a Government hospital.
- Networking with Justice & Peace Commission.
- Visiting the small Christian communities on the Afghan Border.
- Giving accommodation to young women pursuing higher education.
- Pre-Cana Programme for engaged couples.
- Providing basic education and faith formation for disadvantaged children.
- Working with women's groups.
- Guidance, counselling , and medical assistance for families, young girls and pregnant mothers.



- Theological reflections with the girls in the Beauty Parlours in one area of Karachi.

While we live our Charism, its outward expression is constantly evolving, calling us to adapt ourselves to the demands of the mission.

Responding to the needs of the Church and the society, and in keeping with the signs of the times, we have in the recent past , on our initiative, undertaken a couple of new ventures.



The Sisters in Karachi have begun to work with the school dropouts helping them to restart their formal education. This initiative has allowed many kids to bring out their hidden talents and divert their energies in creative art to build a better society.



The year 2014 was also a memorable year in which we were invited by the Salesian Fathers in Quetta to take care of the Laura Vicuna Girls Home. The Sisters work with young girls from different social and cultural backgrounds, empowering them with education , enabling them to shape their future to be women of dignity.





Joining witn Civil Soceity to voice the grievences of the minorities.





Participation in Christ's Redemptive Mission...

Apostolate Of Prayer

" My soul is filled with delight and consolation at the thought of the good that is being done through our week efforts sustained by the grace of God. "

St. Mary Euphrasia



Apostolate Of Prayer

What is the meaning of 'Apostolate of Prayer'?

Is it praying for the apostolate of the Congregation?

Is it praying for those who have asked for our prayers?

Is it praying for the peace of the world/ country/?



Yes, all these are aspects of the Apostolate of Prayer, but they do not signify nor present the whole picture , giving its essence. The 'Apostolate of Prayer' means, participation in Christ's Redemptive Mission. It challenges us to make the Gospel truly 'Good News'; the Gospel which brings about healing and wholeness to the human person, and through that person to others. An authentic vocation to the Religious Life, wheth-

er active or contemplative, is not for the benefit of the one who is called. Our vocation is primarily and principally for the benefit of others. Every high priest is chosen from fellow beings .....Heb.5:1-6. This idea of a high priest or representative before God, evolved in the time of Moses. Though weak and sinful like other people, Moses was accepted by God, to be the Peoples' Advocate.

Our Religious Consecration is deeply rooted in our baptism (Const. 2) . For this reason we are called to represent humanity before God, for we are consecrated for this reason. The Talmud says "Never pray in a room without windows. Never pray, in other words, without one eye on the world around you."

Otherwise our prayer becomes only an external experience, not a life- giving energy, a prayer that brings blessings to the apostolate. Our Apostolate of Prayer is our whole life lived in the spirit of prayer.

Contemplative presence

To be a contemplative is to notice God's action and to be in touch with God, in the awareness of God. God reveals Himself in nature, in the events of life, and through other people who come in contact with us. We are called to live the primacy of God, to transform the world through our prayer, silence and solitude. To transform the world through prayer, this is the apostolate of prayer. How can we do this? We know the story of the burning bush (Exod.3).

Moses was chosen to lead people out of Egypt. (Exod. 5:22) We see how Moses struggled to bring 'life to the poor'. " Lord why do you treat these people so badly?". Here we see a contemplative person, one who carries in his heart the struggles of the people. A contemplative person knows the boldness and the passion of Moses's prayer. The Presence of God cannot leave people unchanged, a God who listens to the cry of the poor.

So, the apostolate of prayer involves a commitment of one's whole being. This is our mission, our apostolate. Like Moses we are to be persons of prayer, for the people, in order to bring life, "to become life bearers".

Seeing their faith Jesus heals the sick man... Lk. 5: 17-20. The sick man himself may be discouraged, depressed with no hope of getting well. But his friends go all the way to help him. It is not easy to go up to the roof carrying a sick man. May be, the owner of the house is shouting at them.

This is the apostolate of prayer, bringing to God all those who are sick not only of body,

but of mind , heart and spirit as well. Seeing how much faith they had, Jesus said to the sick man, "Your sins are forgiven, my friend". Seeing our faith too , Jesus forgives, heals and brings back to the fold, all those who have gone astray. They will also become "friends of Jesus" .

In this our apostolate of prayer, we are not alone. We are united with our active sisters in their ministry. As Good Shepherd Sisters, whether we are active or contemplative sisters, we have a flock to take care of and nurture. For active sisters the flock would be those who are under their care in their ministry. For us contemplative sisters, our flock is all those who have been entrusted to our prayer, namely, the whole world.

Active sisters speak to people about God's mercy through their active ministry. We speak to God about the people and their needs, through our life of Prayer.

We support our active sisters through our prayer and encouragement. Our active sisters help us to fulfill our apostolate of prayer, by asking our prayers and sharing the needs of the apostolate. Our apostolate of prayer becomes fruitful through the active ministry of our active sisters.

I will end this my reflection with the words of our Holy Father, Pope Francis, for Contemplative Sisters.

"Dear contemplative sisters, without you what would the Church be like, or those living on the fringes of humanity and ministering in the outposts of evangelization? The Church greatly esteems your life of complete self-giving. The church counts on your prayers and on your self-sacrifices to bring today's men and women to the good news of the Gospel.

The Church needs you ! It is not easy for the world, or at least that large part of it dominated by the mindset of power, wealth and consumerism, to understand your particular vocation and your hidden mission; and yet it needs them immensely.

The world needs you every bit as much as a sailor on the high seas needs a beacon to guide him to a safe heaven. Be beacons to those near to you and, above all, to those far away. Be torches to guide men and women along their journey through the dark night of time.

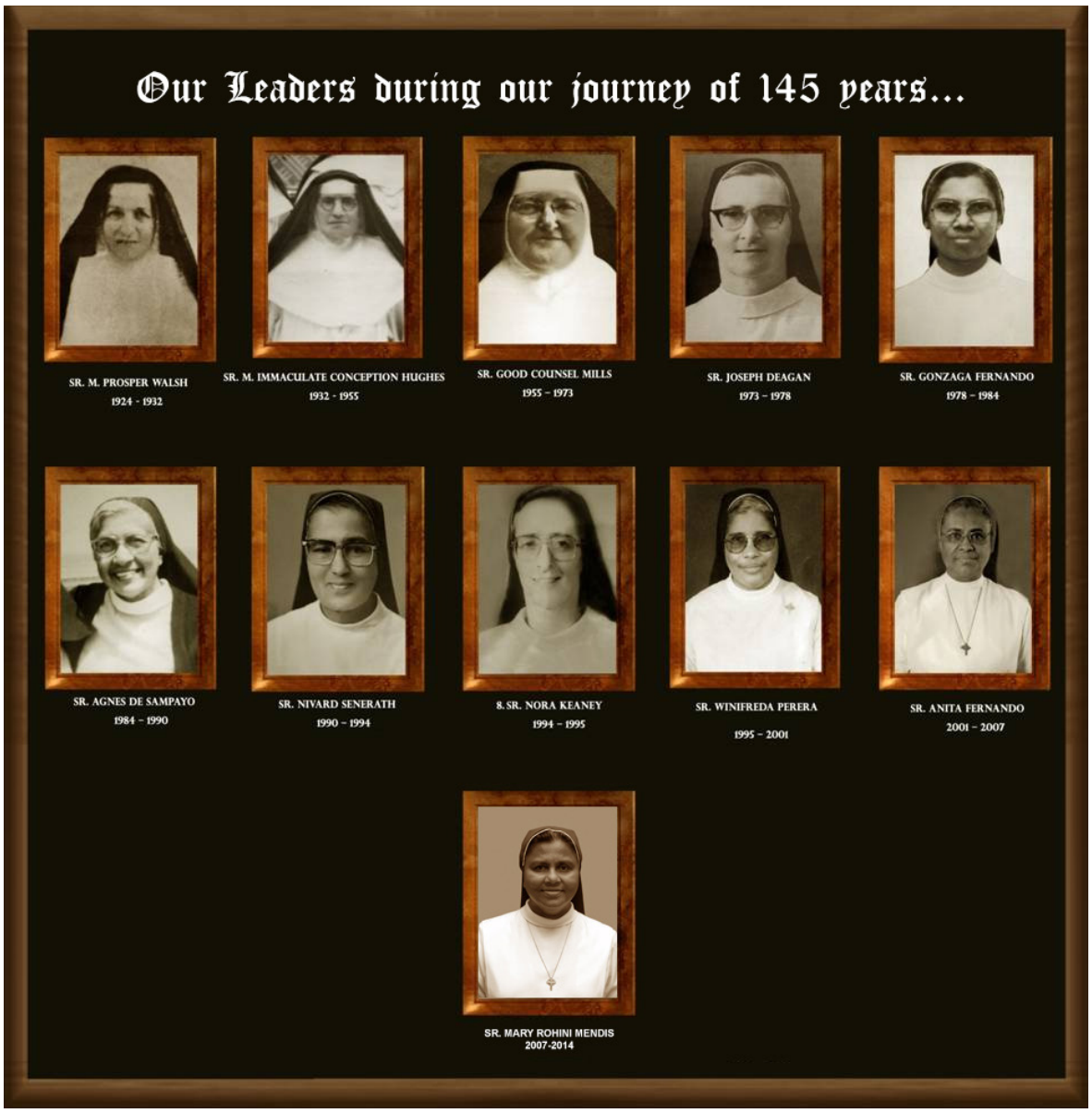
Be sentinels of the morning, heralding the dawn. By your transfigured life, and with simple words pondered in silence, show us the One who is way and the truth and the life."

"Do not be afraid to live fully the joy of Evangelical Life, in accordance with your charism."

(Apostolic Constitution on Women's Contemplative Life. 29th June, 2016.)

Sr. Patricia Perera

(CGS)



Miracles of Life in Our Stories

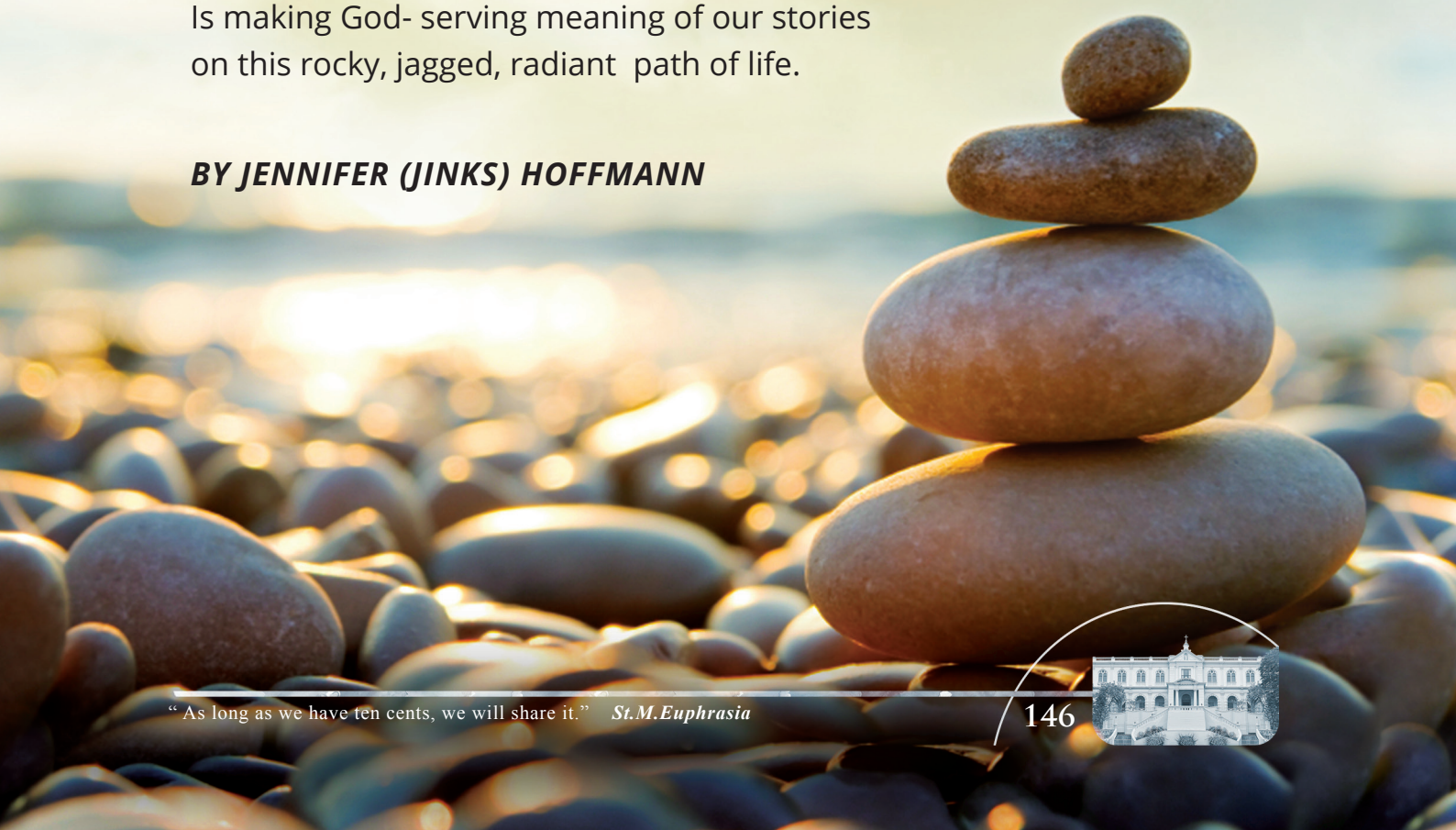
" Let us be grateful to God every day of our Lives, thank him anew at every moment, tell him how happy we are to have been chosen by him. "

St. Mary Euphrasia

Our Stories

It is our stories
our sacred, chaotic, blessed stories,
our lonely, peaceful, frightened stories,
our awe- drenched, doubting, joyous stories,
it is our stories
that are the stones
of God's language
on the rocky, jagged, radiant
path of life.
It is the holy listener
who helps arrange these stones
into cairns
which point the way to
God's desire for our lives and
God's desire for our every moment.
The cairns, if patiently balanced,
Uneven though they be,
By the two who gather in God's presence,
If patiently balanced,
can be the way to heaven.
Heaven after all,
Is making God- serving meaning of our stories
on this rocky, jagged, radiant path of life.

BY JENNIFER (JINKS) HOFFMANN



The Visible Unveiling Here, Invisible Mystery Sacredness Enfolding Us, Here And Now

(Monica Brown)

As I sit here in my room recalling the journey of my life and call, outside my window I see and hear birds fly around with songs of joy and excitement. I am amazed by the Invisible Mystery of God permeating and giving expression right at this moment. Isn't it true of my life as well? As I try to unveil the visible experiences of my life, I am grateful for the Invisible Mystery that has and is enfolding me here and now.

I have been fortunate to experience the sacredness of love through my family. My parents with their deep faith in God and love for all they encounter have nurtured me with faith and love. My brother and I grew up in this beautiful enfolding of love. I was also blessed to be educated in a Good Shepherd school, where I was taught to respect and care for all of life.

As I grew up, I found myself attracted to the vulnerable. I remember in particular one incident during my school days. Together with my mother, I visited a single mothers' home run by the Good Shepherd sisters. My encounter with the babies stirred my heart – I felt deeply connected to them. Today I would say the Divine in them touched the Divine in me. This for me was an encounter with God. God in the simplest of experience. From that moment onwards, I was in a deep search.

Here in this home I saw how the sisters loved and cared for the women and children in their care. The way they related to them, spoke about them, raised them up in prayer to God touched me. I felt that this was where I was called to be. I wanted to be part of this community and be part of something bigger than myself.

Every call has its own challenge of letting go...forming anew...building on who you are. Joining the Good Shepherd family was a turning point in my life – a call to move to the margins of society – to say 'yes' to life and bring abundance wherever I am. I enjoyed the time of formation; where I began to get in touch more profoundly with my inner world, unfold the mystery of who I am.

I recognized my own giftedness and that of others. I realized my vulnerabilities and need for growth...I grew, I was supported to grow...I was enabled to unfold and develop the person I am called to be.

I am grateful The words of St. M. Euphrasia, 'you have a heart created to love and be grateful' have always inspired me. Life in community and ministry have deeply transformed me. I loved my sisters and felt at home. I have been fortunate to share life with

sisters of different ages. Most of my early years were spent with older sisters whose passion for life and mission has influenced me greatly. I must admit that amidst the joys of community, there were also challenges and struggles that have allowed me to touch my own vulnerability and that of the other. Today I realize that these were moments that enabled me to experience the sacredness of our humanity and grow together.

In the different ministries that I served, I encountered the vulnerable. "Once in contact with the poor, once trusting them, establishing a loving and trusting relationship with them, the mystery unveils itself.... We are transformed through our encounter with the poor" says Jean Vanier. This was my experience as well. I was transformed by the 'little ones' I encountered in my ministries – the women in crisis situations - battered women, young women facing various challenges in life. Many a time I had no answers to their problems and struggles, the only gift I could offer was my presence.

Accompanying our younger sisters in formation was a life changing experience for me; in the process I was being formed. Their passion for life and growth, their deep love for mission and creativity in responding to the cries around them, moved me a great deal. I was challenged by their deep search, their questions and quest for life. Together we co-created life for the future.

Coming to Angers for the Congregational Chapter was another turning point in my life. Here I was challenged once again to leave my familiar ground and embrace the inter-nationality of the Congregation. To keep the big picture of the global mission in view.

It was not all that easy – it called for a great shift in my own thinking and being. Each day offered a new challenge, calling me to make conscious choices, rise above my own brokenness and embrace it as an opportunity for growth. It called for mindful living and grateful loving.

Here I am having embraced the global mission, continually being challenged with pressing questions that asks for urgent responses. Many a times there are no answers, yet the call is to live the questions and believe that it is God's mission and God will lead us on. I am grateful that we are together in this search seeking to give of our best to the mission of compassion and reconciliation.

My desire is that together we will move forward in making the dream of God for our world a reality – a dream for abundance and oneness.

I am reminded of the inspiring song of Joyce Johnson Rouse
I am standing on the shoulder of the ones who came before me
I am stronger for their courage; I am wiser for their words
I am lifted by their longing for a fair and brighter future
I am grateful for their vision, for their toiling on this Earth
I am standing on the shoulders of the ones who came before me
I am honored by their passion for our liberty
I will stand a little taller; I will work a little longer
And my shoulders will be there to hold the ones who follow me

I continue my journey being enfolded in Mystery, seeking my role in the larger evolutionary process of becoming. I rejoice in the interconnectedness of all of life, as I continue to touch and be touched by the Divine in all that surrounds me. I pray that together we discover ever more profoundly the Mystery of God calling us to be passionate for life. I conclude by praying this blessing for each one of us:

May my mind come alive today
To the invisible geography
That invites me to new frontiers
To break the dead shell of yesterdays,
To risk being disturbed and changed.
May I have the courage today
To live the life that I would love,
To postpone my dreams no longer
But do at last what I came here for
And waste my heart on fear no more.
(John O' Donohue)

Sr. Josita Corera

Daily Becoming

To an obscure invitation..... to a voice within
I said "YES" though with some hesitation and resistance,
yet a willingness to journey with the Divine,
to an unfamiliar and unknown destiny.
Set foot on the ground of my BECOMING.....
comfortable, pleasing, encouraging and steady
seemed the first steps of the journey.....
Those who were with me felt the same as I did.
Days..... months..... years..... passed,
making history of my life with all that had gone by.
As the wheel of time rolled on, one fact became clear to me;
"**Life is about change – it's never the same.**"
I experienced 'Life' as pulling me in many directions,
But ended confused..... exhausted.....restless .....
Losing inner Peace!

Convinced was I of the inspired words of St. Augustine;
"Our hearts are made for Thee alone, O Lord,
and they will not rest until they rest Thee."
My heart too kept searching for this rest.
Many years glided by,.....
with chaos, uncertainty, struggles, doubts etc.
until the Divine Hand grabbed me and
the grace of the Divine began to dawn on me.

Gradually I was made aware of this Divine Power that enveloped me!
His faithfulness was stronger and steadier
than my faithfulness to Him.
So the journey commenced in a somewhat restless state;
a deep disturbance within.
It wasn't a journey to another destination
to a sacred site elsewhere.
Rather, it was an inward journey
to my own 'SELF' – my TRUE SELF.

Trusting that new growth springs from within,
when I eagerly allow transformation to take place,
abandoning myself to the Divine Power
with no clear-cut destination, road – maps or sing posts,
Enduring pain, uncertainty, and a constant emptying....
Becoming aware of the constant call for 'TRANSFORMATION' from within
I embrace the emerging awareness of the Divine in me
and of my own "True Self" and
CELEBRATE 'NEW LIFE'.

Anything that resists to evolve in the cosmos cannot exist.
Being involved in my shepherding journey,
Enduring the smell of the sheep,
In the footsteps of the Good Shepherd ,
Making His Presence real and effective in the Kingdom,
In my particular area of mission,
I am now doubly open to my transformative journey within.

Now I am a seeker of the Divine
within me, and in the universe!

SR. NILANI SILVA

He Continues To Work Within Me...

Recalling the past, and walking down memory lane, I am fascinated in relishing and cherishing a most exciting childhood game. It is none other than fixing bits and pieces together in jigsaw puzzles; I was determined to fix all the pieces and I marveled when I completed it.

Hailing from a family of God-fearing, caring and loving parents, and fun-loving, understanding, out-going siblings, I was nurtured in an atmosphere of Divine Providence, as well as love for the down-trodden and silent-service. The Lord made me feel that He was calling me when I was just 13. Being a teen, I wondered if it was an illusion! But with the help of many Sisters, and having followed retreats and camps, a great desire for religious life secretly grew within me. I was touched by the children in our Child Development Centers! An article about the mission at Nisaladiya Sevana convinced me about the spirit of the Good Shepherd Congregation.

I entered the candidacy at the age of 19. I praise and thank God for the abundant graces and blessings showered upon me, and for all those who have contributed towards my formation in numerous ways to this day. 'Bloom where you are planted', 'faithfulness', 'humility', ' union with the Lord', are some of the key words that energize me.

Yes, the Lord is still working in me, in the process of change and transformation, in interiority diversity and inter-connectedness with the whole of Humanity and Creation . As a jigsaw puzzle takes form and shape in the process of time in transformative action, so my inner being too is steadily emerging , evolving and unfolding as I journey on with awareness, in contemplative spirituality, as a Good Shepherd sister , in touch with the Divine within me and in others, and in the whole of Creation. We will all evolve to be what we should really be according to the Splendid and Loving Plan and Dream of the Divine Jigsaw!

Sr. Marie Iolanthi Nicholas

My Vocation Story

How did it start?

I am from a simple family of five children, two boys and three girls. My student days were from grade 3 in Kotahena. I was under the loving guidance of Irish nuns.

With the edification of these sisters, I was inspired to follow their way of life, while another attraction to religious life was an Apostolic Carmalite sister, my cousin. I vacillated between these two congregations.

My grade 11 class teacher was Sr. Columba, very loving, quiet and humble in her ways. As there were very few native sisters in the congregation that time, I was hesitant to express my desire to Sr. Columba.

Then after our G.C.E exams, on the last day of the school, we had a small get-together, where sister asked us to write what our ambitions were. I wrote , my desire was to be a Good Shepherd sister. I was educated, and was involved in many activities, most of all in religious services.

Sr. Columba had read all the responses of the girls and then called me privately to her office room after school was over.

She said she was happy about my decision and made arrangements for me to meet Mother Immaculate Hughes, the Province Leader.

I entered the novitiate happily and joyously, while continually thanking my Shepherd God for this vocation.

Sr. Monica Fernando



Beyond Dreams

At the foot of the highest mountain
Across the Golf Club grounds
Angels!! Are they?
Walking three by three on green grass... "Why three?"

Clad in long cream dresses
Rosary hangs on one side
Girdle round the waist
Head gear was black; visible only face.

The little ones including myself
Run behind to touch the tassels and pull
Surely they are not Angels- but
White skinned maidens, Oh how lovely!

This childhood vision became a reality
Years passed, school finished, guided by the FMM's
Education continued
In the teaching field.

My childhood vision became a reality
Appointed as a teacher
At Good Shepherd Convent, Kandy
To face the same 'Angels', Oh what joy!

The CALL from the Shepherd God touched me
Together with my loved ones
Stepped into the holy ground- the 'NOVITIATE' in 1960
Dressed as a bride to meet the groom, formation continued,

First commitment on 8th February 1961
A heavenly bliss on earth!
Back to my teaching profession

To GSC Kotahena, to St. Bridget's and then to Matale.

Life experiences continued, God touched me in many ways
As a community leader; care of little ones too
Another step, Mission Experience in Pakistan
Life in Karachi, Multan and Lahore- saw God's continued love.

God's love in action gained in many ways
Dark clouds covered me many times
But the light from above was there always
'He' walked before me; was close to me; strengthened me.

Now 55 years passed together with my Shepherd God
Walking and feeling with him,
He guides every step of mine
Till I meet Him face to face.

Sr. Mary Joseph of Jesus

The Story of One's Call

A Call is a History.... Yes, it is History.... and A Mystery....

At the age of 16, I felt a very strong attraction towards Religious life.

My father Soloman Francis, and mother Rosaline were blessed with five girls and two boys. I happened to be the youngest. It was not easy for me to move out of the house. In 1966 at the age of 18, my father explained to me that the way of religious life is demanding and I needed to be a little more mature to make a decision. Hence he suggested that I wait until 20 to make a decision. Unexpectedly my father passed away the following month, and my family asked me to respect my father's wish. Thus although I was keen on entering Religious Life, I could not decide.

It was my fervent prayer that led me to be where I am now. I was seeking information from different congregations. Yet wondered, not knowing where to turn to. One fine day my answer came to me in "A DREAM".

I come from the North of Sri Lanka. The Good Shepherds were not in the peninsula at that time and as such I was not aware of them. I had aDREAM - A nun dressed in full white wearing a "SILVER HEART ". She invited me to follow her. She took me to a Convent right on top of a hill. As we went I saw three nuns wearing the same dress waving and welcoming me from the balcony. This dream was so vivid in my mind.

After my father's death, my mother and I got an opportunity to spend afew days in a Convent at Gampola. Strangely there I saw a nun wearing the same "Silver Heart"- she was none other than Sr. Dolorosa. Then and there I decided to enter the Good Shepherd Congregation. The first Convent I was assigned to was Yatiantota. As we went up the hill I saw three nuns standing up there, whom I later identified as Srs. Therese, Cecelia, and Solange. I commenced my Postulancy and thereafter went to Nayakakanda.

"The Lord is my Shepherd... Ps.22"

Sr. Magdalene Francis

When One Door of Happiness Closes...

Being 93 years of age, what do I remember? Much that cannot be spelt out !! Yet, something that can be jotted down!!

'When one door of happiness closes, another opens; but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one which has opened for us.'(Helen Keller). I partly agree with the above saying, since I apply the closing of the door of happiness to the death of my darling mother due to child-birth , which eventually paved the way for so many other avenues! God's ways are so mysterious and wonderful.

My father was a businessman in Malaysia; my grandmother was left behind with five girls, my elder sisters and me. Fortunately, a lady who knew about the Irish sisters in Kotahena, encouraged my grandmother to take us to their care.

Since then, my religious leanings were converted from Hinduism to Christianity. Having completed my higher studies, I joined the staff at Good Shepherd Convent, Kandy. After a few years, I realized that God was calling me to be his bride; so I answered His call as a Francis Xavier Sister of the Diocese of Kandy. I taught English as a subject in the school curriculum, in Kandy, Nawalapitiya and Gampola.

The Lord then let me experience the Amalgamation of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Francis Xavier with that of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. I thus became a Religious of the Good Shepherd. I am most grateful to all our Missionaries who served in our Province of Sri Lanka/Pakistan, most especially to the Irish missionaries with whom I have enjoyed our Charism, and who handed down to us the rich heritage of the Good Shepherd Congregation!

I continued my mission in the Primary School of Kandy Convent, while being responsible for the children in the Child Development Centre too. I really enjoyed our life in Community in Kandy Convent, with Sr. Finbarr Twomey as Prioress of the Community , and with Sr. Joseph Deegan as Assistant Prioress , together with so many of our loved Irish missionaries as vibrant members of the Community.

The atmosphere of love and caring, joy and laughter, prayer and contemplation, that reigned therein, helped us, through all trials and challenges, to grow together as graced companions, zealous in mission. Later, I was appointed as animator in Niripola, and then in Balangoda.

Soon my service to the poor was needed in Pakistan where I joyfully became a member

of the pioneer band to Lahore, with Srs. Nirmala Abeyasinghe and Monica Bastiampillai.

Madagascar was the next mission land that I served for about twenty years, with Sr. Catherine Veale, Irish, who was formerly in Sri Lanka!

God's abundant grace and blessings have been, (and still is) with me throughout my life, and I experience great joy , peace and contentment in my life as an RGS. My heart sings to my Shepherd God who has been leading us on; I sing of Love, Gratitude, Praise and Glory , for our Congregation and our Province, as well as all the people whom we have reached in our embrace, and keep on reaching out all the time, for His Praise and Glory !

Sr. Mary Lucy Murugesu (93 years of age)

My Vocation Story

When we look at the ways that God has called people to consecrated life each one's calling is unique. Looking back the way I had trod, I see my calling as significant. From Grade one up to thirteen I am proud to say that I was nurtured by the Good Shepherd Sisters. Sr. Rose Virginie was my first Principal and she was followed by Sr. Angel Guardian, Sr. Mercy and Sr. Lynette.

I had the desire to become a nun from my childhood. When I was in grade 9, I acted as a nun in a school drama. I asked for Sr. Marjorie's robe because she was my Sunday school teacher at that time. When I went to return the robe she asked me whether I like to be a nun and shared that she too was the only girl in the family when she joined. God has His own ways. I joined Kotahena Good Shepherd Convent for A/Ls. There again I met Sr. Marjorie and she managed to convince my mother to send me for a retreat.

I met Sr. Theophane in my first retreat. She related a story about a girl who desired to be a nun, wanted to finish her university studies before she joined and was unable to join because she had another relationship. Sr. Theophane said that it is how the devil tries to discourage vocations. That story seemed to register in my mind even without my knowledge. Soon after my Advanced Level exam I joined the Congregation. After completing three months in pre-postulancy and six months in postulancy I decided to go home to finish my higher studies.

During my stay at university Sr. Theophane's story played a major role in safeguarding my vocation. Today, I see it as Divine Providence. I rejoined the Congregation after finishing my higher studies. The Devil too seems to have his own ways. When I came home before entering the Novitiate, my mother broke her hand. It was indeed a painful experience for me. Still God strengthened me through various ways and I experienced that when I am faithful to my 'YES' to God he will take care of everything. This has happened not once or twice but countless times. I am grateful to God for this beautiful experience. He always takes care of those whom He has called. My only responsibility is to be faithful to my 'YES', live in His presence sharing the joy of Consecrated life as a Good Shepherdess.

Sr. Mary Shyamalie Fernando.



Shepherding Journey

I became a Religious of the Good Shepherd on the 12th of December 1990. But my real beginnings in the spirit of the Good Shepherd reaches back to the seventies!!

Amidst a chaotic political and social situation in Sri Lanka , and as an active youth, I felt a strong inner voice urging me to belong completely to God and His Mission. The great love of the Lord deeply felt in the depths of my heart, burnt strongly and flagrantly within me, enabling me to let go of all the promising status and prospects of life, with all its worldly glamour and achievements. Though I had begun my under graduate studies in the faculty of Management in the University of Sri Jayawardenapura, secretly I found my way to enter the convent after celebrating my 21st birthday.

While opposition from all directions was vehement, my crossing over from the university to the convent was a surprise even to me , as it was for my colleagues as well. All praise and glory belongs to my Shepherd God who kept me on His Eagle's wings.

The Shepherding path was destined for me from my very birth!! I was baptized on the 24th of April on the Feast day of St. Mary Euphrasia. Though my parents were unaware of the Good Shepherd way of life, I saw them living the Good Shepherd Charism very visibly and vibrantly.

From my childhood memories , it was evident that the lost or rejected ones of society were welcomed and cared for in our home. My parents took leadership in reconciling families embroiled in violent disputes; battered women were rescued from drunkard husbands and sheltered at our home , together with their children; those who were without food were fed, by sharing our own meals with them, which was far from plentiful ! Some furious fights among couples were resolved at our home .

Many a night my parents would go out to reconcile and settle violent situations at a neighbour' s house.

These became routine features of our daily life at home. My parents were very close associates of Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims and Burgher families ; their children were my friends, and we were all one in love and giving, in joy and in sorrow. We shared our laughter and tears together. My parents were economically poor, but they were large hearted; and I wonder how they had enough to share with all those who were in need!

The spirit of the Good Shepherd which I imbibed from my parents , the spirit of love , compassion, concern and sharing; the spirit of going after the battered and wounded

women and children who were victims of violence; the spirit of reconciliation, mercy , forgiveness , peace and unity; the spirit of oneness with the poor; all this and more was the atmosphere in which I grew! Imbued as I was with this spirit that was implanted in me from my very birth, the Charism of the Good Shepherd Congregation drew me , as a fish is drawn to water, to embrace zealously and energetically, and with sacrificial giving , this way of life of our Congregation .

My parents having been my very first Good Shepherds, I now continue with deeper knowledge and awareness , with a greater thirst and zest , and with zeal and dedication along the path of the Good Shepherd , making His Presence felt by all, as was the mission of my parents as well.

This 150th year of the existence of our Congregation in Sri Lanka invites us to walk humbly hand in hand with our simple ordinary people who richly live the Good Shepherd Spirit in their daily life.

Sr. M. Shirani Algama



A ♥ TO LOVE

A voice I heard.. A voice of a call
Murmured within me stirring my heart
I saw a nun in my Pre-school days
The way she talked, the way she worked,
affected my little heart
But I couldn't understand or fathom
What was it that moved me?

It was an invitation
from my God within
To be a shepherdess
For this generation
On the day of my confirmation
I promised God
To be his instrument for peace
To bring his love to the wounded

Many of the shepherdesses I met....
Some were my principals,
Some were my teachers,
Some were met by chance,
Who guided me
They shared with me
How to be a shepherdess to the helpless

Days met as challenge
Days met as victory
Days met as discouragement
Days met as failure
God led me to realize his graces
Through every experience
The day I left my home I realized
My family was God messengers
I learnt how to sacrifice
I learnt how to love

From whom?Not from a nun but from a good mum!

One day I was a candidate
Another day I was a Pre- Novice
Passing through happy times
Struggling through bitter times
Learning through adventures big & small
Today I am a novice
Being molded like clay
In the potters hand
Into the image he has designed for me

The voice of God keeps whispering in my heart
Calling me each day to see myself through his eyes
and allow Him to give me shape
The voice of the call urges me from within
To give His love through my heart
To the world in which I live!

UDARI DE SILVA (NOVICE)

God's Extraordinary Work in My Ordinary Life...

My upbringing in a devoutly Catholic family prepared me for my religious vocation. I am the eldest of three daughters and had a prayerful, joyful life marked by daily Mass and prayers. My mother always spoke of the value of a religious vocation, because of her elder sister, Sr. Paulinus who is also a religious in my own congregation. But then it was not my plan. I always longed for a deep relationship which will let me know the depth of my life.

I'll never forget the retreat I attended in 2002, which revealed to me the infinite love of God. It made me cry because I felt so close to the Lord. My heart was moved and I asked Him "what do you want from me Lord?" and the answer to my question came from the mouth of the preacher who said "the Lord is calling 3 young girls and 2 young boys from this youth group to the service in His vineyard". I owned these words without even thinking of the depth of them.

God prompted His invitation which I do not deserve or would never have dreamed of. On the 17th of June 2003, I entered the convent in Mutwal to experience the life in the Good Shepherd Congregation. As I walked in I felt that my interior possessed the peace of Christ and I felt the leading of the Spirit of God in all my endeavours.

I had many U-turns in life. All my joys, sorrows, crosses and challenges prepared me to respond to God's call with love and freedom. This in return has helped me to understand people and children who were entrusted to me. It has helped me to become a wounded healer. I just offered an ordinary life to the Lord and He made it an extraordinary one by offering me the hundred- fold.

What I am is God's gift to me;
What I become is my gift to God.
St. Augustine

Sr. Martina Fernando

Journeying To Realize My Dream Towardas Lasting Happiness

A connection between God and me.... His vision for my future- A call to emptying myself... to a new life- a life of simplicity and holiness. I thank God for His wisdom, His Spirit leading me to choose a precious vocation and I bow to His will.

The initial preparation for my vocation came from my parents: the experience of God- His love for me. The faith... the virtues... courage to live my faith, etc... With gratitude I remember my father and mother who gave me a glimpse of God's Love for me.

Came my first communion day- heard the first wisdom of God's call which gradually become louder. The missionary sisters of charity in the parish inspired me to go to the less fortunate in society.

I felt God calling me to be a Good Shepherd whose values I appreciated. It is with Good Shepherd sisters I had my education. Their mission was more for girls and women struggling with life's experiences. The mission inspired me to find my vocation in the same congregation. Today I'm happy to stand here as a Good Shepherd novice.

In God's hand I feel like a wisp of the wind which He blows wherever He wills. He moulds me as a potter- the clay. He's my all! My Shepherd in whom I lack nothing!

With Mother Mary I proclaim "HE HAS DONE GREAT THINGS FOR ME! PRAISE HIS NAME!

Nethmini de Silva
(Novice)

My Psalm of Gratitude

As I sing my heart's thanksgiving
I join my hands in surrender
to God's Loving hand in my life, and say...
Thank you.

For my Shepherd God has touched me and led me so tenderly,
and made me the person I am today..
His Loving presence in my life's journey
I hold with reverence and Love.

From my birth, for the gifts you have
blessed me with... I thank you O Lord.
My home and family where I learnt to love, pray, trust and care,
my school where I learnt many good things,
Little girl's prayer in loving you,
playing at home and friends.
I thank you today for my life as a woman,
a woman who could love and feel the need to be loved.

On the day of my clothing
You called me by name:
"Geethani", ***meaning -'song to you'***
Yes, I slowly learnt and you taught me,
to sing all life through, the song of my life.
A song of love and praise to you,
A song of surrender to your holy will,
A song of trust in your Loving providence,
A song of pleading for light, strength and mercy,
A song of love and compassion to the persons in need.

As a young professed at Halgashena Farm School,
You led me through the green pastures.
You wished that I marvel at the beauty of your creation.
Among animals, birds and plants,
hills and the mountains,
nature with its fullness of life.
God's creation and the work of human hands.
These were the blessings you offered me in abundance.
Lord you trusted me

to journey with the young you have chosen.
In fear I asked
how can I .... what am I...?
yet, you impelled me to say a loving 'yes'.
I surrendered.
And it's you who led me,
guided me each day.
Your grace was sufficient.

As the days pass by, you permitted me
to experience my own inner place of exile,
fear, discouragement, loneliness, pain and anxiety.
At all my weak moments--
You were there dear God – my strength.
You were there to lift me – fill me with peace
challenged me... and made me fly once again.
You often whispered to me 'the truth'
that your Love never tests me beyond my strength,
and helped me believe,
that you are there at all times.
For you desired my wholeness,
my whole hearted living and giving.

You called me to a mission land...
my heart cried to say good bye to my aging parents
my loved ones at home...
my Sisters and the people I loved.
Yet it was a loving 'yes' to you.
Love and trust made it all possible.

I loved the mission – Pakistan,
and the people I served.
many blessings I enjoyed....
hardships I endured.
Thank you Lord for the hard times,
the times I was losing my enthusiasm
generosity and capacity to love.
Yes. you were there...
"***Remain in me***" were the words you whispered to me often...
Thank you Lord for the opportunities...
my 'Oasis days'
where you made your presence felt so close.

"***Unless you remain united to me***"....
was your challenge to me.

Step by step the memories of my life's journey,
it's joys, the blessings, it's growth through struggle and pain,
re-assures me of your greatness
and of your presence in my life.

As I lift up my hands in deep gratitude,
to your eternal Love,
I make the words of Hosea 11:3-4 my own.
"My God, it was you who took me up in your arms....
taught me to walk....
You led me with cords of human kindness with hands of love,
you were to me,
like those who lift infants to their cheeks.
You have bent down to me and fed me....
and held me in your embrace."

Lord my words are not sufficient to thank you...
Yet, with St. Mary Euphrasia I say,
you have given me a heart
to love and to be grateful.

Sr. M. Geethani Mallawarachchi

"I Have Called You By Name"

In a non-Christian society, among a population of strong Hindus , God picked out my grandparents as a seed to grow and spread its branches. God willed to call me out of them to be a religious.

Who can read the mind of God?

My family, carrying me from the North to the West of this island, placed me in the green pastures of the Good Shepherd at Kotahena, where I acquired my education under the Good Shepherd Sisters.

At the age of six, Sr. Francis Xavier who prepared me for my First Holy Communion became also for me a source of inspiration of the life and mission of Jesus the Good Shepherd. The continued contact with the sisters as I grew in my knowledge and Spirit , set a flame in my heart a deep desire to sacrifice my life to God. This little flame kept growing until I completed my studies in the School. My ambition to involve myself in higher education and the awareness of my family responsibilities made my initial desire grow dim as I evaded the sisters.

God's ways are not my ways ...God's thoughts are not my thoughts.

I began to realize that I cannot succeed in life relying on my own capabilities and strengths alone. Our loving God was always at my side to show me the way I should go.

March 19th 1980 is a remarkable day in my life - On my way back home after celebrating the feast of St. Joseph at the Home for the Elders, Maradana at a cross road, I met Sr. Francis Xavier who was then involved in the recruitment work of our Province. Our meeting was a coincidence of a Call and a Response. It was for me an encounter with Jesus as it was for Paul.

I believe that my 'Yes' deep from my heart was by the prompting of the Holy Spirit through the intercession of St. Joseph, who continues to be my guiding saint and intercessor. I entered the Convent in the following month and made my Temporary Profession on the 8th February 1983. A few months later with the eruption of ethnic disturbance in our country my parents decided to get back to our original home in the North. The mission entrusted to them was accomplished as they left me in the green pastures where I should bring many souls to our Shepherd God.

I firmly believe that God keeps on calling me giving me strength to follow Him each day of my life.

Sr. Mary Pathmini



A Tribute To St. Mary Euphrasia

Two thousand odd years ago God sent His Son to the world
To gather His flock as Jesus the Good Shepherd
Thirty three years was His life in history
Today His mission continues in mystery

Two hundred years ago into the Pelletier family
Rose Virginie was born in all humility
At the tender age of eighteen was her decision
To follow the footsteps of Jesus with precision

Her ardent love for the salvation of persons did inspire
With toil and prayer the Congregation of
Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd to aspire
"One person is worth more than the whole world" she says
And so her daughters work tirelessly throughout the universe

Love for persons was her passion
To spread her wings to Ceylon was her mission
One hundred and fifty years ago this she did begin
Although by then her Master called her home to return

Thirty First July Nineteen Ninety Two is a date to remember
The first group of lay associates joined hands to render
Mercy, compassion and love to those in need
With devotedness, zeal and labour to succeed

My heart is filled with songs of praise
To God be glory for His abundance of grace
"Look for the lost one, bring back the stray" did Jesus command
"Glory to God and abundant life to persons – may this be my life" did I respond.

Everyone around me is my sister or brother
Thus I will spare no pain to comfort another
Dear Mother, may your name be written in gold
For your labour of love to bring the stray to the fold

Ms. Crecentia Corera (Lay Partner)

Memories of Sister Noel's Time In Sri Lanka Which She Shared With Sister Cait Today

Noel shared about her missionary experience in Sri Lanka. She said that it made her very happy to talk about that time in her life and she has great memories of the teenagers who came to the Sewing Work Room. This was a part-time project and the teenagers would come in the evening time. It was a training centre where they would learn how to sew. The course would start on January 1st and last for six months. The young mothers would come and during the six months' training, they would have acquired sewing skills that would enable them continue their sewing at home.

They would have earned enough pocket money to enable them buy a sewing machine for themselves. They had machines too for pressing and pleating. Payment was given to the girls every week to help their families keep going. The trainees were very poor people with very little schooling. Any learning they had came from the sisters. Noel said that there was a great relationship between the girls and the sisters.

Boys too came to the centre to work during the day so that they would earn some money.

When the girls reached 16 years they were free to return home or to marry. They were very happy at the centre and cried when they were leaving to go home to live their own lives. Noel loved this work. She was helping the poorest of the poor and she would visit past pupils who had gone back home and keep in touch with them. She mentioned working with Sister Therese when she was involved in this ministry.

Noel's memories of the country itself are very positive. She said it was a lovely place, bananas growing at the roadside and other luscious fruit freely available. The fishermen would bring fish to the sisters fresh from their morning catch. She kept emphasising how close the sisters were to the children/teenagers they were helping. She said that talking about her experience in Sri Lanka made her very happy.

Notes taken verbatim 6th January, 2019 Sister Cait.



After I Met Contmeplative Sisters

As good Catholic who goes for Sunday Mass, prays as a family, goes on pilgrimages, and bringing up my two sons in faithfulness to God! What did I need more?

Once in a way I took part at the Holy Hour conducted by the Contemplative Sisters in their chapel, every Friday. In this way I came to the Contemplative Sisters at Bethany .One day the sisters told us, who come to pray there, that they were going to begin ' Lay Partners of Prayer. 'The Sisters invited those who wish, to join this group. My wife and I were among the first members. Sr. Patricia explained to us, the charism of the Good Shepherd, and the history of the Contemplative Sisters. She asked us to line with "Reconciliation" in our families, in our work places. And they asked us to john with them to pray for those who have asked their prayers, for the country and for the Church. After the meeting, I introduced myself as an Ayurveda physiotherapist, and offered my service to the sisters who may be suffering with knee pain, back pain etc..... Sr. Patricia was my first patient. When she was getting healed , other sisters who are in active ministry came for oil treatment. I know that the sisters are not going out for oil treatment. I consider giving my time for the sisters a blessing for me. Whenever I come to their community I experience a welcome spirit and the joy of the sisters. I was impelled to give my time for them. I took the sisters to doctors known to me, and introduced them to these specialists. Whenever I asked questions about faith, or about scripture, I was always happy with the answers I got. I also came to know about religious life, the difference between active and contemplative way of life. God blessed me in whatever I did. He touches the patients I treated with His healing touch. My attitude towards life got changed. I was happy with my work, with the money I earn, but I wanted to go abroad for a job. I shared my dream with the sisters who challenged me, sharing with me the situation of the families whose husbands had gone abroad to work. I thought of my two sons and my dear wife, and gave up my desire, for which I am not regretting.

Whenever possible I go to the meetings of the Lay Partners, so as to know better the Good Shepherd mission and spirit. I make oil for my oil therapy. I know the blessings of God comes over whatever I do because these sisters are with me in spirit and in prayer. It is a blessing that I came to know our Contemplative Sisters of the Good Shepherd. I wish them good health, perseverance in their vocation and more vocations. I will walk with these sisters as their Prayer Partner, and support them in their Contemplative way of life.

Edmond Mariaraj



විශ්වය තුළ දෙව් පෙම පිවත් කරවීමට මා ලද ඇරයුම

මව්කුසයේ පිළිසිඳ ගන්නට ද පෙර ස්වාමීන් වහන්සේ තම ජනතාවට සේවය කරන පිණිස මා තෝරා ගත් සේක. ඒ අනුව 1963 දෙසැම්බර් මස 12 වන දින ඓතිහාසික කැළණි පුරවරයේ පෑලියගොඩ මීසමට අයිති කකෝලික පවුලක උපත ලැබීමට වාසනාව ලැබිණි. පවුලේ දෙවන්නා වන මා හට වැඩිමහල් සොයුරියක සහ බාල සෙහොයුරන් සතර දෙනෙකු ලැබීමට වාසනාව ලැබිණි. කුඩා කල සිටදීම නිවසේ පවුල් ජපමාලය කීම, හැකි සෑම විට දිව්‍ය පූජාවට සහභාගී වීම, ඉරුදින දිව්‍ය පූජාව අනිවාර්යවීම, දේවස්ථානයේ වැඩ කටයුතුවලට සහභාගී වීම, ඉතා හුරුපුරුදු දින චර්යාවක් විය. උන්වහන්සේ මා මෙලොවට එවන විට දී මා කැඳවා තිබිණි. උන්වහන්සේව ප්‍රථම වරට ලැබූ දිනයේ උන්වහන්සේ හා සමඟ ආදරයෙන් බැඳුණු මම නව වන ශ්‍රේණියේ දී ඒ ප්‍රේමය තුළ මාගේ කැඳවීම තහවුරු කර ගතිමි.

කැළණිය වරාගොඩ සාන්ත පාවුලු බාලිකා මහා විද්‍යාලයේ අපෝස්තලික කාර්මෙල් නිකායේ සොහොයුරියන් යටතේ අධ්‍යාපනය ලැබූ මා කුඩා කල සිට දහම් පාසල් අධ්‍යාපනය හා මීසමේ සේවාව තුළ ගැටුණේ ශුද්ධ වූ කුරුසියේ සොහොයුරියන් සමඟය. ඔවුන් සමඟ සේවයේ නියැලුන මා අවසානයේ දී උන්වහන්සේගේ යහපත් එඩේරා සොහොයුරියක් වීමට කැඳවා කැප කර ගන්නා ලද්දේ මින් අවුරුදු 33 කට පෙරදීය. උන්වහන්සේගේ කැඳවීම ඉතා පුදුමාකාර වන්නේ මාගේ සොහොයුරිය හා සොහොයුරන් සියලු දෙනා ග්‍රැන්ඩ්පාස් ශාන්ත ජොශප් බාලක බාලිකා මහා විද්‍යාලයේ අධ්‍යාපනය ලබද්දී මා පමණක් කැළණිය ශාන්ත පාවුලු බාලිකා විද්‍යාලයේ අධ්‍යාපනය ලැබීමයි. මේ වසර 33 පුරාවටම උන්වහන්සේගේ ප්‍රේමය විවිධාකාර ලෙස අත්දුටුවෙමි. ඒ ප්‍රේමය ලොවට බෙදන්නට උන්වහන්සේ මා ආසිරි ගැන්වූ සේක.

විශේෂාකාරයෙන් මල් වැනි චුටි දූ දරුවන් සමඟ ළදරු පාසල් සේවාව තුළත්, තරුණ තරුණියන් සමඟ එකට එක්ව සේවය කිරීමටත් උන්වහන්සේගේ කැඳවීම ලැබුවෙමි. තරුණ ක්‍රිස්තියානි සංගමය, Jesus Youth දූ දරුවන් මෙන් ම කොළඹ පදවියේ ජාතික සංගමය සමඟ එකට එක්ව දේව වචනය රට පුරා ගෙන යාම ද මා ලැබූ උතුම් දේව දීමනාවකි. එසේම ලෝක තරුණ සමුළුවට සහභාගී වීම සඳහා උන්වහන්සේ මා ආසිරි ගැන්වීම ද ලැබූ විශේෂ දීමනාවකි. උන්වහන්සේ මට දුන් සියලු වරප්‍රසාදයන්ට නිතිපතා තුති දෙන අතර සමිඳුන්ගේ ආදරයේ කතාන්දරය අන් අය සමඟ බෙදා ගනිමින් ජීවිතයේ ඉදිරි කාලයේදී ද දේව රාජ්‍යයේ මහිමය සඳහා, කැපවීම මාගේ එකම පැතුමයි.

ඇනස්ටේෂියා පෙරේරා කන්‍යාසොහොයුරිය.

ඇය මමයි.

ඇයගේ ජීවිතය නැමති වන්දනා ගමනට ආලෝක රැස් දාහරාවක් වුයේ ඇය ලැබූ මූලික අධ්‍යාපනය-යි. ජීවිතයේ ඉදිරි ගමන දෙස ද විවෘත හදවතකින් හා මනසකින් බැලීමට ඇයට එය පන්නරයක් විය.

ඇය දියණියන් තිදෙනෙකුගෙන් යුත් පවුලේ බාලම දැරිය නිසා, සැමගේ ආදරය ලබන්නට අවධානයට ලක් වූ කාලයක් ඇයට තිබුණි.

ඇයගේ කුඩා අවදිය කෙළි සෙල්ලමින් ගතවුණි. දේවස්ථානයත් ගමත් ඇසුරේ ගත කළ කාලය, ඇගේ දිවිමඟ පොහොණි කළා සේම ජීවිතයෙන් අන් අයට සේවයක් සිදු විය යුතු බව ඇයට පසක් කර දුනි.

ඇය ළමා වියේ සිටම දේවස්ථානයේ ගීතිකා කණ්ඩයමේ, ළමා සමිති සමාගම්වල, දහම් පාසලේ, තරුණ ක්‍රිස්තියානි සංගමයේ සහ බාලදක්ෂ ව්‍යාපාරයේ ක්‍රියාකාරී හා කැපීපෙනෙන චරිතයක් වෙමින් අධ්‍යාපනයද මැනවින් හැදෑරුවාය.

ඈ කුඩා වියේ සිටම දෙමාපිය රැකවරණය සහ සොහොයුර සොහොයුරියන් ද ඇසුර ලබමින් ගෙවුන කාලය අනාගතයේ දී ඈ පා තබන්නට යන දිවි පෙවෙතට සවියක් මෙන්ම දිවියක් ද විය.

ඈ දෙවිදුන්ට ළංවෙන්නට ගත් උත්සාහය එක් කාලපරිච්ඡේදයකදී ඇගේ ජීවිතයේ බොහෝ වෙනස් වීම් වලට ද දොරගුළු විවර කළේය. සමවයසේ දරුවන් එකට රැස්වන තරුණ ක්‍රිස්තියානි සංගමයේ රැස්වීමක දී තම අනාගත අරමුණු බෙදා ගන්නට අවස්ථාවක් එළඹුණේ ඇය නොසිතූ ලෙසමය.

ඈ ප්‍රකාශ කළේ ජේසු සමිඳුන්මෙන් අන් අයට සේවය කිරීමට ඇයද කැමති බවය.

ඒ අරමුණ පැහැදිලි කරගැනීම අභිලාසයෙන් දේවකැමැත්ත සෙවීමේ අවසන් ප්‍රතිඵලය වුයේ කන්‍ය-සොහොයුරියක වීම ඇගේ කැමැත්ත වීමය. එය කිසිකෙනෙකු ඇය ගැන නොසිතූ නොපැතූ දෙයක් විය.

ඇය හා කුළුපග වූ සියල්ලන්ට මෙය විමතියට කරුණක් වුයේ ඔවුන් ඇය ගෙන් මෙවැන්නක් සම්බන්ධයෙන් ඉඟියක්වත් පෙරදී ලබා නොතිබූ නිසාය.

ඇය නිහඬව කල්පනා කරමින් දේවස්ථානයට ඇතුළු වී යාච්ඤා කළ පසු යහළුවන් සමඟ නිවෙස් බලා පිටත් වුවාය. මවිතයට පත් වූ සියළු දෙනාගේ අවධානය ඇයට තේරුම් ගැනීමට හැකි වුයේ ඔවුන්ගේ කතා විලාසයෙනි.

ඈ තමා තුළ මෝදු වූ මෙම ජීවිත අරමුණ සිත්හි නිදන් කර ගනිමින් මුතු ඇටයක් මෙන් එය රැකගන්-නට වෙහෙස වුවාය.

මෙතෙක් ගත කළ කෙළිලොල් දිවියට සමු දී සියළු දේ අතහැර දෙවිඳු වෙත වූ ඉමහත් ආදරයට පිළිතුරු දීමට මං පෙත් සෙව්වාය. දිවිහිමියෙන් දෙවිඳුන් සොයා යන්නට තම දිවි කැප කළ යුතු බව වටහා ගත් ඇය මමයි.

මා අඳ දින යහපත් එඬේරා පැවිදි නිකායේ
සුරනි සොහොයුරියයි.



එඬේරික සේවයේ මහිමය

මගේ දිවි පණ නල රකින්නෙ - ඔබ පමණකි පේසුනි
දිවිය පුරා ඔබ ආලෝකේ - සැම නපුරේ සරණේ

නිස් හයවසරක් ගතවෙලා, විශ්මිත දිවිය තුළ එඬේරික සේවාව. කුමක්ද මේ එඬේරික සේවාව? මවිකුස පිළිසිඳෙන්නට මත්තෙන් සමිඳුන් මා තෝරා ගෙන ඇත. බිළියක ලෙසින් මෙලොව එළිය දුටු මා ප්‍රේමයෙන් සවියෙන් පණ ගන්වා, වෙව්ලන දණ හිස් බලගන්වන්නට ක්‍රියා කළේ ඔබමයි සමිඳුනි. කුමකටද ඒ? දුබල හදවත් බලගන්වන්නට, අන්ධ වූ දැන හට දෙනෙතක් වන්නට, ප්‍රේමය ලොව තුළ ජීවමාන කරන්නට. එය සඳහා ඔබ මා තෝරා ගත්තා. ඒ බව මට තේරුම් ගියා. මා තුරුණු වියට පා නගනා විට, ඇසුනා ඔබවහන්සේ ගේ ඇරයුමේ හඬ. එසවුනා දෙපය දෙගිඩියාවෙන්. තැබුවා පියවර අමුතුම ලොවකට. සුන්දරයි සමිඳුනි ඒ මඟ. ඒත්, එය මල් මාවතක් නොව, ගල්පර බාධක අතරින් ගලනා දිය දහරක්ම වුවා. අපේක්ෂිකාවක්, පොස්තුලාන්තවරියක්, නව තාපසිකාවක් සහ කණිටු සොයුරියක් ලෙස ගත කළ ජීවිතය එය මට පසක්කර දුන්නා. මම ද බොහෝ නිදහසින් "එසේය" කිවත් පය පැකිලී වැටුනු වාර අනන්තයි. එදා එය "එසේම වුවා" යි කිවූ මරමවුන්ගේ එඩිතර ඊවලිත කැපවීම මට ද පන්නරයක් වුනා. මට අතදෙමින් මගේ දෙපසින් ජේෂ්ඨ සොහොයුරියන් පිරිසක් සිටියා. ඒ අතරින් ලිලියන් මෙන්ඩිස් සොයුරිය මට විශේෂයි. මාගේ දිවිගමනේ මා වැටුන මොහොතක ඈ කිව්වා " නැගිටින්න, ඉඩදෙන්න පේසුට ඔබේ අත අරගෙන යන්න." අභියෝගවලින් පිරි මේ කාලයේ ප්‍රතික්ෂේප කිරීම් කොන්කිරීම් හා විවේචවලින් ලැබූ දිරිය රතු පලසක්ම විය මගේ මාවතට. මා කිසිත් නොදැන සිටියත් පියාණනි ඔබ ඒ සියල්ල දැන සිටියා. විඳවන්නට නොව විඳින්නට, කැඩෙන්නට නොව ගොඩ නැගෙන්නට, ඔබගේම ජනතාව අතරට දුබල වූ මා යැවූ ඔබවහන්සේ මා අත්හැරියේ නෑ. අඳුරු වළා අතරේ රිදී රේඛා ගොඩනැගෙද්දී තරු දහසක් අතර එක තරුවක් වෙමින් කුඩාවුවන්ගේ දිවිමගට ආලෝකයක් වන්නට කැඳවීම ලද මා ඔවුන්ම පවසන ආකාරයට වරෙක මවක්, සොහොයුරියක්, මිතුරියක්, වැඩිහිටියෙක්, මඟ පෙන්වන්නියක් සේම තවත් වරෙක ස්ථීර ප්‍රතිපත්ති මත පිහිටා ක්‍රියාකරන්නියක් ලෙසින් ඔවුන්ට අත දෙන්නට යොමුවුවා.

ආදර දෙමව්පියන්ගේ සහ සොයුරු සොයුරියන්ගේ සෙනෙහසට මැදිව සිට මා තවත් බොහෝ පිරිස-ක්ගේ ආදරය සහ දිරිය ලබමින් කටයුතු කරන්නට, ඔවුනට ආදර සොයුරියක් වන්නට මඟ සැලසු සමිඳුනි, ඔබවහන්සේට තුති. මා ඔබගේ බලවත් ක්‍රියා සැමදා අත්දකිනවා. වසරින් වසර ගෙවී දෙව්-වරමින් පිරී නිස්හය වසරක් පසුකරමින් යන මේ ගමනේ බලය ඔබමයි සමිඳුනි.

සේවක ශ්‍රාවකත්වයේ, කැඩි වැයවීමේ බල මහිමය අත්දැක්කා. තව දුරටත් අත්දකිමින් ද යනවා පියා-ණනි. ශූ පාවුළුතුමා මෙන් මගේ දුබලකම් ගැන උදම් අනමින් මා මෙසේ කියනවා.

පේසුනී මගේ හදටම ඔබ ලංවෙනවා
සිනහවෙයි කදුළු බිඳුවෙයි සැඟවී එනවා

මේරි ෆ්ලොරිඩා සොයුරිය.



එය කැපවූ දිවිය බව මට පසක් විය.

යහපත් එඬේරික ජීවිතයට මා ලත් මේ උතුම් කැඳවීමට, දෙවිසමිඳුන්ට මාගේ හද පත්ලෙන්ම පළමුව තුති පුදකරමි. දෙවිසමිඳුන් මා කැඳවූ විට "එසේය" කියා පිළිතුරු දීමට මා ශක්තිය හා දිරිය ලැබුවේ යම් පමණකින් හෝ මාගේ පවුලේ පසුබිම තුළ, මා ලබා තිබූ විශ්වාසයේ බීජය හේතු කොටගෙන බව නොරහසකි. දුබලයකු වූ මා උන්වහන්සේ කැඳවුවත් මාගේ සැබෑ ස්වරූපය, මාගේ අබල දුබලකම් නුසුදුසුකම් සියල්ල වටහා ගත්තේ නව තාපසිකාරාමය තුළය. එතෙක් මාගේ දුබලකම් හඳුනා ගෙන නොසිටියෙමි. මාගේ නවතාපසික අධ්‍යක්ෂිකා මේරි විනිප්‍රීඩා සොහොයුරියගේ මඟ පෙන්වීම මා ජීවිතයේ ලත් විශාලතම ජයග්‍රහණයයි. මා කවිද යන්න වටහාදෙමින්, අභියෝග හමුවේ ඒවාට මුහුණදීමට පන්නරය ලබාදුන් අතර, දිව්‍ය සත්ප්‍රසාදය තුළ යැපෙන්නට සැලසුවේ එතුමියයි.

එක්තරා තීරණාත්මක මොහොතක දිව්‍ය සත්ප්‍රසාද වහන්සේ ඉදිරියේ මා පවසා සිටියේ ජේසුනී, ඔබවහන්සේ මා කැඳවූ බැවින් ඔබවහන්සේ කැමති දෙයක් කරන්න. එය පිළිගන්න අවශ්‍ය ශක්තිය සහ දිරිය පමණක් දෙන්න කියාය. එසේ භාරදීමෙන් මා ලැබූ ඇතුළාන්ත සුවය හා ශක්තිය කියා නිමකළ නොහැකිය. "මා ශක්තිමත් කරන තැනැන්වහන්සේ තුළ මට සියල්ල කළ හැකිය" යන ශුද්ධ-වූ පාවුළු තුමාගේ වදනින් පණගැන්වී, මා සඳහටම ඔබවහන්සේ වෙත රැඳී සිටිමි යන සිතුවිල්ල මාගේ හදට කාවැදිණි. දිව්‍ය සත්ප්‍රසාදවහන්සේ ඉදිරිපිට මා ලැබූ එම අත්දැකීම මාගේ මුළු ජීවිත කාලයටම තල්ලුවක් වූ අතර පසු කලෙකදී මා හට පැවරුණ සෑම දූත කාර්යයක්ම ඉටු කිරීමට එය පිටිවහලක් විය. ශුද්ධවූ මේරි යුප්‍රේසියා තුමියගේ ජීවිතය හා කරිස්මාව ගැඹුරින් හැදෑරීමට එතැන් සිට අවස්ථාව උදාවිය. විවිධ ශ්‍රේෂ්ඨවරියන් යටතේ මා ලැබූ අත්දැකීම් හා මඟපෙන්වීම්, පැවිදි හවුල් තුළ සතුටින් ජීවත්වන්නට පන්නරයක් විය. තැරැණියන් හා වැඩිහිටි කාන්තාවන් රැකබලා ගැනීමෙන් ලත් අත්දැකීම්වල වටිනාකම කියා නිම කළ නොහැකිය. එය මාගේ කැපවූ දිවිය වඩ වඩා ශක්තිමත් කිරීමට හා අර්ථවත් කිරීමට මඟක් විය. විවිධ ජීවිත අභියෝගවලට සහ ප්‍රතික්ෂේප කරනු ලැබීම්වලට මුහුණ දෙන විට සමිඳුන් වදාළ වදන් " මා පැමිණියේ සේවය ලැබීමට නොව සේවය කිරීමටය." යන්න මට පසක් කරවීය. එය මගේ කැපවූ දිවිය බව මම මනා ලෙස වටහා ගතිමි.

මෙතෙක් මාගේ කැපවූ දිවියේ මා හා ගමන් ගනිමින් මට දිරිය හා සවිය දුන් දෙවි සමිඳුන්ට ප්‍රශංසා වේවා! දිවි ගමනේ ඉතිරි කාලයද යහපත් එඬේරාණන් වූ ජේසු සමිඳුන්ට සාක්ෂි දැරීමට ශුද්ධවූ මේරි යුප්‍රේසියා තුමියගේ අනුග්‍රහය ද ලැබෙන බව මට ස්ථිරය.

මේරි ප්‍රීඩා ද සිල්වා පැවිදිසොයුරිය.



"මව්කුසේ පිළිසිඳ ගන්නටත් පෙර ඔබ මගෙයි"

මලක් විකසිත වෙන්නේ හිමිදිරි පාන්දර හැම කෙනෙක්ම නිදි දෙව්දුව වැළඳ ගෙන සිටින විටය. එම විශ්මිත ක්‍රියාවලිය නිහැඬියාව තුළ සිදුවී උදෑසන හිරුඑළිය සමඟ මිහිකතට අපූර්ව සුන්දරත්වයක් මෙන්ම නැවුම් බවත් එකතු කරයි. සියල්ල සිදුවන්නේ රිද්මයකටය.

මිනිස් ජීවිතය තුළ දෙවිඳුන්ගේ සැලැස්මක් ක්‍රියාවට නැංවෙන්නේ හරිම පුදුමාකාර ලෙසටය. මා මව්කුසේ පිළිසිඳ ගැනීමටත් පෙර එතුමන්ගේ සිතුවිල්ල තුළ මම සිටියෙමි. එතුමන්ගේ කැඳවීමේ අපූර්වත්වය මගේ ජීවිතයේ පසුකලෙක අත්දකින්නට හැකිවීම කොතරම් වාසනාවක්ද?

ජීවිතයේ හා පුරා කියා පළමු අකුර කියවන්නට අම්මා මාව ගමේ කන්‍යාරාමයට ගෙන ගිය දවස අදටත් මතකය. කන්‍යාසොයුරියක සිනාහවකින් සංග්‍රහ කරමින් අප පිළිගත් ආකාරය මගේ මතකයේ සදා රැඳී ඇත. පුංචි මාව ළඟට ගෙන සාන්ත කුරුසේ ලකුණ ඇඳ මගේ ඇඟිල්ල හෝඩි පොතේ පළමු අකුර ළඟ තබා "අ" කියා දුන්න විට දී සිතට දැනුන සතුට අපමණය. එදා සිතට දැනුන සතුට සමඟ පුංචි රහසකුත් ජීවිතයට ඇතුළු වුවා සේ මතකය. එය නම් "කවදා හෝ දවසක මමත් මේ වගේ කන්‍යාසොහොයුරියක් වෙනවා" යන මිහිරි සිතුවිල්ලය.

ගමේ කන්‍යාරාමයත් එහි කන්‍යාසොහොයුරියනුත් අපේ ජීවිත වලට ඉතා සමීප විය. අපේ දවසේ වැඩි කොටසක් ගෙවුනේ සොහොයුරියන් ඇසුරේය. පළමු වරට දිව්‍ය සත්ප්‍රසාද වහන්සේ ලැබූ දිනය අපට අමතක නොවන මිහිරි මතකයන්ගෙන් පිරුණු දවසකි. එම දිනය උදාවන තුරු පුංචි අපි බලා සිටියේ ඉතාම නොඉවසිල්ලෙනි. ඒදින දිව්‍ය යාගය අවසානයේ දේව මාතාවන්ට කැපවීමේ යාච්ඤාව කීමට සිදුවුණේ මටය. මගේ සිතට බියක් දැනුණි. බොහෝ මිතුරු මිතුරියන් අතරින් මේ කාර්යය සඳහා මාවම තෝරාගත්තේ ඇයිද යන්න මට සිතා ගන්නට නොහැකි විය. එම යැදුම කියවන්නට පුහුණු වෙද්දී කන්‍යාසොහොයුරිය මා දිරිමත් කළ ආකාරය මගේ සැලෙන හදවත සවිමත් කර ගැනීමට රුකුලක්ම විය. එම යැදුමේ සඳහන් එක් වදන් පෙළක් මගේ සිතට තදින් කා වැදුණි. එය නම් "පිරිසිදු ජීවිතයක් ලෙසින් මම දෙවිඳුන්ට කැපවෙමි" යන්නයි. එහි අරුත ගැඹුරින් මගේ හදවතට කිදා බැස්සේය.
පාසල් කාලය හරිම සැහැල්ලු නිදහස් කෙළිලොල් වුවත් සිතේ රැඳී ඒ ආශාව දිනෙන් දින දළුලන වෘක්ෂයක් මෙන් වැඩෙන්නට විය. ප්‍රාථමික අධ්‍යාපනය ශූ.පවුලේ කන්‍යාසොහොයුරියන්ගේ ඇසුරේ ලැබීමත් ද්විතික අධ්‍යාපනය යහපත් එඬේරා සොහොයුරියන්ගේ සෙවනේ ලැබීමත් මා ලද මහත් වාසනාවකි. මේ සියල්ලම, මාගේ යහපත උදෙසා සැලසුම් කළ දෙවිඳුන්ගේම හස්තයේ මෙහෙයවීම බව මට දැන් පසක් වේ.

උදෙන්ම පාසල් මාතාව වෙත පියනගද්දී දුටු දර්ශනය මගේ අනාගත ජීවිතයට රුකුලක්ම විය. දිව්‍ය පූජාවට සහභාගි වී පැමිණෙන කන්‍යාසොහොයුරියන්ගේ ශාන්ත විලාශය ඔවුන් ඇඳ සිටි සුදු දිග ඇඳුම, ඔවුන් පැළඳ සිටි හදවත සහිත ලාංඡනය මගේ සිත පැහැර ගත්තේය. යහපත් එඬේරාණන් තම බැටළුවන්ට ඇති ආදරයට එය ඉඟියක් විය. සමාජය තුළ ලෞකිකත්වයට සහ විසිතුරුබවට වැඩි නැඹුරුවක් තිබුණ ද සමිඳුන්ගේ කැඳවීමේ හඬ ප්‍රබලවම මට දිනෙන් දිනම අසෙන්නට විය. පැවිදි දිවිය පහසු නොවන බව බොහෝ දෙනෙක් පැවසුවද සමිඳුන්ගේ ආදරයේ හඬ ඊට වඩා ප්‍රබලව මට ඇසුණු නිසා එතුමාණන්ට "එසේය" කියා පිළිතුරු දීමට ලැබුණු වරම් සහ ශක්තිය අපමණය. එය සදා තුනි පිදීමේ සුවඳ දුමක් මෙන් එතුමන් වෙතට නැගේවා!

මාරි සුවිනිතා සොහොයුරිය.



" A career of labour opens before us: I see a multitude of paths which we are called upon to tread. We must, therefore, set to work with energy without losing a moment."
St.M.Euphrasia

මා කැඳවූ එඩේරික හඬ

නිරන්තරයෙන් නැති වූ බැටළුවා සොයා ගිය ගම්පොළ යහපත් එඩේරා කන්‍යාරාමයේ විසූ මේරි ප්‍රැන්සිස් සේවියර් සොහොයුරියගේ දූත සේවාව කාටත් හොරා මා සිත් බැඳගෙන තිබුණි. දැරියන් හය දෙනෙකු සහ එක් සොහොයුරකු පමණක් සිටි මගේ පවුලේ 04 වෙනි දියණිය වූයේ මමයි.

මගේ පියා 1965 මාර්තු 01 දා ජීවිතයෙන් සමු ගත්තේය.මගේ ආදරණීය පියාගේ වියෝවීමෙන් අනාගතය අභියෝගාත්මක බවින් සපිරි ගමනක් බව මට වැටහුණි. අ.පො.ස සාමාන්‍ය පෙළ විභාගයට ඉදිරිපත් වීමෙන් පසුව මම පාසලෙන් සමු ගත්තෙමි. 1968 වසරේ සිට මවගේ ජීවන බර උසුලන්නට මා දායක වූයේ නිරායාසයෙනි. පවුලේ බර තරමක් සැහැල්ලු වීමෙන් පසුව එක් විසි වයසේ දී මම ජීවිතයේ යා යුත්තේ කොයි බටද යන්න සෙවීමට පටන් ගතිමි. රජයේ පාසල් පරිසරයක් තුළ හැදුණු වැඩුණු මා කිතුණු දහමින් පෝෂණය වූයේ පවුල් පරිසරය තුළමයි. එවන් මොහොතක ජනතාව වෙනුවෙන් කැප වූ ගරු පියතුමෙකුගේ අවවාද ඔස්සේ පැවිදි ජීවිතය තුළ මගේ සිහිනය සැබෑ කර ගන්නට මම පෙළඹුනෙමි. ගරු මේරි නිවාඩ් පැවිදි සොයුරිය ගම්පොල දේවස්ථානයේ තරුණියන් සඳහා පැවති වැඩමුළුවක පැවිදි දිවයට ඇතළත්වීමට මගේ කැමත්ත ප්‍රකාශ කෙළෙමි. මව ගෙන් සමුගැනීම මට මහත් වේදනාවක් වුවත් එඩේරාණන්ගේ හඬට මම අවනත වූයෙමි.

1974 මාර්තු 24 වන දින බණ්ඩාරවෙල නාසරෙත් නම් කන්‍යරාමයට පොස්තුලාන්තවරියක් ලෙස ඇතුළු වූයෙමි. ඉන්පසු 1975 පෙබරවාරි 08 නායකකන්ද නව තාපසික ගෘහයට ඇතුළු වූයේ හද පිරි සතුටිනි. නව තාවසික ගෘහයේ දෙවන වසරේ දී නිතර නිතර මා අසනීප වූයෙන් වඩ වඩා මම දෙවිඳුනට සමීප වූයෙමි. කුමන බාධක පැමිණියත් 1977 පෙබරවාරි 12 වන දින රෝගී තත්ව හමුවේ වුවද බාධක මැද පළමු වේදභාර පොරොන්දු ගැනීමට ශ්‍රේෂ්ඨවරියන් විසින් මා තෝරා ගන්නා ලදී. කණිටු සොහොයුරියක් ලෙස විවිධ දූත සේවාවන්හි නිරත වුවත් අවසානයේ මා කැඳවනු ලැබුවේ අධ්‍යාපන සේවය සඳහාය. කඳාන ද මැසනොද් විදුහලට මට පත්වීමක් ලැබුණේ නොසිතූ ආකාරයෙනි. ගුරු වෘත්තියට මගේ ආගම පිළිබඳ දැනුම ප්‍රමාණවත් විය. එහෙත් ගුරු වෘත්තියේ සේවයට මගේ දැනුම අඩුබව මටම හැඟුනත් දෙවි සමිඳුන් එම අඩුව සම්පූර්ණ කළේ කීකරුකම තුළයි. එවකට ප්‍රාදේශිය ශ්‍රේෂ්ඨවරිය වූ ගරු මේරි ගොන්සාගා සොයුරියගේ හඬ දේව හඬ බව මට වැටහුණේ අ.පො.ස. උසස් පෙළ ප්‍රතිඵල නිකුත් වූ පසුවය. එයට හේතුව වූයේ මාස 06 ක් වැනි කෙටි කාලයක සුදානමින්, කීකරුකමේ නාමයෙන් විභාගයට පෙනී සිට කොළඹ විශ්ව විද්‍යාලයට තේරීමට තරම් සුදුසු ප්‍රතිඵල ලැබූ නිසාය.

වසර 25 ක පමණ අධ්‍යාපන සේවාවේ අභියෝගාත්මක වසර හත වූයේ පානදුර යහපත් එඩේරා බලිකා විදුහලේ වැඩ භාරගත් පසුවය. මාස එකහමාරක් පමණ කෙටි කාලයක් තුළ එවකට ගරු විදුහල්පති ධුරය දැරූ ගරු මේරි ධම්මිකා ගුණරත්න පැවිදි සොහොයුරිය හදිසි හෘදයාබාධයකින් ජීවිතයෙන් සමුගැනීම එයට හේතුව විය. එවකට ප්‍රාදේශිය ශ්‍රේෂ්ඨවරිය වූ ගරු මේරි විනිප්‍රීඩා පැවිදි සොයුරිය ධම්මිකා සොහොයුරියගේ දේහය මිහිදන් කරන්නට මත්තෙන් අප සොයුරියගේ වියෝවින් පුරප්පාඩු වූ විදුහල්පතිධුරයට මා පත් කිරීම මට අභියෝගයක් විය. එමෙන්ම අත්තිවාරම පමණක් දමා තිබුණු මහල් හතරක විශාල ගොඩනැගිල්ල ඉදි කිරීමේ භාරදුර වගකීම ද මට පැවරිණි. ඒ හැම විටම දෙවි සමිඳුන්ගේ ආශිර්වාදයන් මා වෙලා ගැනීම හැම අභියෝගයක්ම ජය ගැනීමට රුකුලක් විය. එම කාලයේ විශේෂයෙන් ආර්ථික අග හිඟතාවයෙන් පෙළුණු පිළිගත් පාසලක අධ්‍යාපනය ලබා ගැනීමේ වරම් නොලත් දැරියන් රාශියකට පිළිසරණ වන්නට මට හැකියාව ලැබුණේ දෙවි සමිඳුන්ගේ බලවත් හස්තය මා මෙහෙයවූ නිසායි. පාසල් සේවයෙන් සමුගත් පසු මා විවිධ මිසම් වල දූ දරුවන්ව දහමින් පෝෂණය කරන්නට දෙවිසමිඳුන් මා තෝරා ගෙන ඇත. පැවිදි හවුල, දහම් පාසල, මිසම තුළ නැති වූ බැටළුවන් සොයා ඔවුන්ගේ පිපාසය සංසිඳුවීමට මා තෝරා පත්කර ගත් දෙවි සමිඳුන්ට අනේක විට මම තුති පැසසුම් කරමි. දිව්‍ය බැටළු එඩේරාගේ හඬ දිනෙන් දිනම මා ප්‍රබෝධවත් කරන බව මට ස්ථිරය.

මේරි මියුරියල් වික්‍රමරත්න සොයුරිය

මා දුටු දෙව් කැඳවීමේ මහිමේ

එතුමන් හඬ මට ඇසුනා
තෝරාගෙන කැපකල බව කීවා
උතුරාගිය සතුටින් දෝතට ගත්තා
කැඳවීමේ තිළිණය උතුම් සදා

දින දින තිළිණය - කැඳවීමේ
ඇරියා දවටන - ආදරයේ
විශ්වාසය ඉවසීමයි - උදව්වුනේ
දැකුමට ලස්සන පිදුමට තිබි ගී සෑම දිනේ

ගලවා දැමූ විට මා බැමි ලැබුවා ශක්තිය දෙවිඳුන්ගේ
කැඳවීමේ තිළිණය රසවිඳුමයි දෙවිඳුගේ ආදරේ මේ මොහොතේ
දුන්නා සේවය දෙව් අභිමතය ලෙසේ
එවිටය දුටුවේ ලෝකයේ අභියෝගේ

මොහොතින් මොහොතට පේසුගේ ආදර පණිවිඩයේ
සිටියා දස දහසක් රැකුමට මා කැපවීමේ
කැඳවීමයි කැපවීමයි නිසි ලෙස දීමට ආදරයේ
නැතිවම බැහැ ඔබ සැම මා මිතුරේ

නැහැ සමකල හැකි කිසිවක් දෙවිඳුන් රැකවරණේ
සිඳ බිඳ දැම්මා පසු පස ආ හැම බලවේගේ
එයමයි ඔපදැමුවේ දෙවි තිළිනේ
නොසිතූ විලසට එළිය වුනා මා සිත් පතුලේ

ආදරයේ තිළිණය කැඳවීමයි
ගෙව් හැම මොහොතම එහි රසයයි
කැපවී වැයවී බොඳුවේ දෙව් ආදරයයි
මා සතු මා හැම දෙවිඳුගේ ගුණ මහිමයි

මේරි චන්ද්‍රිකා පෙරේරා කන්‍යාසොයුරිය



" God will secretly strengthen us and pour out upon us an abundance of new graces.
God asks in return from each of us a special tribute of love and gratitude."
St.M.Euphrasia

அழைப்பும் பணியும்

கொழும்பு மறைமாவட்டத்தில் கொச்சிக்கடை நகரை பிறப்பிடமாகக் கொண்ட நான், 1992ம் ஆண்டு இறைவனின் அழைப்பை ஏற்று நல்லாயன் கன்னியர் மடத்தில் இணைந்ததையிட்டு மகிழ்ந்து இறைவனுக்கு எனது நன்றியை காணிக்கையாக்குகின்றேன்.

1996ல் நல்லாயன் துறவற சபையில் முதல் வாக்குத்தத்தை பெற்றதில் இருந்து உள்நாட்டு யுத்தத்தால் பாதிக்கப்பட்டு ,உள சமூக பிரச்சனைகளோடு வாழ்ந்த யாழ், வவுனியா மாவட்ட மக்கள் மத்தியில் இறைவனின் கருவியாக பணியாற்ற நல்லாயன் சபை தலைமைத்துவம் எனக்கு அளித்த சந்தர்ப்பத்தை நினைத்து அவர்களுக்கு நன்றியினை தெரிவித்து கொள்கிறேன்.

அன்று பிரான்சிய புரட்சியால் பாதிக்கப்பட்ட மக்களுக்கு எமது அன்னை யூப்ரேசியா ஆன்மீக ஆர்வத்தோடு, சவால்களை வென்று பணியாற்றியதை நினைவிற் கொண்டு ,எமது நாட்டிலும் போரினால் பாதிக்கப்பட்ட மக்களுக்கும், வறுமையில் வாடிய மலையக மக்களுக்கும், ஆன்மீகஆர்வத்தோடு, பல செயற் திட்டங்களை வகுத்து இளைஞர்கள், யுவதிகள், பெண்கள் என பல தரப்பினர்களுக்கும் வேலை வாய்ப்பிற்கான பயிற்சி நெறிகளையும் ஆன்மீக அறிவையும் வழங்கி வேலை வாய்ப்புகள் பெற்று கொடுக்கப்பட்டது.எமது குழும செயற்றிட்டங்களின் கீழ் தொழில் பயிற்சியினை பெற்று வேலைவாய்ப்பினைப் பெற்றுக் கொண்டவர்கள்இ நன்றி பெருக்கோடு கூறுகின்ற வார்த்தைகள் எனது அழைப்பின் ஆழத்தையும் பணியின் மேன்மையும் உணர்ந்து ஆர்வத்தோடு பணி செய்ய தூண்ட பெற்றதை நினைத்து மகிழ்ச்சியடைகிறேன்.

பெற்றோரை இழந்த பிள்ளைகளுக்கு ஒரு தாயை போல அன்பையும் சமூக ஆதரவையும் பெற்றுக் கொடுத்து, மகிழ்வூட்டல் செயற்திட்டதின் ஊடாக ஆளுமை வளர்ச்சியில் மாற்றத்தை ஏற்படுத்தி தலை நிமிர்ந்து வாழக் கற்றுக் கொடுக்க இறைவன் தந்த அருளையும் ஆசீரையும் நினைந்து அவருக்கு எனது நன்றிகளை சமர்ப்பிக்கின்றேன்.

“சுடும் வரை நெருப்பு, சுழலும் வரை பூமி போராடும் வரை மனிதன்” எனும் தத்துவத்திற்கேற்ப எனது இளம் வயதினில் ஒரு பெண்ணாக ஏனைய அருட் சகோதரிகளின் துணையோடு,இராணுவ படைகளோடும் ஆண் ஆதிக்க மனநிலை கொண்ட சமூகத்தின் மத்தியில் துணிவோடு பணியாற்ற ஆன்மீக பலத்தை தந்த எல்லாம் வல்ல இறைவனுக்கும் ,உடன் பயணித்த என் சகோதரிகளுக்கும் பணி வாழ்வை வாழ்ந்து காட்டிய எமது அன்னை யூப்ரேசியாவிற்கும் இதயபூர்வ நன்றிகள்.

இளம் வயது முதல் இன்று வரை எனது சபை என்னை உருவாக்கி ஆன்மீகத்திலும் பணி வாழ்விலும் முதிர்ச்சியை நோக்கி பயணிக்க எனக்கு வழிகாட்டிய நல்லாயன் சபைக்கும் தலைமைத்துவ குழுவுக்கும் நன்றியை தெரிவித்துக் கொள்கிறேன்.

அருட்சகோதரி றெமோஷினி

SR. REMOSHINI FERNANDO



வாழையூரில் நல்லாயன் அருட்சகோதரிகளின் பணிதனை பாராட்டுகின்றோம.

கிழக்கிலங்கை தேசம்தனில்
வாழையூரும் மாங்கேணியும் அழைத்து நிற்க
நல்லாயன் யேசுவின் நல்லாயன் அருட்சகோதரிகள்
நற்பணி ஆற்றிடவே தாகம் கொண்டு
ஆறு பத்து ஆண்டின் முன்பே (1964)
அடியெடுத்து வைத்தனர் .

இம்மண்ணில் பணிவாழ்வின் பாதையிலே
30 ஆண்டுகால யுத்தம் தடைக்கற்கள்
புதித்த போதும் தளராத மனதுடனே
பல பணிகள் ஆற்றினர்
.
சமூகத்தின் நிலையறிந்தும் தேவையுள்ளோருக்கு
வாழ்வளிக்கவும் மனித வாழ்வு மேன்மை பெறவும்
அகப்பணியையும் புறப்பணியையும் அன்று தொட்டு
இன்றுவரை ஆர்வமுடன் ஆற்றுகின்றீர்கள் .

துற்கால நவீன யுக நலப்பணிகள்
நன்கறிந்து மனிதகுல வாழ்வுதனை
சீர்படுத்த சீருடனே செய்துவரும்
பணிகள் பல பணிகள் பல .

இக்கால பணிப்பிரம்பின் சிறப்பிடமாய்
மாங்கேணி கிராமம்தனில்
நெய்தல் நில நல்லாயன் கலையகமாக்கி
கிராமத்தின் எழுச்சி எனும் திட்டம் தீட்டி
குடும்ாங்கள் மீட்சி பெற அயராது ஆற்றிவரும்
அருட்சகோதரிகளின் பணிகளோ இன்னும் அளப்பெரிது .

பாராட்டும் புகழும் எமக்கல்ல
எம்பரமன் இயேசுவுக்கே என்று கூறும்
எங்கள் அன்பின் சகோதகிகளின்
ணி சிறக்க வாழ்த்துகின்றோம்.
நல்லாயன் இணைப்பாளர் நாங்களிங்கே...

நல்லாயன் இணைப்பாளர்கள் சார்பில்
பணிவுடன்
ஆ.ஜெய சந்திரன்
(மாங்கேணி வாழைச்சேனை)

பூக்கும் பூக்கள் எல்லாம் மேடை ஏறுவதில்லை.

உன் உட்காருதலையும் எழுந்து இருத்தலையும் நான் அறிந்து இருக்கின்றேன். (தி.பா 139:2) என்று மொழிந்த இறைவன் என்னையும் இப்பூமியில் உருப்பெறச் செய்தார். மண்ணைத் தேடி சிலர், பெண்ணைத் தேடி சிலர், விடியலைத் தேடி சிலர், புகழைத் தேடி சிலர், பதவியைத் தேடியோ பலர். மனிதா உன்னைத் தேட மறந்தது ஏன்? உன்னைத் தேடிப்பார் அதுதான் துறவறம் என்று என்னையும் மேடையேற ஒரு துறவறப் பூவாய் அழைத்தார் இறைவன். வியந்து நோக்கி பார்க்கின்றேன்.

அவ்வழைத்தல் அது ஒரு விசித்திரமானது. கனீரென்ற குண்டு வெடிப்பின் ஓசைகளும், கதிகலங்கி ஓடிச் சென்ற மக்களின் அவலக் குரல்களும் அசையாமல் நின்ற பேரூந்துகளும் என்னை அடைக்கலம் புகவைத்தது. 1985ல் மாங்குளத்தில் அருட்சகோதரி மேரி யூடித்திடம் அவரின் அற்புதமான அழைத்தலின் பகிர்தலும் அவரது ஆழமான கருத்துக்களின் வழிகாட்டலும் "ஒரு ஆன்மா உலகைவிட மேலானது" என்னும் கூற்றை மகுட இலக்காக வைத்து நல்லாயன் கன்னியர் சபையென்னும் அளப்பரிய சபையில் என்னை புதிதாக பரிணமித்தது 1986ல். அன்று ஆரம்பித்தது எனது துறவற சுவாச பயணங்கள். துறவற கல்விக்கு என் வாழ்வை அர்ப்பணித்தவளாய் நான் நகர்ந்து கொண்டு இருக்கையில் உறவுக்கெல்லாம் உயர்ந்த உறவான உயிர்தந்து என்னை நேசித்த என் தந்தையின் மரணம் என்னை கதிகலங்க வைத்தது. இறுதிகிரிகைகளை கண்கொண்டு காணமுடியாத துர்பாக்கியசாலி நானானேன். மாண்டவர் என் தந்தை, என் தந்தையின் சுவாசங்கள் காற்றுடன் சேர்க! தூயவர் கண்ணொளி சூரியன் சேர்க! பூதங்கள் ஐந்திலும் பொன்னுடல் சேர்க! போனவர் புண்ணியம் எம்முடன் சேர்க! ஜனமும் பூமியில் புதியது இல்லை. மரணத்தைப் போல் ஒரு பழையதும் இல்லை. இரண்டும் இல்லாவிடில் இயற்கையும் இல்லை. இயற்கையின் ஆணைதான் ஞானத்தின் எல்லை என்ற வைரமுத்துவின் கவி வரிகள் எனக்காகவே ஆறுதலுக்காய் செதுக்கப்பட்டவை போலும் இருந்தும் துவண்டுவிடவில்லை. என் தந்தையின் கனவுப்பாதையை நனவாக்க ஆண்டவருக்குள் வாழ்ந்து ஆண்டவரின் சொத்தாக ஏறுதடை தாண்டி வீறு நடைபோட்டேன். துறவறம் என்பது ஒரு ரயில் பயணம் போலதான். நிறைய நிறுத்தங்கள், நிறைய வழித்தடமாற்றங்கள் விதவிதமான மனிதர்களுடன் பயணங்கள். சில நேரம் விபத்துக்களும் கூட. அனைத்தையும் இரசித்துக் கொண்டே துன்பத்தில் துவழாமல் என்னை நான் வலுப்படுத்தினேன். அழகாய் அமையட்டும் இந்த வாழ்க்கைப் பயணம். இந்த விசித்திரமான துறவற வாழ்வுப் பயணத்தில் எத்தனையோ இடங்களில் பணி செய்தேன். ஆனாலும் என்னை அதிகம் நொறுக்கியது மாங்குளம். மாங்குளத்தில் எனது பயணங்கள் ஒவ்வொன்றும் போரிலே பாதிக்கப்பட்ட மக்களுடன் இருந்தது அவர்களின் அழுகுரல், அவர்களின் இழப்புக்கள், அவர்கள் அனுபவித்த சித்திரவதைகள் எல்லாம் என்னை நொறுக்கியது. மரத்துக்குக் கூட கோடையை வைத்தவர். வசந்தத்தையும் வைத்து இருக்கும் போது உன்னை மட்டும் நிரந்தர துன்பத்தில் விட்டுவிடுவாரா என்று அம்மக்களுக்க நம்பிக்கை என்னும் விதையை விதைத்தேன் இம்மக்களின் வேதனைகள் என்னையும் துறவற சிகரத்தில் இறைவனை இறுகப்பற்றி பிடிக்க உதவியது.

நான் ஊன், உடை, உறவு இன்றி தத்தளித்த தருணங்களும் இங்கே தான். மத் 8:19 மறைநூல் அறிஞர் இயேசுவிடம் வந்து போதகரே நீர் எங்கு சென்றாலும் நான் உம்மை பின் தொடர்வேன் என்றார். இயேசு அவரிடம் "நரிகளுக்கு பதுங்குழிகளும் வானத்துப் பறவைகளுக்கு கூடுகளும் உண்டு. மனுமகனுக்கோ தலைசாய்க்கக்கூட இடமில்லை என்றார்" எனது துறவற வார்த்தைப் பாட்டை இங்கு நான் உள்ளார ஆழமாக உணர்ந்து வாழ்ந்தேன்.

பூமிக்கு நாம் ஒரு யாத்திரை வந்தோம். யாத்திரை போகுமுன் நித்திரை கொள்வோம். நித்திரை கொள்வது நியதி என்றாலும் யாத்திரை போவது தொடர் கதையாகும். அதுபோல் ஆன்மாவை மீட்கும் பணியில் தொடர்ந்து ஓயாது தொடர்பயணம் செல்ல ஆவலாயுள்ளேன். ஒரு ஆட்டுக்குட்டியை நல்லாயன் சுமப்பதுபோல் என் இதயத்துக்கு அருகில் எசாயா 40:11 உன்னை நான் சுமக்கின்றேன் என்றும் ஆண்டவர் அருளிய வார்த்தையை நான் உணர்ந்தேன். இந்த வசனங்கள் என்னை ஆழமாக சிந்திக்க வைத்து அவரின் ஆட்டு மந்தைகளின் ஆன்மாவை மீட்கவும் அன்பு செய்யவும் என் ஆன்மாவை அர்ப்பணித்து இறை சித்தத்திற்கு இறைபதம் பணிந்து இன்னும் வெண்ணாடை விழுமியத்தில் தொடர்ந்து பயணிக்க உன்னருள் மழையை பொழிந்திடுவாய். கருவிலே என்னைத் தேர்ந்தவனே இருகரம் கூப்பி நன்றிப் புகழ் சாற்றுகின்றேன்.

இப்படிக்கு உம் பணியாள்

SR. RANI AGNES

“தாய் வயிற்றில் உன்னை நான் உருவாக்கு முன்பே அறிந்திருந்தேன்” எரே 1/5

என்னை அறிந்திருந்ததால் என் பெயர் சொல்லி அழைத்தாய். பல நூறு குறை இருந்தும் என்னை தேர்ந்தெடுத்தாய். தகுதி இருந்ததால் நீர் என்னை அழைக்கவில்லை நீர் அழைத்ததால் நான் தகுதி பெற்றேன்

வாழ்வென்னும் பயணத்திலே என் பெற்றோர் தந்த மிகப்பெரும் செல்வம் விசுவாசமும், இறை பக்தியும் என்றால் அது மிகையாகாது. என் சிறு பராயத்திலே உம் பணியாளர்களை பார்க்கும் போதெல்லாம், ஏன் நானும் இவ்வாறு வரமுடியாது என்ற வினா என்னுள்ளத்திலே அடிக்கடி எழுந்தது. போரின் மேகங்கள் எமை சூழ்ந்த போதும், மடு அன்னையின் திருப்பதியிலே நாங்கள் மகிழ்ந்திருந்த நாட்கள் பல. பொருள் இல்லை, பணம் இல்லை ஆயினும் இதயத்தில் இனம் புரியாத ஓர் அமைதி இருந்தது.

என் வாழ்வின் தெரிவுகளிலே இருந்த போராட்டங்கள் ஒளியான உம் வார்தைகளால் உறுதி படுத்தப்பட்டது. “உங்களுக்காக நான் வைத்திருக்கும் திட்டங்கள் எனக்கு தெரியும் அன்றோ அவை வளமான எதிர்காலத்தையும் நம்பிக்கையையும் உங்களுக்கு அளிப்பதற்கான நல்வாழ்வின் திட்டங்களே”- எரே 29/11. என் தந்தையின் பலத்த எதிர்ப்பிற்கு மத்தியில் "கடவுளின் சித்தம் எதுவோ அது நடந்தே தீரும்"எனும் என் தாயின் வார்த்தைகள் எனக்கு ஆறுதல் அளித்தன. பல சபைகளில் இருந்து என்னைதேடி வந்தாலும் என் மனம் என்னவோ நல்லாயன் சபையையே நாடியது. அருட் சகோதரி கில்டாவின் துணையுடன் இச்சபையில் சேர்ந்தேன். புது முகங்கள் புது இடம் புது மொழி என்று மனம் கலங்கிய பொழுதெல்லாம் எலியாவை காகத்தின் மூலம் போசித்த இறைவன் என்னையும் தேற்றுவார் எனும் நம்பிக்கைக்கு பதில் போல பலர் வழியாகவும், பல அனுபவங்கள் வழியாகவும் என்னை பலபடுத்தி பணியின் மகத்துவத்தை உண்ர்த்தி என்னை வழி நடத்தினார்.

உம்முடைய கொள்கையின் வழி நின்று நான் உழைக்கும் போதெல்லாம் உம் நேசக்கரம் என்னை தாங்கியதால் இன்று வரை நான் இவ்விதமாய் இயங்கிட எனக்கருள் கூர்ந்தாய்

“படைத்தவரே என்னை எற்றுக் கொண்டு உம் ஆசீரால் எனை நிரப்பி விடும் பிறர் வாழ என்னையும் உம் பயனுள்ள கருவியாய் மாற்றிவிடும். என் பயணம் உம்மோடு தொடர உமக்காக நான் வாழ எனக்கு அருள் ஈந்தருள்வாய்”

SR. MARIE BENITA LAMBERT



Jubilee Song







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