



NEA NEWSLETTER



DECEMBER 2020 NEWS

First profession of Elizabeth, Lesley and Naomi

'I have come that all may have life and life in abundance' John10:10

The sisters of the Sacred Heart of Mary have the pleasure of inviting you to the First Profession of Elizabeth, Lesley and Naomi on January 23rd 2021.

The ceremony will be at 10 am Brazilian Time (6am our time)

You can assist the celebration by the link ---

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC5wD0CmmuKayzK9hUMDuTCw>

Report from the Enlarged Leadership Council Meeting (via Zoom) - Mary Mullins

As you know I represented our Area Leadership team at the recent Enlarged Institute Leadership Council meeting. It was lovely to see and wave to so many of you at the opening and closing prayer. I was glad to have the opportunity to acknowledge the 150th anniversary of the arrival of our first RSHM sisters to Lisburn and to ask a blessing on Kathleen, Maeve, Mary and Ursula who carry on the legacy of Mother Saint Thomas and her companions.



The meeting took place from November 16th to the 22nd from 4.00 pm daily until 7.30 pm. It was a marathon for all and especially for the Institute Leadership team who had done so much preparation, and the organisers. Veronica Brand looked after all the technical side of the zooming and did a great job. Veronica also shared the translation with Mary Jo McElroy and Rosario. Sr Brid Long, SSL facilitated the meeting. Zooming isn't ideal as there is little opportunity to connect with people but we are grateful for it during these difficult Covid times.

It was decided at the end of the meeting that Margaret and her team would send out a report of the meeting on behalf of all the participants and you have all received it by now. Sr Amy Hereford CSJ, who is a Canadian canon lawyer gave a very good talk on Restructuring and Planning for the future. I have requested a copy of it and we will send it to you when we receive it. One of the things that struck me most was the diversity between all the Areas and yet the richness of our internationality. We all face the challenge of forming new structures which we believe will enable us to move forward in a lifegiving way.

Mary

A Creative Reflection submitted by Virginia

On listening to the first reading for the First Sunday in Advent from the Prophet Isaiah the words that struck me forcibly were: 'You are our Father; we the clay you the potter, we are all the work of your hand. I was taken back to Jeremiah 18: 6 and found myself moving to the Potter's house.

*I trekked through dew drenched grass to a little house
And there he was at his wheel immersed in the work at hand.
He stopped and looked at me with gentle eyes
And quietly beckoned me to sit on a reed woven stool
Adjacent to his well-worn work bench
Then he rose and took from the shelf an unfinished pot
One of many awaiting his touch
He fondled it with care and ran his fingers
All along the rough, unsmoothed edges
He looked at it minutely examining every flaw
And shook his head and began
To smooth the surface with the utmost care
Then, with his fingers, prized out grit and grime,
And right before my very eyes began to break the pot
Gently yes, and with the touch of a masterly hand.
I wanted to intervene, to question- why break it down?
But deep down, I knew it was not for me to interfere
I sat motionless and still as he sieved and sieved
The fragmented mass of clay until his face illuminated
And turning to me he clapped his clay ridden hands
As he said: ' Let's begin again. ' And so he moulded
Until the clay began to soften yielding to his every touch
Responding to his pliant finger tips. He looked again at me
And said: It can be beautiful and will be beautiful
But it takes time and love for the artisan to complete
His work of art. Then he bade me go to another day
Another time. I knew for certain as I left
The creative work on me the pot was still unfinished.*



From Cultivating Hope in Advent – sent by Ellen

Advent is a time of waiting. Nature shows us what it means to wait. The days are shorter, creatures hibernate, growth slows, the soil rests, our attention is drawn inwards. This Winter is like no other we have experienced as our world continues to battle Covid-19. It is a time for reflection, a time to awaken to what is happening to our planet. What if during this time we prepared the ground for planting at home, in school or parish? Because we know Spring is coming. Nature is preparing for the future season of Spring and new possibilities. Can we build back better? Can we Rewild our World during this time? ‘Everything in the world is connected... As the pandemic made sure to remind us, we are interdependent on each other as well as our Mother Earth.’ (Pope Francis, TED Talk 2020)



Third Sunday of Advent: O God, source of light and darkness, let the lighting of this third candle be a sign of our willingness to speak for the light; to be, like John the Baptist, a witness to the light. It is to John we turn for inspiration today as one who found in the wilderness the grace of seeing clearly. May we find in our time a voice to protect our wild places for ‘in wilderness is the preservation of the world’ (Henry David Thoreau). We pray that the Holy Spirit will fill our hearts with the light of joy and thanksgiving so that we may live as children of the light blessing one another and the sacred earth by what we say and do. We make this prayer in the name of Jesus, the Light of the world.



Greetings from my new home in Ferrybank -Brigitte Dalton

My deep gratitude goes to all of you for your warm welcome to my new home in Ferrybank. Your cards, phone calls and kind messages have helped me immensely in my move. Special thanks to our Grianan Sisters who had so nicely prepared my apartment and whose welcome is now their daily caring presence in making sure that I’m settling in and have all I need. No doubt I’ll stay

It also happens to be my jubilee year and I just want to thank you at a rather late date but nonetheless sincerely for making my jubilee day (August 27th) so special. What a joy it was to receive your beautiful cards, calls, greetings, masses and your assurance of prayers. It was a day to be ever so happy in the Lord!

I also take this opportunity to say that your prayers for my nephew Conor are most helpful to the family and we are extremely grateful for your support. Conor is off treatment at the moment and is presently waiting to know what his next treatment will be and when will it be possible. We just have to trust and keep hoping for him and with him.

And now comes Christmas! May this blessed season be one of deep joy and hope for each one, your families, friends and collaborators and may 2021 be a safe and life-giving year for all.

Love and best wishes,

Brigitte

An article about one of the Literacy Projects in the North East of Brazil supported by the Sacred Heart of Mary Sisters.

During 2020 Misesa Cara did virtual monitoring of a selection of their projects in countries where they support projects. In Brazil, the Sal da Terra project was chosen for the experiment and as a result the following article was included in their Christmas edition of their magazine:

THE SAL DA TERRA ASSOCIATION IN PARAÍBA, BRAZIL

In the State of Paraíba, in the Northeast region of Brazil, about 518,000 people over 15 are illiterate, a rate of roughly 16 of the total population, the fourth highest rate in the country. The city is also home to a significant number of indigenous Venezuelans, of the Warão ethnic group, who have had no formal education in their country of origin and in many cases only speak the native Warão language.



Most of the illiterate population, particularly the elderly, work in the fields or in the homes and premises of others with little pay and sometimes in conditions of virtual slavery. **The Sal da Terra Association, located in the city of João Pessoa and supported by the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, has been working to provide adult education programmes, teaching basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic and helping people in the area to develop the critical skills necessary to manage their own lives independently.**

Sal da Terra project participant practising her literacy skills.

Everyone that Sal da Terra works with has their own personal motivations and needs driving them to seek literacy. Some are self-employed workers selling products in markets. Others are housewives, domestic workers, collectors of recyclable materials, young people selling lollipops and sweets on beaches, street cleaners, car washers, construction workers or farmers. In addition there are the unemployed, or older people who have a life-long desire to read the Bible at church. Still others are indigenous Venezuelans, who want or need to be part of Brazilian society, to achieve better social conditions.

In the case of uneducated women who have learned to read and write, they have a powerful influence on their families, and are able to change attitudes to education and society in general, making them a powerful instrument for change.

Kate Nolan

