

Jubilee Message from Superior General

Dear Sisters, Mission Partners and Friends of our Province of Sri Lanka/ Pakistan,

It is with great joy and gratitude that I send this warm greeting to you from 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 Euphrasia that needed to be honored. A program for “re-education” was to be established as soon as possible and later along with teaching the Sisters were to open a home for 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 in their 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 countries there were some people who did 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 denial of 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 March 13, 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 17th of 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