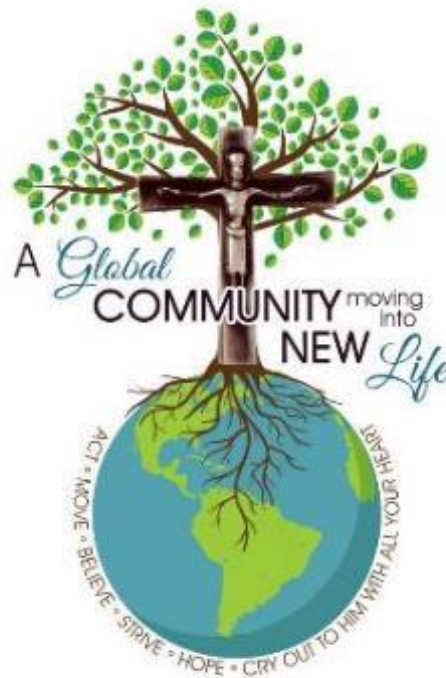


Inter – Ursuline



January – April 2024

Austria	
European experience in Czecho-Moravia	1
France/Belgium/Spain	
World Youth Days	2
France/Belgium/Spain	
Spiritual stroll in the heart of creation	6
Slovakia	
Ursuline Youth Slovakian group in the WYD	8
Kenya	
Immersion experience	11
Greece	
A Greece of many faces	13
Australia	
A referendum and its context	18
Next Inter-Ursuline Bulletin	20

*Bulletin of the Ursulines
of the Roman Union
Via Nomentana, 236
00162 Roma
TEL 06-86-22-181*

*Website:
ursulines-roman-union.org*

Austria

EUROPEAN EXPERIENCE IN CZECHO-MORAVIA

Sr. Christiane Cusin, OSU, shared her European experience from the 1st October 2022 to 17th April 2023, in the Province of Czecho-Moravia

Many thanks to the Sisters in the Czech Republic!

A year ago today, I travelled by train to the Czech province for a six-month European experience.

To the province, where I was allowed to spend part of my school sabbatical.

For the first three weeks, I lived with Sister Klára and Sister Bernadetta in a terraced house in the suburbs of the city of Olomouc. They not only spoilt me with pilgrimages, but also with German lessons at our school.



I was then able to experience this warm atmosphere also in Prague. On Mondays, the sisters had morning prayers at school, which could be heard throughout the school through the loudspeaker. They were the "voices from heaven"!



Sr Anděla, Sr Adeodata, Sr Magdalena, Sr Benedikta and Sr Alžběta welcomed me to this truly "Golden City" which enchanted me.

After ten days, I went to the convent for which I had in fact signed on. To Jiřetín!

The 9 sisters - Sr. Perpetua, Sr. Maristella, Sr. Marie, Sr. Nives, Sr. Consolata, (over 90), Andrea, Jana, Pavla and



Katarina welcomed me warmly, with one big worry: how will we communicate? And it went better than expected: with the heart!

For these sisters, old age with all its infirmities is no obstacle to praying the entire breviary together. Not only Lauds and Vespers, but also all the Hours and the Rosary. And every day they have their recreation after lunch and dinner. We would say: old-fashioned! But for me it was a revitalisation on all levels.

They help each other in living, loving and forgiving! They truly live the INSIEME!



Mrs Nadiya and Mrs Oksana, who are Ukrainians, take turns serving and doing everything that the sisters cannot do themselves. They are a great help to them.

The sisters are happy that Fr Pavel Koudelka, SJ celebrates Mass every day and that Fr Antonin stands in for him. The many spontaneous visits from priests and friends and the personal letters from Bishop J. Baxant show how much the sisters are appreciated.

I am grateful to each one of them for every day that I was able to experience with them. But especially to Sr Marie-Anna, the provincial at that time, who made all this possible for me and happily brought me back to Salzburg in her car.

IT'S GREAT THAT YOU ARE THERE! GRATEFULLY UNITED IN PRAYER!

France/Belgium/Spain

WORLD YOUTH DAYS WITH THE STUDENT PARISH IN TOULOUSE

Sr Sara Varret, osu, from the province of France/Belgium/Spain, shared her experience of WYD in Lisbon (Portugal).

Hello everyone! As some of you have asked me to, I'm going to share with you a little of what we experienced at WYD with the diocese of Toulouse.



gymnasium...).

For the first week, we were already many hundreds, including young people from the student parish and groups from other parishes. We were hosted by the diocese of Coimbra, and after our arrival and visit in Mealhada, we were split between the towns of Luso and Pampilhosa for accommodation. We were truly touched by the generosity and the kindness of the host families (for those who were lucky enough not to sleep in a



I was staying with three girls from my group (cf. photo) at the house of a grandmother who left us the whole house! She didn't speak a word of French, but during the family meal she invited her grandson so that he could speak English with us.



In Luso, the people invited us to discover their heritage, in particular taking us on a tour of the Bussaco site, with its magnificent palace (formerly a monastery) and a lush forest (cf. photo).

We took part in local services such as cleaning up the forest and other services for the parish and town (putting up a notice board in the parish halls (cf. photo), painting public benches, collecting rubbish, etc...).

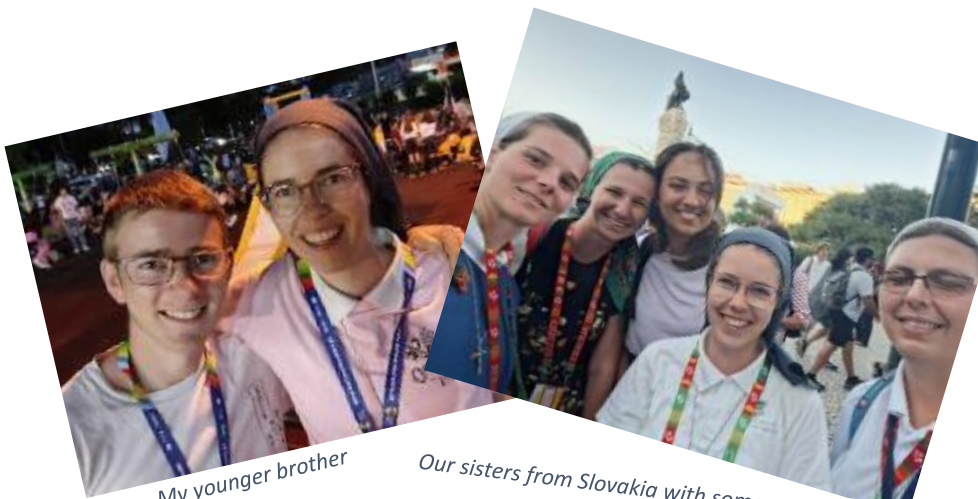


Each day we had prayer times offered to the young people, mass and a spiritual time together called "paso", which means "step" in Portuguese. We also had the opportunity to meditate on the rosary with those who wished to do so.

At the end of this wonderful week, we made a quick stopover in Fatima (cf. photo) before heading on to Lisbon.

During this first week, we were already able to appreciate the work of many of the volunteers on duty. They helped us to make the most of this exceptional moment.

The WYDs are also a time for meeting new people and getting to know each other again. In addition to the many young people from the Serviam and Merici hostels (from France), we were able to meet up with family and other acquaintances, including one of Sr Claire-Marie Vincent's students and some sisters from Slovakia.

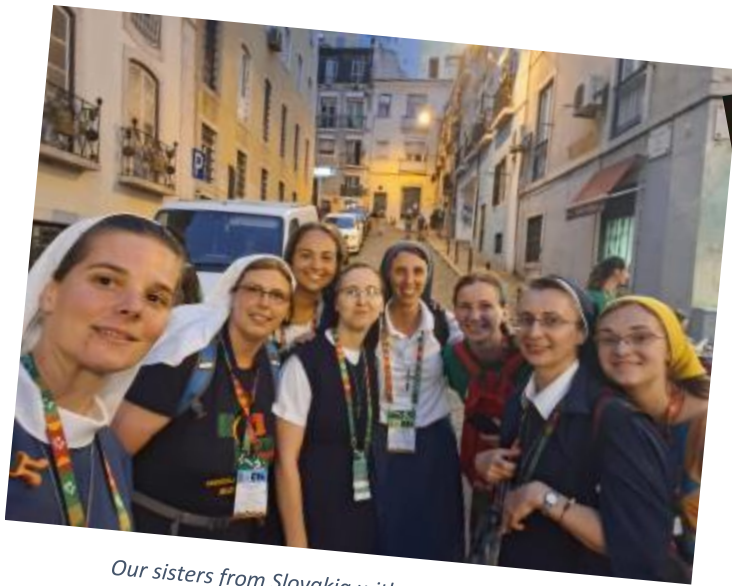


My younger brother

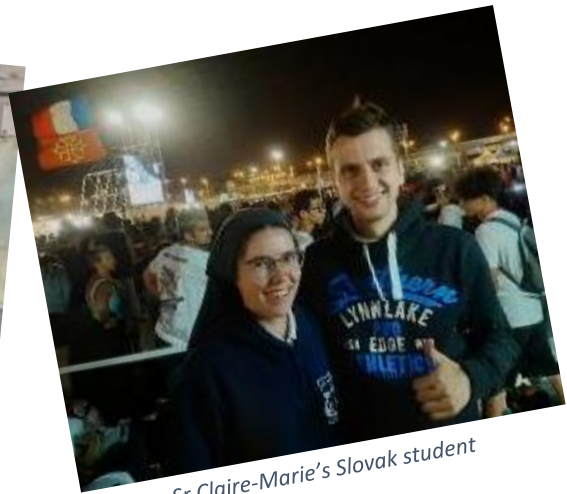
Our sisters from Slovakia with some young people



A young Polish woman from Wrocław, proud of her Serviam logo



Our sisters from Slovakia with some young people



Sr Claire-Marie's Slovak student

During the week in Lisbon, Sr Agnès-Marie Duchesne and I, along with another religious, were lucky enough to stay with the Sisters of Charity. Once again we avoided the gymnasium!

In the morning we had catechetical workshops in French with the dioceses of Toulouse and Évreux and a group from Madagascar. In the afternoon, we took part in the joint programme with young people of all nationalities! As it is often the case at the WYDs, the time spent travelling, walking and waiting was also an opportunity to meet and to exchange ideas.



We were able to appreciate the beauty of some of the monuments, and take time out from the crowds to pray, share and rest...



The key events were the arrival of the Pope for the opening Mass (cf. photo), the Way of the Cross (in the same place) and the final weekend.

This final weekend was very hot and every opportunity was taken to find shelter from the sun: covers, floor mats (cf. photo), dustbins...

I really enjoyed sharing these two weeks with the diocese of Toulouse. I was able to experience the depth of the pastoral care offered to young people and the desire of these young people, whatever their origins. As my group was mainly composed of young people from the “Institut Catholique” in Toulouse (ICT), it also enabled me to lay some foundations for the university chaplaincy, in which I’ll be more involved when the new academic year starts.



Part of my group at the final weekend

On the way back to Toulouse, the stop in Spain was a good opportunity to review everything we had experienced over the past two weeks. There had been one particularly beautiful moment: various commitments were set out (service in the parish, in the chaplaincy, service to the poorest people, etc...) and, according to the call that each of us felt in our heart, we were each invited to stand up.

Thank you for your prayers!

France/Belgium/Spain

SPIRITUAL STROLL IN THE HEART OF CREATION

The Ursuline community in Malet, France, shared the experience of a spiritual walk to celebrate and find out more about Pope Francis' message for the Time of Creation. Article written by Sr Françoise Bonnaterre, osu.



As part of the **Time of Creation (1 September - 4 October 2023)**, a spiritual walk in the gardens of the Convent and the Meeting Space was offered to parishioners, pilgrims and the community with a view to discovering the message of Pope Francis written for this occasion and making some symbolic gestures of commitment.

"Let justice and peace flow like a river" Amos 5:24 was the theme for this month. So we focused on water.

After greeting the participants at the spring near the reception area, we began our journey by singing a song - Source of Hope - **"That in the beginning, God gave us creative water, the source of life"**. This is followed by a reading by two people from Genesis 2:4b



to 17. The local priest said a prayer, then after drawing water from the fountain, a



sister and two children set off with watering cans to water the albizia planted last year. The group followed them.

As we wandered through the gardens, we headed for a rather dry spot at the entrance to the inner courtyard, remembering, as the host reminded us, that **"very often we don't take care of this gift (water); we waste it, or worse, we trade in it"**. With Psalms 84 proclaimed by two voices, we were introduced to a penitential step supported by intentions interspersed with refrains: Kyrie eleison or Oh, blessed are you Lord, blessed are you for water! The sprinkling of the assembly with holy water concluded this part, reminding us of our baptism.





We set off again and gathered around the fountain in the inner courtyard, where **"Like the Samaritan woman, Jesus invites us to receive living water from Him, so that we too can become sources of justice and peace"**. The hymn "I have seen the living water" introduced the reading of John 4 (The Samaritan woman) by the priest, followed by a brief comment.

The two participants then offered a prayer of intercession for the care of our common home, in the words of Pope Francis, from whose message the moderator read out an extract:

"Like a river basin with its many tributaries,

large and small, the Church is a communion of countless local Churches, religious communities and associations that draw their nourishment from the same water. Each source makes its own unique and irreplaceable contribution, until they all flow into the vast ocean of God's merciful love". To give concrete expression to what Pope Francis is reminding us of, we were invited to take a walk: we split into three groups, each given a container of water, and we set off *along three different paths that led to the Sacred Heart*. It is the symbol of **"a synodal Church that lives communion in its diversity"**. The water carriers were invited to pour the contents of their jugs into a single basin. Following in their footsteps, we said the Our Father together, joining hands: *"Let us join hands and take courageous steps so that justice and peace can flow all over the Earth "* (message of Pope Francis).



The whole assembly moved towards *the entrance to the church*, where the priest, standing at the top of the steps, gave a solemn blessing and then *mandalas decorated* by sisters from the community and by pilgrims were distributed to each participant: an invitation to act with justice and peace in our daily lives, never forgetting the message of the Cross. We ended by singing a verse from "Source d'Espérance" (Source of Hope).

Slovakia

URSULINE YOUTH SLOVAKIAN GROUP AT WORLD YOUTH DAYS IN LISBON 2023

This article was written by the Sisters from Slovakia sharing their experience of the World Youth Days.

“Let the adventure begin” - These words describe perfectly our experience during WYD Lisbon 2023.

Our group, *Ursuline Youth Slovakia*, were approximately 47 pilgrims. Thanks to the support from our sisters and from donations, we were able to embark on this pilgrimage.



We set out on our journey on 23 July 2023, so that we could stay for 2 days in Madrid. We were accommodated in a school gym which belongs to *Colegio Stella Maris La Gavia*. It was great training for what was waiting for us later in Lisbon. We visited some tourist sites in Madrid, tasted Mexican cuisine, and experienced the power of prayer and community.

On July 25, we moved to *Codal* parish, *Vila Chã* in the *Vale de Cambra* in the diocese of *Porto* in Portugal. We were given a heart-warming welcome – on every church was a poster with the Slovak flag, Serviam emblem and a welcome in Slovak. After our welcome, the families we were staying with for the coming week, came to collect us. It was very emotional and beautiful to see the joy and generosity of these younger or older families, in which all of our concerns about language barriers disappeared.



We discovered the local culture, language, country, customs and, last but not least, the personal stories of the local people. We prayed and shared together in the program in the city of Porto. On Saturday, we met with all the young pilgrims at the common holy mass - foretaste of a great international experience.

On Sunday, we had a good time with families and parishioners. We celebrated holy mass in the shrine of St. Anthony, had a lunch together, and danced. After that, we moved to the church in Codal, where the procession to St. James took place. A brass band and local customs marked the occasion. On Monday, we finally had to say a final goodbye to our adoptive families who will remain in our hearts. They have been a great example of openness, generosity and hospitality. May our Lord be their reward.



On the way to Lisbon, we stopped at Fatima. We visited the house of Hyacinth and Francis, as well as Sister Lucy's house. At 15:00, we attended the international holy mass with tens of thousands of other young Catholics. Our Lisbon adventure began in the late evening.

Oh, what a surprise it was, when the volunteers told us: "You are going to stay in the mercado." We thought it was going to be some kind of supermarket (because of the root of the word mercado) and we were not far off the mark - it was indeed a market. However, this was only the first of many surprises. Certainly, nobody expected open air showers with a view of a basilica. We had to break many personal boundaries, but nothing discouraged us.

Seeing hundreds of thousands of young people from all over the world walking together to a common goal, singing, rejoicing together, on their knees praying, living in the presence of God, together with the Pope, was well worth it. We experienced the high Portuguese temperatures during the Slovak catechesis as well. These were very carefully prepared thanks to the Slovak team. We had the grace of seeing the Pope coming directly towards us twice – during the opening ceremony and the Way of the Cross.

Joy at seeing the Pope twice filled our hearts with new energy and reassured us that obstacles, too, have their meaning.

We completed our pilgrimage with the evening vigil and final holy mass after walking for more than 4 hours and covering more than 13 kilometres on foot. We would rather not mention the temperature because sometimes we thought it was more than we could bear. We were encouraged by the Pope's presence and his words: "Do not be afraid! Have courage!" We believe that this experience strengthened us physically, mentally, but mostly spiritually, and will serve as encouragement for our future lives.



Testimonies:

“When a friend of mine first invited me to go to WYD 2023, I refused. I am an introvert and I was scared of so many people. The turning point came in December when sister Jana Pavla mentioned that the Ursulines were also coming with other young people and they still had a few free places. I had to decide quickly because time and money were precious, and we wanted to get our flight tickets for the lowest price possible. After a few months of refusing, I suddenly decided to go. Something changed inside of me, and I somehow knew this was a good idea and that this should happen. “Aren’t you nervous? Aren’t you worried? What are your expectations?” I started questioning myself a few days before leaving. Despite almost always being in a huge crowd and being with the group all the time, where I knew nobody, I was very peaceful. I had no clue how things would turn out, but I let our Lord guide me. And the reality? It was beautiful, strong, mesmerizing,... and also difficult at times. We were tired, hungry, didn’t sleep well, and had to cope with all this. Precisely in these moments,

God held us by the hand and carried us through. By His mercy, we were able to manage a lot of stressful situations. The Pope also encouraged us not to be afraid, and to step out with courage. We can dream with God and do the impossible if we open our heart and let God do wonderful things. He will carry us when we are too tired to stand on our own.”

“It has been almost a week since we came home, but I still revisit all my memories of the WYD 2023. I feel great gratitude for this opportunity, for the fact that I could be present, and for everybody with us. And despite all the hardships, I feel it has made me a better person and has made me stronger.”



Kenya

IMMERSION EXPERIENCE

Sr Francisca Mulatya, OSU, from the Group of Kenya shared with us her experience of Immersion in the Province of France/Belgium/Spain before her Tertianship in Rome.

On 2 August 2023, I began my 6-week immersion trip in the Province of France Belgium Spain.



Why did I choose France?

Firstly for the history of our Congregation: from Italy to France.

Monasteries: some historical items stored in the archives of the Province.

Mary of the Incarnation.

The history of the Irish Ursulines began in France with Lady Nano Nagle.

The communities visited.

Paris, the Provinciate, the communities at Malet, Chirac, Toulouse, Pau (with a pilgrimage to Lourdes), Beaugency, Tours, Lyon.

France.

Population: 67.75 million.

Main food: typical bread, cheese, salad, fish, rice, seafoods, butter, different fruits - apples, grapes, cherries, apricots, pears, and wine.

France has many big rivers such as the Seine, the Saône and the Rhône.

France has many historic places with old buildings - churches, religious houses, Roman theatres and walls, castles, ancient caves, beautiful gardens.

Lourdes

The French are welcoming and ready to help foreigners.

Few young people go to church, the majority are adults and small children.

The country is highly developed and clean.

The sisters' apostolate

They welcome pilgrims on their way to Santiago de Compostela, Spain.

They look after people with mental disabilities. They host elderly people who are alone in their homes and need companionship. They live and take meals with them.



They teach catechism, have leadership in prayer groups, welcome people, etc.
 They welcome and accompany students in the Serviam spirit.
 They take care of the Province's archives.

Communauté de Tours.



They offer guided tours at the Mary of the Incarnation's Centre, Tours.



They are at the service of the governance of the Congregation with a provincial team.

They accompany bereaved families and make arrangement for the funeral mass with them, and participate in Pastoral Council teams.

They teach French to foreigners.

They coordinate Catholic education in their schools.

They give theology/philosophy lectures at university and provide spiritual direction.



What I learned in France.

The French language - few words to communicate, to travel alone, with a few guide phrases, by train, by bus and I learnt how to use tickets.

There is vocation shortage and many aged sisters.

A number of communities are closing and the sisters merging.

New apostolates different from the past.

Lay people actively participating in the work of evangelisation.

A big difference in the way we sing in church.

Big appreciation to all the sisters in France who welcomed me into different communities and accompanied me to beautiful places in their country and province.

Thank you too for assigning some wonderful lay people to be part of my immersion journey:

Christian in Malet helped me with the gardening equipment.

Cédric drove me to and from Malet to Chirac.

Guillaume who accompanied me by train from Rodez to Toulouse.

Sara gave me a tour around Beaugency community neighbourhood and Paula and her daughter Sophie gave me a tour in Beaugency community.

The archivist of the Beaugency community: Victoire Maignan-Watson.

Many thanks to my sisters in France!



With the sisters in Malet

In Malet :

Rest and refreshment on your pilgrimage route. Every evening, pilgrims pray compline outside, near the statue of Mary. Breakfast with pilgrims. Mexican train game.

In Toulouse, preparation of Chapati for lunch.

In Paris, time with Serviam students.

Visits :

To the church of Florentin-la-Chapelle near Malet.

In Paris: Tour on the Seine. Senate garden,

In Lyon: Ancient Roman theatre of Fourvière,

In Lourdes 22/8/2023: House of Saint Bernadette, Lourdes.

Greece

A GREECE OF MANY FACES

Sr Marie Claudine Deransy and Sr Brigitte Brunet (Province of France/Belgium/Spain) visited Sr Agni Alperti, an Ursuline of the Roman Union in Greece, in October-November 2023. They met many friends of the Ursulines.



Meetings with Mrs Dimitra, principal of Maroussi (Kindergarten and Démotique (Primary)) and Mr. Vasiliki, principal of Neo Psychico (Gymnasium and Lykeo) with Sr Brigitte Brunet and Sr Marie Claudine Deransy.

During our trip to Greece, we were delighted to meet the principals of Psychico and Maroussi, schools that have been magnificently renovated over the last 3 years.

They told us how pleased they were to feel that the Merician spirit and the Lassalian spirit were working so well together, one spirit serving young people. We ourselves felt a warm, family atmosphere in the schools.



They said how the Ursuline school has been renewed. They emphasised the importance of Lassalian support, the quality of the training, and the desire for a visit from the Ursulines from time to time!

Here are just a few of the things they said: "we want the school to do well"; "we want to keep our educational values"; "we want a school that is open to the outside world, a source of inspiration"; "our concern is to untangle social problems to know how to educate".

We appreciated the simplicity and depth of this meeting.



THE PEACE CIRCLE

Every year, from 21 September, anniversary of the birth of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, until 21 October, feast of Saint Ursula, the schools in Maroussi and Psychico celebrate the "Month of Peace".

This year, in 2023, the children of the Kindergarten and Démotique (Primary) schools have prepared peace wreaths with drawings and slogans. These wreaths are hung on the door of each class. If you come in, it means you want to be a peace builder.



Pupils from the Gymnasium and Lykeo wrote poems and collected prayers and poems about peace. They made origami birds of peace in various colours. The "Peace Circle" took place on 23 October. All the pupils gathered for a prayer, the reading of some of the poems and a minute's silence. Then, holding the strings linking the birds of peace to each other, they formed a large circle for peace, quietly, all around the courtyard. They then released white balloons with the word "Peace" written on them in many different languages.



We were very moved by the atmosphere of silence and even contemplation of all these young people; in our opinion, the teachers, members of staff and educators gave a strong testimony of hope, very much in the spirit of John Baptist de La Salle and Angela Merici.

GREECE - ΕΘΝΙΚΗ ΓΙΟΡΤΗ ΕΘΝΙΚΗ ΥΙΟΚΤΙ NATIONAL HOLIDAY

Memorial performance for 28 October 1940 by the children of the Lutra Public Demotic School.



68 children from the villages around Lutra attend classes at the State Demotic (Primary) School set up in a part of the premises of the former Ursuline monastery in Lutra.

Knowing that the Ursulines were coming to Tinos for a few days, Ms Katharine, principal, was keen to invite them to celebrate the National feast. The pupils had prepared songs, drawings, poems and scenes recalling 15 August and 28 October 1940, a period of confrontation and resistance to Nazism and Fascism.

The local Orthodox priest encouraged teachers and pupils to keep alive the memory of the choices made by the Greek nation at that time and to build peace where they live today, in the classroom, at breaktime, in the family and everywhere.

In memory of the Ursulines and the pupils who lived in Lutra, they then presented the Ursulines with gifts prepared during the school time: paintings of flowers from the Lutra garden, drawings on marble of the pigeon lofts on the hills of Tinos, flower arrangements from parents, etc...

Ms Katharine then took us on a tour of the classrooms and other rooms of the school, of which she has been principal since September 2023. During the morning, we had a strong sense of the spirit and the discreet but real presence of all the sisters who served the Lord and his children for so many years in this place. Recognition and creative fidelity defined the contacts and exchanges of this memorial morning.



The national celebration continued in Tinos town with a procession of all the children and young students, in uniform, from the schools of the island, gymnasiums and lycées, to the war memorial overlooking the sea, near Saint Ursula House!

GREECE - Celebration at Lutra for our deceased sisters

Friday 3 November 2023 – Sr. Marie Claudine Deransy and Sr. Brigitte Brunet.

At the beginning of November, together with Sister Agni Alperti, an Ursuline who now lives in the city of Tinos, we joined Bishop Josef Printezis, the parish priest P. Giannis Sklavos, friends and parishioners at the monastery of Lutra to take part in a Eucharist celebrated for our deceased sisters.



For the Mass, we gathered in St Michael's Chapel, one of the garden chapels, before praying at the tombs of our sisters.

Then, with all the participants, we were invited to the *Serviam Café*, a friendly place set up by the Caritas of the Islands in the old buildings of the monastery, bakery, cobbler's shop, etc. These buildings are currently being beautifully restored using traditional techniques.

During the summer and on special occasions, Caritas welcomes tourists visiting the Ursuline Museum in Lutra and families from the surrounding

area.

The restoration project is gradually moving ahead, thanks to generous craftsmen and many volunteers.

We appreciated the family spirit, the mutual aid and the good humour. In this way, Lutra shows the face of a Church that is familial and supportive.



GREECE - CARITAS TINOS

“Love the responsibility of saying that I, I alone, will save the world. If it is lost, it will be my fault”. (Nikos Kazantzakis Asceticism - Salvator dei)

We are members of an international family, that of Caritas, of the Catholic Church.

We are volunteers and through this mission we try to contribute to bringing about positive change in our local community but also in general.

By helping our brothers and sisters, as Jesus did before us, we help to improve their lives by providing material, emotional or educational support.

By helping people in need in a fragile society, we Caritas volunteers are part of a committed community that shares the same values and goals as those pursued by the Church to create a just and peaceful world.



Working as a team, we aim to help people in need, whatever their origin, religion or social situation. We broaden our horizons, we come into contact with people from different cultures and backgrounds and this makes us "rich".

In the societies of Tinos, Naxos and the other nearby islands, human relationships are more concrete and collaboration and action to meet needs are stronger.

As lay members of the Catholic Church, we volunteers are useful instruments of the Church; even if there are not many of us, we offer solidarity, love and the best we can to benefit society as a whole.

Antonis, Lamprini, Emilia, Giannis P., Stella, Maria, Giannis E. Tinos , 01/11/2023

GREECE - FILOXENIA: welcoming the other, the different.

Pedro ARRUPE Centre: welcoming migrant children and young people

Argyro Hadziantoniou has been working at the Pedro Arrupe Centre of the Jesuit Refugee Service in Athens for over 12 years. She is assisted by a team of volunteers.

From 3pm to 9pm, the centre welcomes 180 children and young people aged 6 to 17, of 22 nationalities, mainly from the Near East, Middle East and North Africa.

Every morning, Argyro does the shopping and prepares the meals for these children and young people. From 3pm, she gives three hours of literacy classes so that the children and young people can master the Greek language as quickly as possible. This is followed by homework help and games until 9pm.

Argyro carries out this humanitarian educational mission in the spirit of Saint Angela, with the aim of ensuring that every child and young person can be recognised in their dignity and supported in their growth. In the midst of truly precarious and violent conditions, the care, justice and peace lived out by the animators lead the young people to real hope and to living together today for tomorrow. Argyro says that Jesus is her only treasure and that she meets and contemplates him in each of these children and young people.

Thank you, Argyro, and the volunteers around you for this beautiful mission of life given, restored and received.

Australia

A REFERENDUM AND ITS BACKGROUND, OCTOBER 2023

Sr Kari Hatherell, Provincial of the Province of Australia, shared her reflections on the referendum held in October 2023. For the readers of the Inter-Ursulines bulletin, she first gave the context of it.

The context of this event: Uluru –

In 2017 First Nations Peoples from all over Australia came together at Uluru, the great red rock at the centre of our country. They invited all Australians to walk with them in seeking Constitutional change by establishing a First Nations voice to the national parliament. This meant having a constituted advisory body to speak to government about matters pertaining to the life of our First Nations peoples. The Uluru Statement issued the invitation with respect and beauty.



Uluru - the heart and centre of Australia

<https://ulurustatement.org/the-statement/view-the-statement/>

- In response to the invitation, a referendum was held on October 14th this year with the question "A Proposed Law: to alter the Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice. Do you approve this proposed alteration?" The response was a simple Yes or No.
- Many people showed their support for this proposal pre referendum by marching, letter dropping and most clearly and bravely by wearing T-Shirts with YES printed on them.
- The majority of people voted 'No' to this proposed change in the Australian Constitution for a variety of reasons.
- For many of us who supported the proposal this was an extremely difficult result leaving us with the feeling that as a nation we have yet again failed in our response to the invitation from first nations people to 'walk with them' and give them their rightful place in our land.
- During our Extraordinary Chapter, just a few days before the vote, a First Nations Woman, Theresa Ardler, led us in a reflective day sharing with us her culture and her spirituality both indigenous and Catholic. Theresa began the day by welcoming us to country, because the white settlers never bought the land from the Aboriginal people who had lived on it for over sixty thousand years. As part of Theresa's welcome, she painted our faces with ochre, a natural pigment used as part of body painting during ceremonies and she proceeded to lead us into the beauty and of her culture and the wisdom of her people.

And here is the article written by Sr Kari in the October 2023 issue of the Province's magazine "Bearings".

It feels to me that October has been a roller coaster of a month. On October 7th Hamas attacked Israel and Israel has been responding ever since. And we watch in horror. We celebrated the Extraordinary Chapter on October 9 – 11. Through ritual we answered **Yes** to the call of the Chapter and committed ourselves once again to cultivate the vine entrusted to us. We experienced the hospitality of Theresa as she broke open for us something of her rich inheritance as a First Nations woman. We were welcomed with ochre painted on our faces, we listened to stories and painted our gum leaves. We rejoiced in each other's presence and left with gratitude for all that has been. October 14th was Referendum Day that initially felt so full of promise but that promise was dashed with a resounding **No**. Celebrating the feast of St Ursula on October 21st drew us back once again to our roots, to all that it means to be Ursuline.



Even with the times of rejoicing, it can be exhausting fronting up day by day to what feels so unchangeable in the world around us. We can easily lose hope, finding ourselves being drawn into the black hole of negativity.

As I pulled on my **YES** t-shirt the other day I remembered being in Bethlehem in 2004, visiting the Christmas Lutheran Church. A young Palestinian woman directed a centre for creativity, encouraging young people from every faith to create beauty together. On the wall of the centre was a sign, 'Destruction may be, Creativity shall be'.

We don't need to lose heart because the promises made to us are more real than the destruction we experience. As Paul reminds us,

The Son of God, the Christ Jesus that we proclaimed among you, was never Yes and No; with him it was always Yes, and however many the promises God made, the Yes to them all is in him. That is why it is 'through him' that we answer Amen to the praise of God. Remember it is God who assures us all of our standing in Christ, and has anointed us, marking us with his seal and giving us the pledge, the Spirit, that we carry in our hearts. (2 Cor 1:19-23)

So sealed with the Spirit, let's continue to figuratively put on our **YES** t-shirts, saying **Yes** to all that is good, all that is respectful, all that is generous, all that is beautiful, all that is right, all that is just.



NEXT INTER-URSULINE BULLETIN

As usual, the next issue of the Inter-Ursuline bulletin will welcome all your experiences to be shared around the world. Please send short articles, with or without photos, **by 5 April 2024.**