



Mother Anna Huberta Rogendorf
Founder of the Society of Helpers of Mary

Igniting Sparks

MONTHLY NEWS LETTER

OCTOBER 2016

An unforgettable visit

It was early morning on 19th July, 2016 the Mahanagari express brought me to Varanasi station in Uttar-Pradesh North India. I was greeted by orange clad Bolbams (special devotee of Lord Shiva who come in large number to the city on foot carrying pots of water to be poured on Lord Shiva) Varanasi, the holy city of India, is also known by the name of Kashi and Banaras. Kashi, the city of Moksha for Hindus since centuries, is known for its fine-quality silks, 'paan' and Benares Hindu University. Varanasi is the most popular pilgrimage point for the Hindus. One of the seven holiest cities. In Hinduism it is believed that those who die and are cremated here get an instant gateway to liberation from the cycle of births and re-births. On my way I was elated to view the Ganges from distance and to feel the liberation that Ganges offers to the devotees.

During my visit to our communities in the North Province of Varanasi, I had this feeling that even if roads are unmanned, footpaths filthy, traffic congested, railway stations crowded, and all the civic systems almost non-functional, people didn't mind it. Every Shravan Mondays, large number of devotees in Orange dresses, carrying pots of water from Ganges, tread the way on foot even up to Allahabad and beyond. Such is the religiosity that Varanasi exhibited; and no doubt people come to seek God. My six weeks in North Province took me to Varanasi, Ranchi, Orissa, Jharkhand and West Bengal, I was happy to see Sr. Daisy and team together with all the sisters in the North Province trying to reachout to as many as possible. But my visit to the village of Musahar tribe near Bhadohi mission was an unforgettable experience and a memory to last.

The Musahar community is a Hindu caste who lives on the margin of society. They are considered as the lowest of the Dalit groups, the untouchables, which are the most segregated communities in India. They are discriminated for their skin colour, religion, and traditions. The Musahar, whose name translates in English as "rat eaters", live in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and North Madhya Pradesh. They speak Bhojpuri, a dialect deriving from Hindi. Among the 17 Basthis near Bhadohi (villages), I visited a village of 40 families. The people there have nothing to eat, live in temporary plastic roof houses, have just one hand pump for the whole village, having neither school nor health care facilities. Earlier their meals were dependant on the availability of rats and grains that they procure from the rat holes, However, things are



changing for some families as their children have gone to different states to work. They now catch rats mostly during the harvesting season.

The Musahar are mainly landless agricultural labourers who are continuously subjected to discriminations. All the neighbouring villages have electricity with all the basic amenities, but they still live in such inhuman conditions. The Indian government runs some schemes in order to help the community cope with their condition of extreme poverty. I sincerely wished that the Musahar be washed by the Holy Ganges, untouchability be vanished, that people who come to seek God, seek also their neighbour Musahar, irrespective of the vote bank, Government do something for them so that people have something to live, and to hope for.

The history of the Musahar has been one of chronic impoverishment, subjugation and marginalisation. They have struggled to make a living in a society that has classified them as 'untouchables'. After generations of shame and rejection, they are still trapped in poverty and ignorance. They need help to make use of the government benefits that has already been provided, as well as increased access to education, medical facilities and provision of electricity, clean drinking water and self-employment schemes. I saw a great opportunity for the Marys in Uttar Pradesh to reach out to this unreached and to restore them to dignity that God vested in them.

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Sr. Stella Devassy shm, Superior General



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Cherishing Moments of Togetherness



This significant day of the 5th Renewal Program in the annals of the Society of the Helpers of Mary dawned on the 13th of September 2016, at 3.00 pm in Atma Sadhana, Andheri. 64 of us from group Nos. 27-36 found ourselves filled with a spirit of great joy as we entered for this inaugural ceremony. Rev. Sr. Stella Devassy, Superior General lit the lamp before our Founder Mother Anna Huberta invoking her blessings for everyone. In an innovative way the participants were welcomed to the renewal program. In the key note address, Sr. Stella emphasized the purpose of bringing the sisters together; to capacitate every member to carry on the baton of the legacy of Mother Anna Huberta and to pass it over to the younger generation.

No words can completely capture the joyous feelings in our hearts when we think of those enriching days. What an experience of sharing, encountering, learning and heart touching moments, awakening and reawakening, and journeying within oneself. It created an atmosphere of bursting out of cheers, excitements and joy bringing out our hidden talents, vibrancy and resources from within to grow gracefully and giving ourselves joyfully as women of fire shaping our missions. We are called to be mystics and prophets. It invited us to deepen our commitment to place ourselves and our resources with the vulnerable, the marginalized, especially women and children so that all may have fullness of life. It motivated all to be vibrant Helpers of Mary, bringing the spirit of Mother alive in each of us. Every topic that covered, we found it was incredible. The resource persons were indescribable – so patient, humble and wise.

The Commission for Spirituality and Formation along with Sr. Stella did an amazing job. We are touched by Sr. Stella's vast wisdom and enthusiasm, it inspires us to see much efforts being put in, working with the unwavering goal of planting seeds, sharing, inspiring, reaching out, encouraging, and directing us to step forward to live the Charism with its original spirit in the 21st Century.

We thank Srs. Naveena and Sulochana for putting this program together and administering it so wonderfully. We appreciate the enormous effort put in by the Sisters in Generalate, Mother House and Formation. We offer utmost praise and oceans of thanks and love to Sr. Stella, our Superior General and Councilors for organizing this renewal program.

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Sr. Elsa Antony shm & Sr. Janet Aranjo shm

Hope to the helpless



It's a joy to share the experience of Pournima who received a new life in our home. Pournima means fullness. The name exactly fits the smiling young girl. Pournima Khambhe's eyes are filled with wonder and awe seeking to live life to the fullest and dreaming for a better future.

Pournima was admitted to Mukhta Jivan children's home on 18th June, 2011. She was 13 years old, infected with HIV. After her parent's death due to AIDS she was brought to our home. As we know, education is most important for a child, so she was enrolled in the school. She completed her 12th class successfully. Later we registered her name for fashion designing course along with other 2 girls. She did very well and completed it successfully. Apart

from studies she is very hard working and always willing to help other children in their needs and studies. On 31st August 2016 she has been successfully rehabilitated; her relatives took her home and they want to settle her in marriage. She is continuing her studies, doing BA (Bachelor of Arts). The journey for Pournima was very painful but she is proud to be part of Mukhta Jivan because here she was touched, cared, sheltered, educated, received values and built a fine personality to face the society with courage. She is deeply grateful to all the Sisters in Mukhta Jivan and her loving companions. Pournima's future is bright like her smile, and we owe it to children just like her around the world a chance to grow up, to go to school and fulfill their dreams and aspirations.

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Sr. Meena Jose shm, Mukhta Jivan, Vehloli

4th Extended General Council Meeting



The 4th Extended General Council meeting of SHM kick started on 28th September 2016, with the esteemed group of Sisters of the Congregation in Atmasadhana, Andheri; the Superior General, Rev Sr. Stella and her Council, the three Provincials and their Councils, African Region Councilors, the formators, the Bursar General, Sr. Amrita and Secretary General, Sr. Joanita.

The meeting dealt with the triennial report of the General Administration, the annual reports of the Provinces and the midterm evaluation of the VIth General Chapter.

An input session for a day was directed by Rev. Fr. Fermin SJ on vocation and recruitment at this time when Congregation is looking for enthusiastic young girls to join our hands to reach out to the poor and needy. A presentation of reports by formators and vocation coordinators were also part of the meeting.

The mid-term evaluation showed a great appreciation of the progress and the transformation that the Congregation has made. Thanks to the dynamic, energetic leadership of the Superior General, Sr. Stella, Provincials and Regional Superior. The fire and the Spirit of Mother Anna Huberta, our Founder was reignited at the time of decisions and deliberations. Each one was motivated and challenged to go back to the roots and witness the life of Jesus in the mission. The entire team was strengthened and revived to respond with a clear vision.

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Sr. Indumati Pallikunnan SHM
General Councilor

Care for Mother Earth

Nature was created before human beings and we are inter-dependent from the beginning of creation. Our relationship has often been described as symbolic because the very survival of the people depended on it, just as a child depends on the mother. In turn the nature depended on us for its preservation. So it is we who need to take care of our mother Earth. God took 6 days to create Earth and did so amazingly and said it's beautiful. On the special occasion of the Birth Anniversary of the Mother Anna Huberta and marking the Platinum Jubilee of our Congregation, the community of Madarihat-West Bengal, organized to plant trees in the compound. The children of the home and the Sisters prepared the ground and planted 210 saplings. We were privileged to have Mr. Bimal, a Social activist as a Chief

What a marvellous time together with Marys!



Both communities, Kitengela and Nakuru in Kenya had feast day gathering for two days. We started with recollection on 3rd Sept. 2016 and Fr. Stephen was the preacher who spoke on Mother of Mercy connecting the merciful ways the Society of the Helpers of Mary reach out to the poor and needy.

We feel proud of Sr. Stella our Superior General, who motivates the Marys to be more compassionate, gentle and nurturers of life. It was a great time for all of us when we wrote poems and essays on Mother, participating and conducting quiz competition on the history of our Congregation. There was a sense of joy and belongingness in our gathering and all were excited. It was a great occasion to deepen our knowledge about our Founder and Congregation as we prepare for the Platinum Jubilee. All this touched me personally, that to know one another and to experience God's call through events which takes place daily. Mercy is to forgive and forget, the kind words that we use make a difference in others' life. I thank Srs. Alphonsa and Ujwala who took initiative to organize this program.

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Sr. Maria Gabre shm

Divine Providence Convent, Kitengela, Kenya



Guest. Mr. Manoj, Mr. Sanjit were guest of honors during the celebration. We began this event with a beautiful prayer song by the children. The Chief Guest was much impressed and appreciated the Sisters for the good work the Helpers of Mary being carried on and specially for taking initiative to plant trees and encourage the children. It was a joyful day for us specially the children who were motivated, empowered and encouraged to be responsible towards care for Mother Earth.

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Sr. Pinky Saha SHM, Madarihat, West Bengal

French Scouts' Mission at Andheri, India

Our experience in Mumbai (Bombay) was unique and thrilling. We were fortunate to view the country with the SHM Sisters.

In the first week we worked at Andheri. We were introduced to young children – Bal Bhavan at Andheri and Jivan Asha a home for the elderly. This experience pleased us a lot – very quickly we felt that we were integrated with the community and could participate in their life. It was very kind of the Sisters to invite us for the celebration of the children on the occasion of the eve of the Feast of the Assumption and Independence Day.

In the second week we visited the Sisters at Vakola, Santa Cruz. We were accompanied by Srs. Maryann & Nirupama who visited the families in the slums. We were overwhelmed by the generosity of their welcome even though we were only temporary guests. These encounters helped us to perceive the complexity of the conditions of life in India. We worked with the children living in the slums and helped them in their studies. Unlike Andheri, the interaction with these children was more difficult because they did not speak or spoke very little English. We were particularly touched by the commitment of the Sisters of the Helpers of Mary who work in the slums and their support for women, children and families.

The third week was spent at Malwani, Malad West. We were divided into two groups and sent to different schools. We were astonished to observe the huge number of children in the limited space of the classroom. Srs. Irene, Saira & Rajni introduced us to the workshops which are conducted in the centre. This experience ended by spending the day with Sr. Joanita visiting Vehloli and Assangaon. We were impressed by the diversity of the activities of the Helpers of Mary and the deep joy which they radiate. A big thank you to the Helpers of Mary and to all those we met.

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Sarah & Group - French Scouts

Fire of St. Bernadette – France



Radiating God's love and light in the world



A Silver Jubilee is a time to look back with gratitude for the years one has travelled by and to look ahead in confidence for the years to come and also to look around with joy. In Psalm 145:6-7, the Psalmist exclaims, "The might of your awesome deeds shall be proclaimed, and I will declare your greatness. They shall celebrate the fame of your abundant goodness, and shall sing aloud of your righteousness".

Yes with shouts of joy we the 11 Jubilarians sing aloud, and thank God for the marvels, He has worked in our lives, for the past 25 years. Our hearts exalt your Divine name and our souls dwell exuberantly in you.

This 25 Silver Years of Journey in faith and dedication, in the service of the Master in the Society of the Helpers of Mary, on 11th Sept. 2016 we celebrated the completion of the milestone in the journey of our Religious Life. As we recall that journey, we see the steadfast love of the Master. We have walked faithfully in His footsteps, and the Master walked with us, as He did with the disciples on the way to Emmaus to **RADIATE HIS LOVE IN THE WORLD.**

We are deeply grateful to our Superior General, Sr. Stella, the General Council, every member of the family of the Helpers of Mary, our family members, for what you have done in words and deeds that has reflected in our lives. We pray that the good Lord may continue to bless each one to radiate His light and love in His service in the years to come. Through the intercession of Mary our model and Mother Anna Huberta our founder, we pray for graces, "a full measure, pressed down shaken together and running over" to lead a life with great dedication and commitment in the years to come.

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Srs. Amrita, Chaya, Daisy, Gracy, Isabel, Jacinta, Jennifer, Juliet, Neeti, Shaila and Veronica. (Jubilarians)

Our Sympathy

We extend our heartfelt condolence to our dear sisters who have lost their loved ones

**Sr. Annie Fernandes &
Sr. Immaculate Fernandes** who lost their **father**
Sr. Prafulita Machado who lost her **mother**
May their souls rest in peace.

