

Meeting between CSFN and SNR in Rome

16-21 June 2022

The Nazareth Sisters and AHF on the synodal path of the Church with the Holy Family

The meeting held in Rome on 16-21 June 2022 under the theme "The Nazareth Sisters and AHF on the Synodal Path of the Church with the Holy Family" was attended by:

Province, country	Sisters	SNR members	Children of Nazareth
<i>Jesus the Good Shepherd</i> (Europe - France)	Sr. Luiza Chrzastowska Sr. Miriam Metelski	Ela and Sławek Świć, Małgosia Czarnehorska	Natalia, Julia, Karolinka, Kamilek
<i>Of the Most Holy Name of Mary</i> (Poland - Krakow)	Sr. Katarzyna Witkowska Sr. Jolanta Olczyk	Karolina and Kamil Jaworscy	Jan, Alicja, Julia
<i>Of the Most Holy Name of Jesus</i> (Poland - Warsaw)	Sr. Maksymiliana Dojcz Sr. Michaela Pietrzak	Bożenka and Janusz Malcowie, Małgosia and Tomek Gniadzikowie	
<i>Holy Family</i> (USA)	Sr. Maria Magdalena Rybak	Michael D'Onofrio	
<i>Blessed Martyrs from Nowogródek</i> (Belarus)	Sr. Marianna Aleszczyk	Marta and Arciom Tkaczuk	Sara, Miriam
<i>Mary of Nazareth</i> (Philippines)	Sr. Mary Michael Banquil Sr. Rosalie Marie Madelo	Grace Garrucho Nava and Carlos Olivares Nava	
<i>Holy Spirit</i> (Australia)	Sr. Rita Marie Apura	Lyn Griffiths Alycia Koulouris	
<i>Rome</i>	s. Speranza Grzebielec		
	12 sisters	16 members	9 children

The translators were: Sr. Anita Jach and Sr. Justyna Czerwińska. The children were looked after by: Sr. Wioletta Czarnul and Sr. Miriam Jedlińska.

Day 1. 06. 16.2022 (Thursday)

Session 1.

Introduction to the meeting – Sr. Speranza Grzebielec

Speech by Superior General Angela Marie Mazzeo

The first day of the International Meeting of the Sisters Directors and representatives of AHF began with a Holy Mass. During the first session at 9.00 a.m., Sr. Speranza Grzebielec,

general coordinator of the AHF, welcomed all those who arrived and presented the most important organizational matters. The opening prayer throughout the day was led by representatives of the Kraków Province, Sr. Katarzyna Witkowska and Karolina and Kamil Jaworscy.

Introducing the theme of the meeting, which is: **"The Nazareth Sisters and AHF on the Synodal Path of the Church with the Holy Family"**, Sr. Speranza invited everyone to listen in a special way to what the Holy Spirit wants to say to us and where He wants to lead us along the paths of Nazareth. She recalled the words of Blessed Franciszka Siedliska: *"The Lord Jesus has given you an understanding of this treasure of hidden life in Nazareth. It seems that there is nothing extraordinary about it, nothing attractive, nothing that deserves human praise and recognition... Here our Lord is more hidden than on the cross or in the Eucharist. In Nazareth it seems that He even hid His love for us. He does nothing, and he achieves so much! He hid his wisdom and even his love to give us a model of the fullest devotion... This apparent passivity concealed the fullness of activity, that is, perfect love, prayer and self-sacrifice."* Sister stated that the Lord Jesus allowed us, Sisters and Associates, to discover and understand the beauty of Nazareth.

The General Coordinator then presented up-to-date statistical data. AHF exists in seven Provinces. In chronological order, these are: USA, Australia, France, Warsaw, Kraków, Belarus, and Philippines. For the time being, there is no Association in Ukraine and in the "mission houses" of the Sisters of Nazareth in the Holy Land, Ghana, and Spain. As of December 2021, AHF has 707 members worldwide.

In October 2021, Pope Francis, opening the Synod of Bishops in the Church, invited all the faithful in the local Churches to undertake a synodal path that is based on three foundations:

To meet – an encounter with the living God;

To listen – to listen to the Holy Spirit;

Discernment – discerning the way of love.

As Nazareth Sisters and the Association of the Holy Family, we wish to be involved in the life of the Church and in the synodal journey. According to this method, we also want to work during the International Meeting in Rome. In our contemplation we will be accompanied by the scene of finding Jesus in the temple and returning to Nazareth (Lk 2:41-52). The basic question we want to answer is:

What steps does the Holy Spirit invite us to take to grow in our journey together, the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth and the Association of the Holy Family?

The guests of the 1st session were the Sisters from the General Council, led by General Superior Sister Angela Marie Mazzeo. The General Superior expressed at the beginning her great joy at the opportunity to receive so many guests from all over the world in the General House of the Congregation. She emphasized that this is a historic meeting, because in addition to the Sisters Directors and Sisters serving in AHF, representatives of the members of the Association from each province also take part in it for the first time. "We see," said General Superior, "how important it is to listen to different voices and to consider different perspectives."

The idea of groups cooperating with CSFN is a concept reaching back to the thought of the Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd about the Fraternity of the Holy Family. Although in each province there are different models of the Association, everywhere – Sister Angela emphasized – there are the same elements that Blessed M. Francis wrote about:

"To honor and follow the example of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, especially by spreading among ourselves and among others the Kingdom of God's love, which first blossomed in the Holy Family on earth."

Sister Angela recalled that in 1925, during the General Chapter, it was stated that the associated laity would spread the Kingdom of Divine Love where the Sisters could not reach. This goal is just as important and relevant today, in the twenty-first century.

Currently, there are about 1100 Nazareth nuns in the world, while in the AHF there are: 707 members, 268 children of Nazareth and about 120 candidates for the AHF. This sum of the number of lay people is almost equal to the number of the Sisters of Nazareth. This underscores the strength of the AHF and the strength with which the AHF can spread the mission of the Kingdom of Divine Love in the Church and in the world. Superior General emphasized that the CSFN is enriched by the AHF with a fuller presence in the world and is gaining new areas for the apostolic mission, allowing the charism of Nazareth to be realized more fully.

In order to be able to realize the idea of the charism of Mother Foundress together with the Sisters of Nazareth, the members of the Association themselves must put a lot of effort into caring for their family, for its mutual love and unity.

Later in her talk, Sister Angela Marie Mazzeo recalled with Saint Paul that "the gifts of grace are different, but the same Spirit" (1 Cor 12:4). Each of us, each of the Associates, has different gifts and talents. Participation in the mission of the Congregation can therefore vary according to the gifts that the Lord gives, as well as by virtue of the state in which we are, whether religious, married or single life. "I pray," Sister emphasized, "that each of us will be open to sharing these gifts."

The international meeting of CSFN and AHF in Rome is an opportunity to exchange goods and ideas that are characteristic in individual countries and regions. "We cannot predict where the Holy Spirit will lead us," said Superior General. "The way is known by walking."

"May the Holy Family be your guide and accompany you in these days," Sister Angela concluded. – Learn from **Mary** to listen as she listened to the words of the Angel and believed that God's words addressed to her would be fulfilled. And like her, keep in your heart the treasure of this time spent together.

Learn from **Joseph** to be open to all the ways in which the Lord wants to communicate with us, and may our actions flow from the desire to always do the Father's will.

And may we learn from **Jesus** to walk with our brothers and sisters as one family, to see the talents of others, to give others the space to be ourselves and to offer them the peace of Christ, who is the cause of our hope."

Session 2.

Charism, spirituality and mission of the Congregation. How are the Nazareth Sisters and AHF supposed to walk together, drinking from the same source? - Sr. Maria Teresa Marcinik CSFN

We speak best of the charism by living it when our way of life bears witness to it. All of us, Sisters and Associates, have the same source: Baptism, the word of God, the Eucharist, we draw from the spirituality of Nazareth.

The charism and spirituality of Nazareth are intertwined, firmly united. At the center is the Holy Family of Nazareth, which is the Kingdom of Divine Love. From this flow other elements, characteristics, attitudes, such as: love of God and love of each other; deep union with God; the spirit of hidden life, the ordinariness and simplicity of Nazareth; love of the Eucharist; love for the Church and the Holy Father; Paschal feature; obedience to God's will; fidelity to the Holy Spirit.

From this flows the mission of Nazareth, which is to spread the Kingdom of God's Love among oneself, among others and especially in families.

What is a charism? Charism (Greek: *charis* – grace, Latin *grazia, gratis*) – a gift freely given. The difference between grace and charism is that grace can be prayed for, implored, the charism is received freely, depends on the generosity of the Holy Spirit. The term *charism* in the Church refers to the charism of consecrated life, the charism of the founder.

The charism in the theological sense includes a dimension:

- pneumatological – a gift of the Holy Spirit;
- communal – it is always for the community, to serve it;
- ecclesial – it is to respond to a specific need in the Church, it is given to build up the Body of Christ;
- Christological – reveals a particle, a "fragment" of the mystery of Christ.

In the light of this, as Mother Teresa Jasionowicz once said: "Charism is not something, it is Someone", it is Someone, that is, Jesus, who came from Heaven and for 30 years revealed God's love in the family. The charism of the founder is manifested in the mission of the Congregation, it is a much richer, broader reality, it is a spiritual gift received by the founder, and it is a reality discovered over many years.

Spirituality is born from a concrete charism, from this gift a journey, a stream is born. The source is an image of the charism, and the stream is a symbol of spirituality. The charism is an immutable gift, spirituality is susceptible to cultural influences, it can manifest itself in different ways depending on who lives it, depending on the cultural and linguistic context in which it is lived. Just as a stream of water takes different forms depending on the terrain on which it flows, depending on the trough in which it flows, depending on the banks that surround it and the climate in which it flows. It is the same with spirituality. The same spirituality will be experienced differently by different people and different Institutes.

The charism is something permanent and stable, it carries with it the requirement of continuity and cannot be changed. Spirituality, on the other hand, can be shared with others, even if they do not have close ties with the Institute and its tradition (cf. B. Secondin, *Open Horizons*, pp. 281-282).

Every charism has its origin in the word of God, which God in his plan foresaw for this founder. Father Bernard Hylla, the Resurrectionist, says that all the founders live according to the whole Gospel, but each of them received it as if open on a different page. In Blessed Mother Frances, it is God's open word about the Kingdom: "*Ecce regnum Dei intra vos est*" (Lk 17:20).

For the charism to be discovered, the founder must have the unique experience of God. Added to this is the discovery of the urgent need of the Church for this time, which only God can remedy and He will find the way to remedy it. In the second half of the nineteenth century, this need was to save the family, especially the Christian one. The discovery of this need in the Church has made it possible to understand the Gospel and the mystery of Christ in a specific way. Mother Foundress saw in the Holy Family, in the hidden life of Nazareth, the beginning of the Kingdom of God on earth. *"The charism of Nazareth is Love Incarnate in the Holy Family of Nazareth. The Kingdom of Divine Love revealed in the life of the Holy Family is a reflection of the life of the Holy Trinity."*

In the last conference to the sisters, on November 14, 1902, a week before her death, the Mother said: *"It is an illusion if one of the sisters thinks that she loves the Lord Jesus, and she cannot bear this or that sister. LOVE, LOVE MY SISTERS! NAZARETH AND LACK OF LOVE CAN HAVE NOTHING IN COMMON. From Nazareth came the Incarnate Word, Love came into the whole world, and so in us, in the children of the Holy Family, love must flourish and reign, otherwise we would not be true children of the Holy Family."*

Our charism is a gift to live in the concreteness of life, to share first within our communities, families, environments – to spread the Kingdom of God's Love among ourselves, among others, and especially in families. As in the seed, as in the word of God, the power of life is hidden, the same spiritual power is hidden in the charism of Nazareth. It is important to discover it!!! My desire is important – is that what I want??? Do I want to know this spiritual charism in my journey, in my life? Do I want to discover in the charism this spiritual potential of life?

Session 3.

Do you want to learn to love the Lord Jesus? The life and spirituality of Blessed Franciszka Siedliska on the example of establishing a new foundation in London - Sr. Barbara Gromada CSFN

Beginning the story of Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd Sister Barbara described the atmosphere of the Siedliski's home during her childhood and youth. It is there that the features of her personality and the sources of what became the longing and the undiscovered beginning of her spirituality are already visible.

"Do you want to learn to love the Lord Jesus" – this is the question of Father Leander, a Capuchin, invited to the house of the Siedliski's family, which met with a resonance in the heart of young Franciszka. From then on, her whole life became a great school of love, a school that had an extremely demanding Master; from this school came extraordinary souls, such as Blessed Frances.

Her life, spirituality were shown by Sister Barbara on the example of setting up a new foundation in London, when Franciszka Siedliska was 50 years old.

It was the end of the nineteenth century, and about three to five thousands Poles came to England, poor, lost, who wanted to get to America, but for various reasons stopped in England. Lacking financial resources, they were doomed to a tragic fate. There was no regular pastoral ministry on the islands. In 1891, the first thought of establishing a foundation in London appeared. On the one hand, it was a chance to gain new vocations among girls who

knew English, who could be sent to an extremely intensively developing mission in the USA. In addition, the financial problems of the newly formed Congregation encouraged the establishment of a foundation in England.

Shortly after the meeting with the Archbishop of Westminster Herbert Vaughan, as well as with the extremely influential and important person Lady Herbert, the decision was made to go to London. In 1895, the Polish-Lithuanian mission began its activity. The beginnings of the foundation were very difficult, the Sisters lived in very poor conditions. There were many different problems, also regarding the background of Sisters' nationality. In addition, the unrest was caused by the aggressive attacks from local Jews, who feared that the Sisters had come to convert them.

For about half a year, the Mother Frances carried out a very intense pastoral activity due to the lack of a priest. The Sisters were strongly involved in the service of the sick, both at home and in hospitals, regardless of religion or nationality, sometimes covering great distances on foot to reach those in need.

"Not people have us, but we have to search for people. They go to the priest through the Sisters. Sisters must attract them, teach them, attract them!" – Mother Frances repeated to her Sisters.

They could not help people financially, but they saved their souls, they sought their salvation. *"The Lord Jesus gave me what I asked of him in prayer, to look for stray sheep and, by the grace of God, to bring them into the fold."*

This is how Blessed Franciszka's school of love looked like in practice. She did not choose the type of lesson, she went where Jesus, whom she wanted to love more than life, sent her.