

**MISSIONARY FAMILIES OF CHRIST INDIA NEWSLETTER**  
(FORMERLY KNOWN AS COUPLES FOR CHRIST INDIA)



# FEMININITY IN SERVICE

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# GO BEYOND

We have experienced and do accept that we are blessed tremendously by our God, especially as we are striving to live our lives in Him and as we serve Him, particularly with regard to His divine mission for our community.

At the same time, we do know that there have been a lot of challenges, heartbreaks, obstacles, oppression, suffering and pain. Even these are part of the blessings!

And so for our theme for the year June 2022 to May 2023, in the face of an ongoing pandemic and a world still spiraling into deeper darkness and sin, we proclaim to the world that we will GO BEYOND.

We must be constantly focused on Jesus, 24/7, we must remain in him, in every circumstance of our lives. Jesus is our all. And so we have taken the following as our theme verse: "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

God's goodness and desire for our eternal life are beyond bounds. Our positive responses are beyond what our circumstances would dictate, as we look to the Lord. Always. Without ceasing. In all circumstances.

"Go Beyond" also points to our determination to do God's work, despite any obstacles, of which there are many. We will not be deterred by the waves of diseases, by our physical movements being hindered, by mission travel curtailed. We can and will still do our work of evangelization, worldwide. To "go beyond" is to be beyond borders, as we do our e-vangelization.

Further, "Go Beyond" stresses our continuing understanding of lay empowerment, and how God desires to use laypeople in furthering His work, how in fact God depends on lay people to do so. The harvest is rich but the laborers are few. We are not bound by old ways of thinking about the role of the laity. We are not just to animate the temporal order but are to fully participate in the ministry of Jesus as priest, prophet and king. We are to actively engage in the spiritual life of our Church, and look to helping restore our Church to missionary mode. We are to defend faith, family and life against the enemy that is already within.

There is much work to be done. We are blessed and privileged to be called by God to do His work. In our life in Him, we are truly blessed as we Go Beyond!



**COUNTRY SERVANT - JIMMY XAVIER**



### FULFILLING GOD'S PLAN AT ANY STAGE OF YOUR LIFE

Living in a valley of tears, and especially today that there is massive darkness and evil in the world, it is important to know that God has a plan for each of us. God had assured Israel through the prophet Jeremiah that He knew well His plans for them, which were plans not for woe but for a future full of hope. We today are God's chosen people, formed by the blood of the Lamb and empowered by the Holy Spirit. God certainly has the best plan for us.

The fullness of God's plan is fulfilled only at the end of time, when we enter into our eternal reward. In the meantime, still in this world as pilgrims, we are encouraged and propelled by looking to God's plan, but have to struggle through life in a fallen world. But wait. That is part of God's plan as well, that is, the challenges, trials, suffering and pain. God allows these to come into our lives, intended for many good things and the development of virtues. When we suffer for the cause of Christ, that is blessing. When we are able to pray without ceasing, to give thanks in all circumstances, and to rejoice always, that is blessing. When we recognize that suffering in and for Christ is our own privileged participation in his cross, that is blessing.

In our lives there will be ups and downs. There will be times of joy and of sorrow. Those in the world look only to the so-called positives, and these are what they consider as blessings. But those in Christ will recognize that the so-called negatives may also be the best positives. When we overcome temptations and trials with God's help, we become stronger. When we have our pesky unwanted pains, like Paul's thorn in the flesh, these can keep us from

sinful pride. When we are tested through fire, we will be purified as gold, bringing out the genuineness of our faith. When we are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, blessed are we and the Kingdom of Heaven is ours.

So what afflicts or troubles you? You may be unmarried and are ostracized as such, and you wonder about God's purpose for your life. You may be widowed and struggle with managing your family, as you wonder why you may not be enjoying a normal and fulfilling family life. But you must know that God in fact has a preferential love for the marginalized, for the least, for the lost, for those who seem last in society. Blessed indeed are those who are weeping, who are excluded and insulted. The Kingdom of God is yours! In the Lord you are first.

God has a wonderful plan for you. You may already be living it out but not just recognizing it. So first, be prayerful, thankful and joyful. In whatever circumstance. Why? Because God loves you and prefers you. Second, live a life of righteousness, striving to be holy as God is holy. Third, continue to seek God's will, and with what God reveals to you, align yourself with His will. Do not get God to align to your will, but you align to His.

Finally, know that you are not alone. The community is there for you. Get advice, pastoral inputs, guidance, knowledge, assistance as community is able, pastoral support of brethren. Be Faithful to God through your covenant. Serve the Lord as you are able.

**SERVANT GENERAL - FRANK PADILLA**



**"You can, you must try to seek God in every human life. Although the life of a person is a land full of thorns and weeds, there is always a space in which the good seed can grow. You have to trust God."**

**POPE FRANCIS**

# HISTORY OF THE HANDMAIDS

Handmaids was originally called WOMEN FOR CHRIST in Goa.

The Women for Christ in Goa began around 1992-93, when we, in Vasco, felt the need to support women in a variety of circumstances.

Basically widows who were raising children alone were facing varied difficulties and needed support in Christian living, as well as in raising their children in a Christian environment.

This support was then extended to women in other situations, too, those whose husbands were abroad, those separated for any other reason, those whose husbands could never make it to meetings due to shift work, business management, etc.

These Women got inputs at the main meetings under the CFC umbrella body, just like the Children, Youth, Young Adults and Widowers. The support for each of these groupings came in their regular weekly Household meetings, where they learnt to apply the teachings to their specific circumstances, and grow in the character of Christ, and Mama Mary.



The Women bonded together among themselves and other women in the community, through activities held in the early afternoons, in each other's homes. Here is where we prayed, made sweets, savouries, and pickled jams and snacks, in preparation for the upcoming Chapter/ All Goa

meetings, where these were served or sold, to meet the needs of the community, or those of the widows themselves.

In those days, we never bought snacks to serve at meetings, but we made them together. The surplus were sold within the community to raise funds to help the needy.

The Women for Christ helped out at all the Children, Youth and Young Adult activities, where their own children and those of others were being cared for and nurtured, spiritually, emotionally, and physically.

The women used their talents for God's glory in numerous ways. They opened their homes and made themselves available to serve other women and other young people without any inhibitions. It helped women trust each other with their deepest secrets and gave them support and guidance to face their day to day challenges with God's grace.

The CFC community grew in a wholesome manner, and was recognised in the Parish and the Diocese as a harbour for those in trouble and looking for sound Christian support.

**Maria Corriea**  
**MFC Couples Goa**



# HEART OF LIGHT

This year's pioneering MFC's Virtual Handmaids India Conference 2021 was truly a special one and was indeed a great success with a beautiful theme - "HEART OF LIGHT".

It gave us an opportunity during this pandemic to come together from different states in greater numbers, creating a cordial atmosphere under one roof in the Spirit, bound together by love.

We began with Fr. Johnson celebrating the Mass. In his homily, he elaborated on the theme and stressed on Three aspects of Light namely

- 1) Light is becoming another Christ
- 2) Light helps us to see things
- 3) Light should shine for God's Glory. He said that we should reflect the light of God and become the cause for others to give glory to God.



Our emcees - Venetia & Varenka (V2) - were outstanding and kept up the tempo of the program making the event interesting and lively. We enjoyed the dances painstakingly put up by our Sisters from Goa, Bangalore, Pune & Mumbai. A lot of effort and time went into it – all for the glory of God.

We had competitions of Cooking, Painting, Craft, Photograph and Singing that were preorganized. Many of our Sisters participated. The winners were announced by our emcees. Congrats to the winners and participants!



Through the day we had Three sessions by wonderful speakers who have greatly been admired for their good work and passion. The topics chosen were relatable and meaningful, giving us a deep insight on how to lead better lives.

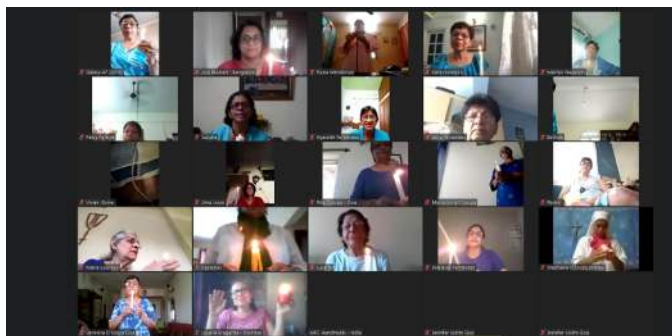
Session I, given by Sister Stephanie D'Souza was very inspiring. She broke down the word "SHINE" - Serenity, Hope, Inspiration, New Identity & Everlasting Love - relating it with the life of St. Paul and the Samaritan women from the Bible. At the end of her talk, she left us to ponder on a question – where are we on our journey with the Lord?

The second session, "STAY IN LOVE" was remarkably explained by Sister Kim Xavier with a down to earth and refreshing point of view, lighting a spark in our thoughts. She says it is when we encounter the Lord that our journey begins; when we give ourselves entirely to Him. It's a journey of Hearts. Our life will be filled with difficulties, derailments, detours, and darkness, and God allows all of it to happen, but we should carry every burden to the Lord and He will help us work through that darkness, because His Grace is sufficient for us when we are rooted in Him.

People should see our lives, our weaknesses and through this see God's power & glory. She emphasized on the word "LIGHT" explaining how we can stay in love with the Lord. Live an authentic

life, initiate relationships, grow in humility & gratitude, heed God's command, and tune your heart to God's Heart. She spoke of Mary Magdalene's life who was a real and true disciple of our Lord.

The last session "SHINE IN LOVE" was a continuation of Sister Kim's talk, where Sister Veena Rodricks told us that the light of Christ is to be shared with everyone. We are all gifted to love and give. She made us introspect the gifts/talents God has given us and how we can use them to bring light to the people around us. It's not only our talents, but our wounds, too, that can uplift others who are distressed. The greater your darkness, the brighter your light will shine. We have to grab opportunities given to us to minister Jesus to others.



We can journey through this with a travelling companion or choose Mary & St. Joseph for companionship. We need to lead exemplary lives by being kind, caring, loving, faithful, giving and imparting blessings, goodness and happiness to all those we meet.

Toward the end of the day, we had a devout Adoration led by Sister Sonia along with the Music Ministry. This was followed by a Praise Fest with upbeat hymns which kept everyone smiling and their feet tapping.

On a closing note, we had our Country Servant, Jimmy Xavier, who was totally in awe of the program organized. He encouraged everyone to take this light forward and shine, making yourself

available & significant wherever you are in His Light.

The Grand Finale was a dance by Jacinta Shabong to the song "Jump into the Light" asking us to leave our darkness behind and "Jump into the Light".

A BIG 'thank you' to the organising team who effectively contributed to making this event a smooth flowing, Spirit filled day.

**MFC Handmaids  
Aquilla Fernandes ,Goa**

**Start being brave about everything. Drive out darkness and spread light. Don't look at your weaknesses. Realise instead that in Christ crucified, you can do everything.**

**Saint Catherine of Siena**



My life has been transformed ever since I have joined MFC. My spiritual walk with the Lord is on a positive progress from dry land to a land full of pastures. I am seeing changes within my family, my spouse, children, and experiencing His Grace and mercy on us. Thanks to our weekly meetings, biweekly and monthly engagements that are enriching and mind changing experiences.



**Deepa Vincent, Bangalore**



First of all, I never made the time to even open the Bible and read. I used to read the daily readings and that was all. Sunday Mass was compulsory. But ever since I joined MFC Handmaids, I have really changed into a new person. Every morning I say my prayers.

As a family, we say our daily Rosary followed by the Divine Mercy. God has blessed us abundantly. Thank you, Jesus and Mother Mary.

**Nicaela Menezes(Nikk), Mumbai**

It's been a complete blessing to have joined the MFC community; and thereby being part of the Handmaids Group, since 2017. The Handmaids group has given me a larger perspective on improving our life and transforming ourselves. By committing every aspect of ourselves and our life to the perfect teachings of JESUS CHRIST we can experience true freedom and happiness.



**Stella Alex, Pune**



When I first joined the Handmaids it was a learning experience to interact with so many sisters. Gradually, I got more comfortable. In addition, I needed to deal with pent up

anger and learnt to handle it with Sister Usha's forgiveness prayer. I received encouragement and support over the years. Spiritually, when I slackened I would be drawn back by reminders from my Sisters to stay close to God. I've also made new friends, with whom we can share our lives and we are there for each other in our joys and sorrows.

**Lalita Victor, Panaji**

I have been in the MFC Handmaids for more than 10 yrs. With my spouse not with me my household members support and help me, who are ever willing to reach out. The weekly household meetings taught me to give first priority to God and this brought me into a new relationship with Him, by keeping my commitment to a personal prayer, and Bible reading along with a reflection. Many of my members were facing the same problems like me as their spouses, too, were not with them. So we used to share our problems and many times it comforted me. Whenever we had a problem at home I used to share it with my household leader who gave me inputs to deal with it. My members were my Prayer Warriors and we all chipped in to pray for one another for their needs, especially fasting or saying intercessory prayers for them.



On many occasions, we used to do a chain prayer where every hour we would spend time with the Lord lifting up the intentions. MFC Handmaids has made me more community oriented.

**Marcia Dsouza, Margao**

# GROWING IN GRACE

**One of our Handmaids shares her experience of being part of the handmaids section and how it has helped, shaped her spiritual journey.**

### **Who are the women in the Bible/ Catholic faith who are role models for you in this ministry?**

My role model is surely Mama Mary. She has always been my comfort, especially during my low and tough days. Her willingness to just trust God and say 'yes', is what inspires me and helps me to put my trust in God. Apart from Mama Mary, I would have to say Saint Veronica Giuliani. She is an inspiration through her life and the persecution and struggles she went through, but all with the perseverance and faith in God.

### **How being in the Handmaids ministry is helping you in your walk with God?**

Being a part of the MFC Handmaids has helped me grow deeper in my faith. I'm able to share my life with like-minded and relatable Women of God, and this has helped me overcome the struggles faced at this age and time of my life. It's the loving friendship and sisterhood within the Handmaids that's helped me grow with a firmer and grounded formation.

### **How can this ministry help people at this stage of life?**

Very often we come across people who can't really understand or get our struggles. People who can't really relate, and that proves difficult in our lives to a more happy and grateful life. However, through the Handmaids, you'll find like-minded women who are in their late 30s and above who've been through similar struggles and fears, and can walk with you, providing the right guidance, support and encouragement.

### **How can this ministry contribute to the church?**

Ecclesiastes 4:10 says, "If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble."

This ministry helps toward this promise, among others. It helps us to be the workers in God's vineyard, to bring more souls closer to Him.

### **What are the challenges people at this stage face?**

As you grow older, thoughts of not being married, will I be able to conceive, how do I adjust and progress at work, dealing with the physical body changes are just some of the challenges faced as you grow into your late 30s and ahead. And being among women who may have already been there, helps and reassures that the mountain we may see before us isn't as big as we imagined, but rather just an anthill that we need to climb leaning on God and the love of the Sisterhood we share with each other.

### **How is your prayer life structured (personal and communal)?**

Personal prayertime is of the utmost importance and once again, through the personal testimonials heard through the women in Handmaids it testifies to how much more powerful prayer is and it just encourages me to keep at it. I always start my day with personal prayer, and on days I'm unable to spend that time in prayer, there's a feeling as though something is missing through that day. So I end my day with Scripture reading.

**Lisa Maskell**  
**MFC Handmaids, South Bangalore**





# TRAINING & EVANGELIZATION



## National Kids Conference

More than 300 kids from India attended the conference online from the 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> of October, 2021.



## LIVE PURE® Live Pure

Over 120 participants attended the 12th Annual SFS Youth Retreat conducted online from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> of November in Delhi.



## No One In Need

Kindness kits were distributed to almost 200 families across 9 parishes of the Diocese of Mangalore.



## Outreach program

7 singles organized an outreach program to a girls Orphanage-Christabelle,s Trust, Paara, Goa on the 19<sup>th</sup> of December.



## L.I.G.H.T.

An Online CLS was conducted for 29 Singles on the 25<sup>th</sup> of January in Mapusa, Goa.



## MFC Servants Training

60 participants attended the training conducted online for the Singles on the 12<sup>th</sup> ad 13<sup>th</sup> of February.

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# TRAINING & EVANGELIZATION

## Prayer for Missionaries

Heavenly Father, we lift up to you all missionaries working in Your vineyard. Lord, you have called them away from home to follow You to fulfil Your will in their lives and in the lives of those they come in contact with.

Father, we ask you to protect them and keep them safe. We pray that all those whom they reach out to may be open and willing to receive the beautiful and life-altering truth of Your Son, Jesus Christ. We pray for all those missionaries who feel discouraged. Comfort them with your assurance that their labour is not in vain.

We pray for missionaries rendering their tireless services during the COVID-19 pandemic. Help them act with your wisdom and guidance during these times. Grant them good health. Father, as many are quarantined, we pray that outreach via the internet or other forms of communication may be all the more powerful. Help them to connect even when not in person and to truly represent You well during these tense days, so that they may bring your message of joy, love and peace to everyone. Amen



### Live The Word

25 participants attended the study conducted for the members of Pilerne Parish at St. John de Baptist church, Goa on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March.



### Christian Life Seminar

21 couples attended the program conducted on the 4<sup>th</sup> of March at Jeppu Church, Mangalore.



### Christian Life Seminar

18 couples attended the program conducted on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March at Kulshekar Church, Mangalore.



### Live Christ Share Christ

A program was conducted for about 100 plus families at St. Anthony's Parish – Gangapuram on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> of March.



### Live Christ Share Christ

About 200+ people participated in this retreat conducted for Randham Parish, Sennathur and Ladapaddi Parish on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of March.



### Live Christ Share Christ

About 200+ people participated in this retreat conducted for Sacred Heart Parish, Melpudhupakam on the 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> of March..

# TRAINING & EVANGELIZATION



## Outreach program

12 singles organized an outreach program to an old age home, Ae De Deus, Saligao, Goa on the 13<sup>th</sup> of March.



## Program for Married couples

Couples of Holy Family Church, Omzoor were addressed on Couples day on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March.



## LIVE PURE® Live Pure - Truth Unveiled

40 participants attended the program conducted by MFC Youth Mumbai on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> of April.



## Faithful and Fearless

A program for married men was conducted for 38 participants on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April at Don Bosco Provincial, Bangalore.



## Chosen and Cherished

A program for married women was conducted for 40 participants on the 30<sup>th</sup> of April at Don Bosco Provincial, Bangalore.



## Youth Pasch

8 participants attended the Easter program conducted for young adults and working youth from the 13<sup>th</sup> of April to 17<sup>th</sup> April, 2022 at Don Bosco Youth Center, Pune.

## LIVE CHRIST SHARE CHRIST

**A Lay Response to the Call of Nw Evangelization.**

**It is a movement for evangelization and renewal based in the parish and workplace.**

**This work is FOR, OF, and BY the parish. It does not compete with but complements the existing Church groups or ministries.**

**It aims to re-evangelize the participants and encourage them to share Christ by being involved in their parish, be members of the various ministries or organizations in the Parish and become active evangelizers.**

**The 5 Pillar Programs: Live Pure- Chastity program for the youth.**

**Live the Word: Liturgical Bible study.**

**Live Life: Defends faith, family and life.**

**Live Full: Work with the Poor**

**Live the Faith: Catechesis**

# TRAINING & EVANGELIZATION

## CONSECRATION TO OUR LADY OF VICTORY



O Blessed Virgin Mary, you with your Son Jesus crushed the head of the serpent.

In the spiritual war that continues to rage in the heavens and on earth, you have already won the victory.

Your holy warriors stand before you, dear Mother Mary.

We consecrate ourselves to the cause of your Son Jesus, the Redeemer of the world,

and to you as his Co-Redemptrix. We dedicate ourselves to the task of winning souls for the Kingdom.

We commit to battle against all evil forces.

Cover us with your mantle of protection as you send us forth under your banner. Amen.

Mary, Star of the New Evangelization, pray for us.



### Grace and Glow

39 women from different chapters of MFC Goa attended the event conducted on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April.



### Liturgical Bible Study

25 participants attended the study conducted for the Margao chapter members at Pillar House, Margao, Goa on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May.



### Liturgical Bible Study

15 participants attended the study conducted for the Mapusa Singles on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May at St. Jerome's Church, Goa.



### Liturgical Bible Study

35 participants attended the study conducted for the members of Porvorim chapter, Goa on the 6<sup>th</sup> of May at Holy Cross Chapel, Goa.



### Restored

28 youth attended the camp conducted from the 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> of May at Shanti Nilaya Benedictine monastery, Bangalore.



### Campus retreat

200 children attended the retreat on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of May at St. Peter School, B.C road, Jammu.



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