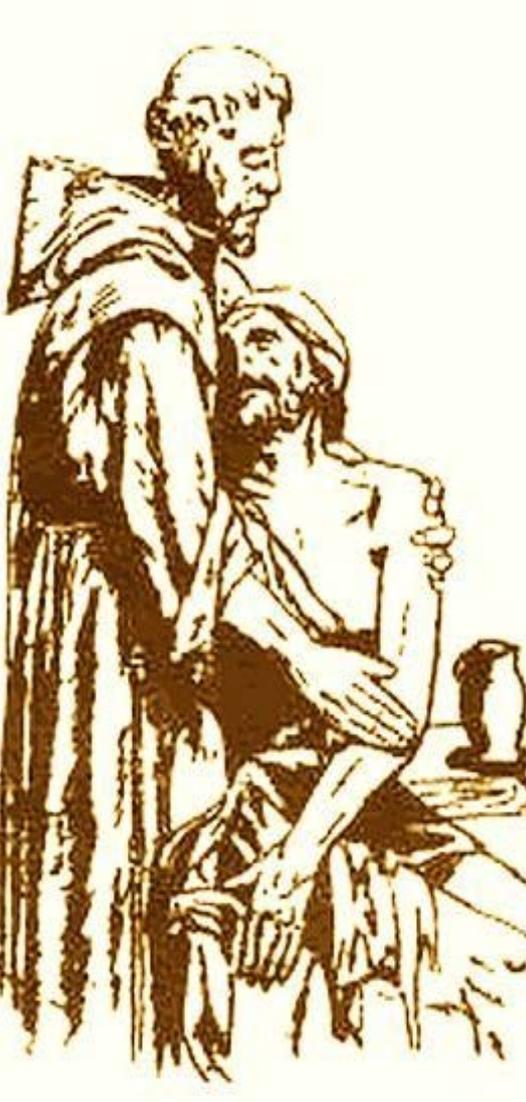




International Franciscan Conference – TOR

Responding IN THE MARGINS OF SOCIETY

December, 2016



Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Peace and all good!

Our Third Order Regular Rule calls us to be at home with those living at the margins of society, our brothers and sisters who are most vulnerable in daily life.

“And let them be happy to live among the outcast and despised, among the poor, the weak, the sick, the lepers and those who beg on the street”.
TOR #21

In our last General Assembly, aware of these words from the Rule, we made this commitment: *We reach out to the people on the margins of society and Church, especially women, and we pledge ourselves to defend their cause.* That was in 2013, and 2016 we have celebrated the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy proclaimed by Pope Francis. His letter at the beginning was an inspiration for us, especially his hope about our response for those living on the margins of society.

This will be an *“experience of opening our hearts to those living on the outermost fringes of society: fringes which modern society itself makes. How many uncertain and painful situations there are in the world today! ... (We are) called even more to heal these wounds, to assuage them with the oil of consolation, to bind them with mercy and cure them with solidarity and vigilant care... Let us open our eyes and see the misery of the world, the wounds of our brothers and sisters who are denied their dignity, and let us recognize that we are compelled to heed their cry for help!”* ...
Misericordiae Vultus #15

Since we received many articles for the 2017 *Propositum* theme, we are sending your contributions in two parts: December 2016 and February 2017. In these articles, Third Order members share their experiences of responding to those on the margins of society where they live and minister. These are some of the many experiences at the fringes, where life continues to unravel and where presence itself can be healing – a presence of understanding and compassion, companionship in the most difficult of situations. As we journey into the fullness of God’s kingdom, let us heed the cry for help from the most vulnerable, aware that every opportunity extends the mercy and compassion of God to our brothers and sisters in the margins.

May God bless our going forth with peace.

Sr. Deborah Lockwood, President IFC-TOR
Sr. Celestine Giertych, Vice-President
Sr. Klara Simunovic, Councilor
Sr. Maria do Livramento Melo de Oliveira, Councilor
Sr. Sinclair, FCC, Councilor

Indonesian Province of the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Holy Mother of God's (SFIC) response to alleviate the suffering of the people in their surroundings

Written by: Sr. Melly Frondarina

Original language: English

The West Kalimantan geography indicates that by land, there are three official borders between Indonesia and Malaysia. As a consequence of this, one will find a lot of uncontrollable business involving human and commodities for diverse purposes along such borders.



The facts show that the Malaysian economy is more prosperous than that of Indonesia, and also the minimum wage for employees is higher compared to Indonesia. Related to the situation mentioned above, it can bring some benefits but also trouble and suffering especially among the youth such as:

- Many Indonesian citizens are interested to be Overseas Indonesian Worker (TKI) in Malaysia. They are recruited either by both legal and illegal agencies, as well as by "crime syndicates" involve in human trafficking for several countries.
- The uncontrollable "in and out flow" causes the increase of illegal and dangerous transactions involving illegal drugs, and human trafficking.
 - The current globalization of the world that offers so much convenience / pleasure in influencing the lifestyle of the young generation at this time, especially in Kalimantan Barat, breeds consumerism, individualism, free sex, and an attitude of wanting everything that is instant and easy so as to avoid hard work.
- Challenged by the above-mentioned facts, the SFIC-Indonesia province feels the need "to alleviate the suffering of people in the surrounding "(SFIC Constitution, the Basic Spiritual Chapter 1: 5-6) through formal education for young people especially women as in schools, also in boarding houses and parishes where SFIC Sisters are present.

Education includes the topics of human trafficking, the dangers of drug addiction, sex education and dangers of free sex. The negative effects of globalization, mass media, and modern technology are also included. These topics are all integrated in the following activities: recollections, retreats, and seminars during which an expert speaker/resource person is invited for a particular topic. The personal guidance either in dormitories and in schools is also associated with these topics.



Seminar on Globalization



Recollection Activity

As Sisters managing the boarding houses for young women, we have written formation coaching programs and guidelines approved by both the parents and the boarders at the time the latter are accepted in the boarding house. These programs consist of a daily schedule: to study, work, rest, prayer and recreation. Recollection is held at least every semester and the retreat every year. Seminars and guidance are held as needed. The main purpose of guidance and coaching is to promote self-discipline (responsibility) and self-defense (and others) against the dangers of this time

Knowing that the problems of young people in West Kalimantan is a problem of the society in general, especially in Kalimantan Barat, we collaborate, therefore, with various institutions such

as other religious orders/congregations through the Association of Dormitory Formation in Kalimantan Barat, the Youth Commissions of the Parish and on Diocesan levels, Parents, Health Care Delivery, Police and Donors/Sponsors.

Many parents realize the importance and advantages of letting their children stay and be cared for by the SFIC Sister in the dormitory for their safety and good formation. Through the dormitory ministry, the SFIC Sister prepares the youth to have a good future by training or inculcating in them a variety of good habits. They learn to be frugal in lifestyle, disciplined, independent, responsible and to have a good relationship with one another.

Aside from the ministry in the dormitories, there are also SFIC community members who are directly involved in the parish or pastoral work. They visit the villages, especially on Christmas Day, Easter and Sunday. They extend assistance to the youth, teaching Sunday classes and mentoring youth through various activities such as retreats, choirs, as well as coordinate youth organizations (Catholic Youth Organization), etc. The presence of the Sisters in the villages is very much appreciated, because of their support and more significantly, their encouragement and inspiration.



Drugs, HIV/AIDS & Sex Education

"Let us begin again because until now we have done nothing"
(St Francis Assisi)

Responding in the Margins of Society

*By Sister Rosemary Stets, OSF
Bernardine Franciscan Sisters, USA
Original Language: English*

The Bernardine Franciscan Sisters are an international congregation founded in the U.S. in 1894 in response to the need for ministry to Polish immigrants seeking religious and political freedom in America at the end of the 19th century. The early ministries of the sisters focused on education and health care in the United States, but as international needs increased, the sisters were asked to serve in developing world countries where today, they continue to serve the poor and disadvantaged on the margins of society.



In 1937, the congregation responded to an appeal for missionaries to be sent to Brazil to work among the poor. The sisters established schools, hospitals, clinics, and later moved into the favelas where they organized social projects that combined education and health care with humanitarian aid for those who faced the ravages of poverty and economic injustice. Today, there is a Province of Bernardine Franciscan Sisters in Brazil, with members in the South, North, and Northeast regions of the country. Recently the sisters opened a new mission in Boa Vista, RR, Brazil and a mission in Mozambique, East Africa where they evangelize through catechesis and practice alternative medicine that is stabilizing the health of communities without adequate medical care.



In 1956, missionary sisters were sent to Monrovia and Cape Palmas in Liberia, West Africa. They established a boarding school, grades 1 to 12, for girls and opened a clinic to provide rehabilitation for handicapped children. They also taught catechism in rural communities, and organized vocational training, teaching sewing, cooking, and crafts for women who could sell their work and earn income for their families. Today, one Liberian Bernardine Franciscan remains after the civil war in Liberia, and she is providing much-needed leadership for those who survived the devastation. She is the director of a small university which includes several colleges, and supervises two demonstration elementary schools. She oversees a publishing company and writes/edits educational materials for the schools, and she founded and operates a radio station for better communication among the people. She also oversees a cement block factory that is producing the bricks and mortar to rebuild the country.

In 1994, the congregation opened a new mission in Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic. It is located in a very poor and under-developed



barrio, and has a thriving population active in parish liturgies and

activities. We opened an award-winning elementary school (grades 1 to 5) staffed by the Bernardine Franciscan sisters and lay teachers from the D.R. We operate a pharmacy, a clinic staffed by a physician every weekday, and many vocational training projects which are helping to develop quality of life and economic opportunities in this community. The congregation provides volunteers to assist the mission through a Volunteers in Mission program, linking short and long-term volunteers and college groups with opportunities to serve the poor through education (ESL), medical and dental services, and cultural and athletic activities for children.

In the United States, the sisters continue to serve in the spirit of their **foundress, in the city of Reading and in northeast PA, and in several schools located on the east coast** and in Michigan. In 2015, the congregation established the Mother Veronica Immigration Resource Center for the very large Hispanic community in Reading, and it continues to expand, staffed by a Bernardine Sister director and volunteers from the local community. The Center offers classes in ESL, GED, and Citizenship preparation as well as tutoring in reading at all levels. We also operate a Children’s Cultural Enrichment Center at another parish in the city where we prepare children for reading readiness in English when they begin attending elementary school.



The needs of the people of God continue to grow, and the congregation is always seeking new members to creatively meet these needs with the resources available to us. Serving immigrants and the displaced persons in our society remains a priority, both as a call from Pope Francis as he leads the Church in this new millennium, and a call that we hold in our hearts from our revered foundress, Mother Veronica.



Women Of Haiti - Marginalized But Powerful

*Sister Mary Inga Borko and Sister Marilyn Marie Minter
Congregation of the Sisters of St. Felix of Cantalice, Haiti
Original language: English*

The Felician Sisters, Congregation of the Sisters of St. Felix of Cantalice began their ministry in Haiti soon after Haiti experienced its terrible earthquake. Sister Mary Inga Borko and Sister Marilyn Marie Minter of the Our Lady of Hope Province in North America were the two sisters that were sent there to begin their ministry with the Haitian people. Here are some comments about a few of the people that they work with.



Haiti is a male-dominated society. It is a culture in which women are suppressed, especially those who live in poverty. The following information that we share is based on a lived experience of the past four years, as we have lived and ministered among the poor in **Jacmel**, Haiti. We witness

the cycle of poverty that these women grow up in and out of which they cannot seem to escape. In the family where there are girls and boys, the boys are sent to school first; often they are the only ones. In the poor areas known to us about 80 percent of women are illiterate. Many of them carry in their hearts the desire, even in their old age, to learn to read and write. A man would not think of entering the kitchen area, nor even carry a large cooking pot for his wife or old mother, even though he is the one eating first from the pot. When a teenage girl or young woman gets pregnant out of wedlock, she carries all the responsibilities and consequences alone. We would like to share some stories of the women with whom we walk in relationship.



Beverly is 20 years old. She was lucky to be able to go to school. A boy in her class got very friendly with her, and she ended up pregnant. He wanted her to have an abortion because he did not want this to affect his education. Beverly refused this choice because she cherished the life of her child. Her mother rejected her and made her sleep on the floor because she was an embarrassment to her family. The Church would not allow her to receive the sacraments nor proclaim the Word of God. Beverly came to daily Mass in our chapel while pregnant. She wanted to participate fully, and we invited her to experience the Sacrament of Reconciliation. We never realized that this would be a problem but, when Beverly did go to confession, the priest refused her absolution because she was pregnant outside of marriage. Beverly was not allowed to continue her studies; the school rejected her. The young man did not take any responsibility. He wanted nothing to do with her, and he continued his schooling and his "normal" life. He could also have the freedom to go to Church and to receive the sacraments without being ostracized. Yet, Beverly showed her inner power by surviving all of this. She gave birth to a beautiful baby girl and is a loving mother. Now she helps and teaches other young mothers to care for their babies. Beverly helps serve in our Mother Angela Kitchen, feeding the children. She also makes Mother Angela Chaplets, for which she gets some money to support her child. Beverly never gave up learning; she continued her studies in her home, grateful for her friends who shared school work with her. In June,



Beverly went to **Port au Prince** to take the national exam and is now awaiting her results. She dreams one day to become a medical doctor.

Vilcia is a strong, self-motivated woman. She will always find work to support her family. Vilcia has a few jobs washing clothes, cleaning homes, and working in gardens. She is a mother of two children-- a girl and a boy. Vilcia was a single mother from the beginning. She loves her children and wants them to have a good education. She cannot read or write but desires to learn. For the past two years, Vilcia has been participating in our program of teaching women how to read and write. She is also responsible for the care of her mother and helps three of her adult brothers. Vilcia's children participate in our sacramental program and have received Baptism and Communion. Vilcia is baptized but desires to receive Communion. She now participates in our adult program. She became a *Water Women*, a program we began three years ago, where a woman is given a filter and bucket to provide clean water for herself and three other families. Many lives depend on this one woman.



Marginalized, but powerful, is Francois. She is the single mother of three young boys. She has a passion to make sure her sons get a good education that they may enter the future prepared. When we first met Francois, she was living in a small tin shack across the street from us in a banana garden that belonged to someone else. At that time her children were malnourished, especially the youngest. His hair was orange and his belly extended. The children were running around naked, and we realized they did not have clothes. Even though the children were often hungry, she managed to send her two little boys to school. Every afternoon, she would be under a tree, using an old piece of slate to teach her children. One evening, Francois almost lost her life when the father of two of her boys came into the garden and started to beat her, demanding she leave the property. She refused because she had nowhere to go with her children. It was at this time she needed our help to find her a home in a new location. Now they live in another area of Jacmel in a rented one-room space. Francois takes great care of her boys. They are always clean, and her concern for their education continues as she seeks extra help for them after school in order for them to succeed in school.

These are only three young women among the many other marginalized but powerful women in our community in Jacmel, Haiti. They help us not to get discouraged when working with other young women who seem to have lost their way or have not yet found it. There are women who often were rejected in their childhood and do not know what it means to be loved; women who hunger for love and seek it in wrong places. Strong women like Beverly, Vilcia, and Francois who have tasted poverty in a variety of ways, but were able to overcome it, are signs of hope for young girls and for us all.

"His mercy is from age to age to those who fear him. He has shown might with his arm, dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart. He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones but lifted up the lowly." Luke 1:50-52



Responding in the Margins of Society

Script: From the Constitutions of the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity,

Manitowoc, WI, U.S.A.

Language: English

Photos: Submitted by Community Members

Format: Sister Martin Flavin, O.S.F.

Design: Sister Mariella Erdmann, O.S.F.

Our Congregation of Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity is rooted in the call of God to live in a more intense way our baptismal consecration. Our foundresses embraced the Franciscan heritage which we gratefully treasure. Like them, we have answered the call to live the Gospel as Francis did in fraternity, total self-emptying, joy and peace. We, too, let Francis' humility and simplicity, his love for God and neighbor, his reverence for created things, his spirit of poverty and prayer, his esteem for work permeate our lives.



Franciscan charism into the world

Submitted by:

Carmen Barsody, OSF

Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, MN

At this time in history when there are fewer women expressing interest in joining us in our vowed religious life we are not disheartened. We recognize that the commitment to live our Gospel values in the world never have been exclusive to one lifestyle. In the past 30+ years our vowed community has been strengthened and enlivened by a committed relationship with more than 300 Associates, men and women living in the U.S., Colombia, Ecuador Mexico and Nicaragua. As a community of Sisters and Associates we find hope in our future by working to extend our Franciscan charism into the world. We are creating pathways for people of different faiths, ages and genders to live and serve together as a community.



We have many vital ministries where we are committed to serve with people living in the margins. Some of them include,

Faithful Fools Street Ministry in San Francisco, CA where our Sisters and Associates work in an impoverished area of the city bringing people together from all walks of life, homed and homeless, to work for personal and social change.

In **Mexico** our Sisters serve within the parish of San Rafael in Nuevo Leon, a poor, rural area. The Sister's home is also a residence for up to 20 high school girls from poor families allowing them to attend high school and receive education in life skills, build self-esteem, and help them see their potential as young women.

In **Cumbaya, Ecuador** Casa Hermano Sol y Hermana Luna is the education center that trains missionaries in spiritual direction and the development of Base Church Communities. In **Nicaragua** Franciscan Associates created a primary school that serves 236 children from pre-school to 6th grade. The school makes it possible for students to study within their neighborhood. Also in Nicaragua Associates take the leadership in organizing people to learn about consumer rights and critical issues, like privatization of water, consumer rights and domestic violence.

In the inner-city of **Minneapolis, MN** we have a Franciscan Sabbath House. It provides a space for quiet and renewal through prayer, reading, healing presence of plants and nurturing food. In **St. Cloud, MN** our Franciscan Community Volunteer program for young adults is grounded in Service, Community and Spirituality. The volunteers serve men, women and children who are poor through various social service agencies. In **Little Falls, MN** our Franciscan Music Center housed in our Motherhouse offers music lessons to over 500 students from one of the most impoverished counties of MN. It's U Rock program is free to youth from 5th to 12th grade with a special focus on helping them "turn to music" rather than violence as they encounter difficult issues faced by young people today.

Inside of each of these ministries, and many more where groups of Sisters and Associates and individuals are doing extraordinary work person-by-person, act-by-act, is a great commitment grounded in our Franciscan values. We are doing what is ours to do to live the Gospel joyfully and courageously in continual conversion in the margins and mainstreams of our world.



To Live the Gospel in an Intercultural Way

Submitted by: Molly LIM, fmm

Original Language: English

Country: Kenya

During the recent bereavement of my dad, I experienced the amazing support and prayers from sisters, priests, friends, acquaintances, colleagues from Kakuma mission here, from sisters in Nairobi, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Europe and from my home country in Singapore / Malaysia. The funeral rituals for my dad consisted of masses in our catholic churches, sisters' prayer at the wake, rosaries and divine office for the dead, Methodist Christian prayers, chanting by Buddhist monks, Taoists' offerings and praying with joss sticks, band music and Silent Presence.

All these different expressions of prayers are in some ways depicting our extended family spirit and universal mission of love. There is also the desire by each one of my family members to be open, accommodating, respectful, participative and cooperative.

My dad was not a baptized catholic, but he lived the truth in his life. Dad radiated God's care, peace, gentleness, understanding, goodness, humility and spirit of sacrifice in his being and sharing.

On reflection, I felt that God is the one who made it possible for my family members to experience ecumenical, intercultural and inter-religious prayers possible through the life and death of my dad. I am deeply grateful as I also see the gospel of love being lived in an intercultural way.

Mission in Kakuma also gives me many opportunities to recognize God's presence in the local Turkana people, in the refugees from Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Burundi and also in the students who comes from different localities. The Joy of the Gospel is well expressed in the Turkanas when they really celebrate the Eucharist with their voices, gestures and dances.

I greatly appreciate their simplicity of life, as I feel that they are the ones who use the least resources of the earth but they are bearing the consequences of climatic change, lack of resources and water. They seem quite resigned, I have yet to hear them complaining about their lack of basic necessities. When it rains, the refugees' shelters get flooded and they take up this challenge with a smile. They are able to make time for themselves, for their families, for their friends and for God. As for the students at St. Clare Training Centre, sharing life with them, learning their gestures for greeting, their culture, their behavior, their attitudes and becoming a friend to them is something important and helpful to me and to them.



Sr. Molly with Turkana lady at an outstation



Sr. Molly with a handicap lady, Christine and her family with few neighbours

Living the gospel in intercultural way is challenging and also meaningful in the apostolate, in the community (we are 5 from different countries and in 3 continents) and with the people in Kakuma, Kenya.