

## Day Three 6.18.2022

### **TOPIC: Presentations of AHF in all provinces**

The time of the meeting began with a prayer led by U.S. representatives. It was a prayerful reflection on Seven Stations of the life of Holy Family.

### **HOLY FAMILY PROVINCE – UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

**Director:** Sr. Maria Magdalena Rybak CSFN

**Representative:** Michael D'Onofrio AHF

#### **General information:**

**Members:** 220

**Married couples:** 18

**Groups:** 16

Mid-Atlantic - 6 groups

Midwest – 1 group

Southwest - 3 groups

Great Lakes - 3 groups

New England - 3 groups

**Lead Sisters:** 21

#### **Characteristics:**

In 1980, the USA was created the first AHF in the world, it has been in existence for 42 years. The average age of members is 70-75 years. In 2017, there were 320 members in 20 groups, but due to the age of associates, it naturally decreases. There are difficulties with the recruitment of younger members. Due to the advanced age of the Sisters working with AHF, there is an urgent need to invite new people and to delegate responsibility to the laity.

AHF is divided into five regions, for which five Sisters coordinators are responsible. Regions are divided into smaller groups. The organizational role of the meetings was handed over to the laity. Long distances between individual groups make it difficult to contact (e.g. from Chicago, where Sr. Maria Magdalena lives, to some places the journey by car takes up to 16 hours).

The American AHF is characterized by energy, joy, excitement, enthusiasm, fervent dedication, sincere commitment of members to spread the mission and charism of Nazareth. Due to the pandemic, meetings have hardly taken place in the last two years, but Sisters working with the members of the Association have tried to stay in touch by writing letters, e-mails, talking on the phone or organizing teleconferences. The initiative of praying the Rosary together every Saturday, when members and Sisters met to pray the Rosary of Healing for all families through zoom, was also very valuable. In this way, as one of the Sisters said: "The pandemic has brought us closer together..."

#### **How do the Sisters see the cooperation with AHF?**

The Sisters of Nazareth in the Province of the Holy Family value the members of the AHF very much, emphasizing that their hearts are inflamed by the charism of Nazareth, they are very much involved in the apostolic works of the Congregation. They see that it is the lay members of AHF who should take

over the leadership functions when the Sisters, due to their age, will no longer be able to coordinate the activities of the Association. Currently, the Sisters continue to work closely with the members of the Association as their mentors, instructors and spiritual companions.

It is worth emphasizing the attitude of some of the Sisters of Nazareth in the USA who, despite their old age (e.g. 89 years or 94 years old), still participate in meetings and spiritually accompany members, not imagining themselves that it could be otherwise. They love AHF.

#### **How do members of the AHF see cooperation with the Sisters?**

As members, we strongly feel that we are a family, we pray, we support each other in a concrete way we help, e.g. during the pandemic by delivering food to the homes of the sick or the elderly. It takes a great commitment to help elderly at home. Other forms of volunteering that the Associates take opportunity in are transporting older members of the AHF to the doctor, meetings, shopping etc., as it is done in the family. Despite the advanced age of the members of our AHF in USA, they are very energetic groups, dedicated to the mission of Nazareth. Our problem is the lack of young people, we do not know how to encourage young people, how to reach out to young families. Increase in younger membership of the AHF is a vital and crucial point.

### **PROVINCE OF THE MOST HOLY NAME OF MARY – POLAND, KRAKOW**

**Director:** Sr. Elżbieta Kuczarska CSFN (absent)

**Sisters present:** Sr. Katarzyna Witkowska CSFN and Sr. Jolanta Olczyk CSFN

**Representatives:** Karolina and Kamil Jaworscy AHF

#### **General information:**

**Members:** 93

**Married couples:** 35

**Children of Nazareth:** 89

**Groups:** 8 (Kraków, Gdynia, Wrocław, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, Kielce, Rabka-Zaskale, Bielsko-Biała, Częstochowa)

**Lead Sisters:** 7

#### **Characteristics:**

About 300 people participate in the meetings of the AHF. As a part of the formation of the AHF, following activities are organized: holiday retreats, weekends for mothers, fathers, meetings of young people of the AHF, night vigils, Christmas carol-wafer meetings, New Year's Eve meetings. In individual communities of the Association: canoeing, cycling trips, pilgrimages, picnics are being organized. A special form of ministry since 2016 are cyclical courses for married couples conducted by three couples who are the members of the AHF in Krakow and Kielce (over 160 married couples have already benefited from them). In 2019, a course for parents of teenagers was also launched (about 40 people took part in two editions).

During the pandemic, new forms of online meetings took place, topics that were discussed and presented during those meetings included: *“Evangelical Talents”*, *“Support in crisis”*, *“Hollywood and the Gospel”*.

Members are eager to engage in actions in the Polish Church, and now actively helping Ukraine.

### **How do the Sisters see the cooperation with AHF?**

Cooperation with AHF takes place through the realization of the mission of Nazareth, spiritual accompaniment of members, prayer and openness to oneself, evangelization, strengthening the faith and proclaiming the Kingdom of God to others. It is also the participation of members of the AHF, in organizing joint meetings, trips, co-creating the website of the AHF, leading courses that will strengthen marriages, and courses supporting parents in raising their children.

The challenge is to involve more Sisters in cooperation with AHF (sometimes they have too many other pastoral activities or the Sisters do not notice and appreciate the role of the Association) and to create the community of the AHF for every Nazareth community in the province.

### **How do members of the AHF see cooperation with the Congregation?**

Meetings of the AHF deepen and strengthen our faith, strengthen marital and family ties, and allow us to participate in the charism of the Sisters of Nazareth, spreading the Kingdom of Divine Love. Both the Sisters of Nazareth and the members willingly pray for each other – Sisters for families, families for Sisters. As Associations, we also see our role by bearing witness to life in the family, work, among friends and striving for holiness in marriage, in the family, as well as providing for each other spiritual and material help. We want to continue to share our experiences, as well as undertake joint initiatives, actions, courses that will benefit marriages and families.

## **PROVINCE OF THE BLESSED MARTYR SISTERS - BELARUS**

**Director:** Sr. Marianna Aleszczyk CSFN

**Representatives:** Marta and Arciom Tkaczuk AHF

### **General information:**

**Members:** 25

**Married couples:** 8

**Children of Nazareth:** 17

**Groups:** 7 (Grodno, Minsk, Smorgon, Lida, Głębokie, Iwieniec, Molodechno)

**Lead Sisters:** 7

### **Characteristics:**

AHF started in Belarus in 2009. The oldest group is located in Grodno. Each community is different, has a different character. We meet regardless of whether there is enough space, often even in the Sisters' three-bedroom apartment or in private homes. In the communities, there are many families with small children. A specific community is Głębokie, where the Nazareth Sisters do not live, but there is a priest and members who want to meet regularly.

New Year's Eve is an opportunity for all communities to meet. To revive life after the pandemic, the Nazareth Forum was organized in 2021. Every year there are two series of holiday retreats, in which about 80 people with children participate. There were also "Retreats on the way" for couples – a trip to Żdźary, Kraków and Budapest. There are also gatherings for women and men. A unique experience is the meeting in Moscow, where one family from the AHF live and they take care of other families.

During the meetings of Nazareth (very seldom we use the name "Association") we build living, human, warm relationships. Our members and friends associate Nazareth with home, warmth and love. We see

each other not only during official meetings, we help each other, also in a material way, and we support each other with prayer.

**How do the Sisters see the cooperation with AHF?**

Nazareth Sisters are perceived in Belarus as “specialists” of families, which is why AHF is for the Sisters a practical realization of their charism. Together, the Sisters recognize the needs, current problems of communities and people and try to respond to them. Recently, for political reasons, three families of members of the AHF were forced to live in Poland.

The difficulty is the small number of Sisters who want to join the AHF, because they have many other activities, apostolates, commitments etc.

**How do members of the AHF see cooperation with the Congregation?**

Members of local communities of the AHF are actively involved in the life of Nazareth. As an initiative of the laity of the AHF, a general meeting of communities in Novogródek was organized – the “Nazareth Forum”. The need and desire of contacts between families resulted in numerous informal meetings, visits to communities, as well as other activities. Members have common “chat groups” where they share prayers, intentions, reflections. For a long time, the Association actively undertook activities supporting political prisoners by making for them subscriptions and sending them Catholic newspapers. Daily prayer for the families of prisoners, writing letters and sending packages to prisoners became a part of lives of our Associates.

**PROVINCE OF JESUS THE GOOD SHEPHERD - FRANCE (Italy, England, France)**

**Director:** Sr. Luiza Chrzastowska CSFN

**Present Sister:** Sr. Miriam Metelski CSFN

**Representatives:** Małgosia Czarnohorska and Ela and Sławek Świć AHF

**General information:**

**Members:** 32

**Married couples:** 13

**Children of Nazareth:** 11

**Groups:** 1 (Paris)

**Sisters involved:** 5

**Characteristics:**

AHF in France has been around for 31 years. Everyone comes to the monthly meetings, together there are about 80 people, they are mainly Poles living in Paris. Characteristic feature of our Association is the desire of all members to participate in retreats together as a group, both Advent and Lenten. AHF has a large retreat and recreation center located in the forest, called “Emmaus”. There are weddings, baptisms, Holy Communion, dance workshops, photography workshops for young people, children's camps. “Emmaus” became a place that united us even more as members of the Association. “Emmaus” is for us a “home” that we all care about, by carrying out major or smaller renovations, and planning some expansions.

**How do the Sisters see the cooperation with AHF?**

The Sisters see the need to continue the work of AHF, because they need families, and families need Sisters. The Congregation and the Association is “the way together”. Being together might be a difficult reality for some, because you have to give up your time, take an interest in the life of another person,

and sometimes reveal your own weakness. In this "journey together", we must learn to look at each other through the eyes of Jesus. We are God's gift for each other. Each of our relationships should reflect in itself the beauty and qualities that we see in the Holy Family. Each meeting is a chance to open your heart and eyes to the other person and create unity with them.

In our local communities, little is said about the Association of the Holy Family, we often have little contact with the members of the AHF, we are a bit "strangers" to each other, and yet we are united by a charism.

Members of the AHF are gifted to assist in the Congregation's apostolates. The need to include them in the broadly understood evangelization. For this to happen, Sisters must bear witness to a radical dedication to Jesus and to the consecrated life.

There is not enough courage in us, Sisters and Associates, to win for Jesus this world, here and now, through new ideas. Only under the guidance of the Holy Spirit will we become the Church to which God calls us today.

### **How do members of the AHF see cooperation with Congregation?**

Our cooperation with the Congregation has two dimensions: practical and spiritual. This practical dimension is expressed through the group called "Diakonia"- which is created by voting from among the members of the AHF. "Diakonia" cooperates with the Sisters in organizing meetings, retreats and weekends at the "Emmaus" retreat center near Paris. The spiritual side of our cooperation with the Congregation is the involvement in prayer for sisters, families, priests (for instance, the "Nazareth's Rosary Roses" and groups so-called "Marguerites").

Our walking "together" is a common journey through life with the Holy Family to our ultimate goal, union with God. Thanks to Nazareth, we form TOGETHER ONE BIG FAMILY. We are united by friendships, we open our homes, we share our sorrows, joys, pains, illnesses, which is extremely valuable, especially while living as immigrants. We are proud of our priestly vocation among the children of Nazareth.

Our concern is for young people who are brought up in a secularized world and often look for their own ways, abandoning the values installed in them. The second concern is the lack of new Sisters for missionary work in France as well as lack of permanent priests.

## **PROVINCE OF MARY OF NAZARETH - PHILIPPINES**

**Director:** Sr. Mary Michael Banquin CSFN

**Present Sister:** Sr. Rosaline Marie Madelo CSFN

**Representatives:** Grace Garrucho and Carlos Olivares Nava AHF

### **General information:**

**Members:** 85

**Groups:** 6 (Antipolo, Cebu, Lipa Batangas, Calapan Mindoro, Nasugbu and Manila)

**Sisters involved:** 6

**Married couples:** 15

**Children of Nazareth:** -

### **Characteristics:**

In 1982, the Sisters of Nazareth came to the Philippines, a country of several thousand islands. AHF was founded in 2010 and is constantly evolving. Members actively participate in Sisters' apostolates; bear witness to the faith to those who are not baptized, help those in need, visit the sick and imprisoned. Many of them join so-called nutrition program for the poorest (they donate food, cook, give

food to children, and clean up). The Associates provide a variety of assistance during catastrophes and natural disasters.

Members of the AHF also assist couples who have entered only into civil union with process of determining the validity of marriage and encourage sacrament of marriage for those couples who have not entered into civil union. In December 2019, on the feast of the Holy Family, 13 couples received the sacrament of marriage, and in December 2021 – another five couples.

#### **How do the Sisters see the cooperation with AHF?**

The Sisters in the Philippines see the need to grow in dialogue. The residents of a thousand islands speak different languages, dialects, many of them suffer from poverty. Both the Nazareth Sisters and the members of the AHF, must have an open heart and mind, and willingness to welcome and appreciate the differences in character, language, place, history of individuals, marriages, families and the environments in which they live. CSFN and AHF must take care of each other, give each other valuable time, seek unity in diversity. It is also a concern to find a way to communicate with the members of the AHF, if it is not possible to meet in person and to raise funds to be able to carry out the activities that are planned.

#### **How do members of the AHF see cooperation with the Congregation?**

We carry out our mission through common prayer to the Holy Family, meetings, testimonies to non-sacramental people, preparation for Baptism. We treat the Sisters of Nazareth as companions, guides on our spiritual journey. Together with them, we want to serve as prayer warriors for families. At the same time, there is a need for greater involvement of younger couples and young people. We also want to support the Sisters in their activities, also, if possible, financially.

### **PROVINCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT - AUSTRALIA**

**Director:** Sr. Rita Marie Apura CSFN

**Representatives:** Lyn Griffiths and Alycia Koulouris AHF

#### **General information:**

**Members:** 34

**Groups:** 3 (Canberra, Marayong and Perth)

**Sisters involved:** 3

**Married couples:** 6

**Children of Nazareth:** -

#### **Characteristics:**

AHF was founded in Australia in 1987 and its members include Italians, Maltese, Poles, Filipinos, Chinese, Japanese, Indians, Sri Lankans and Australians. Most of them are older people, but there are also a few young families. A large number of friends of the AHF also gather around. Due to the geographical location, age and health problems of the Associates, joint meetings are a very big challenge. The pandemic has caused irregularity of meetings or forced other forms of contact, for instance; teleconferences, newsletters, zoom, with those who have access to those means.

#### **How do the Sisters see the cooperation with AHF?**

The main form of cooperation with AHF is prayer, although some members of the AHF support the Congregation financially (e.g. missions in Ghana, Ukraine).

For many Sisters, AHF is an additional task, which is why there is a lack of enthusiasm of the Sisters towards the Association.

A form of closer cooperation could be the presentation of the individual provinces of the Congregation, as well as choosing one common intention for the whole month, in which the members and Sisters would pray until the next meeting.

### **How do members of the AHF see cooperation with Congregation?**

As members of AHF, we have a sense of belonging to Nazareth, we experience the care and support of the Sisters, and we see the value of being together. We see cooperation with the Congregation as a common journey consisting in sharing the charism, through individual love and devotion to the Holy Family and mother Foundress.

There is in us a desire to be connected with the Sisters, to grow in the spirit of Nazareth. As members, we support the Sisters with our prayers, we pray for our families and others; we visit the sick in homes and hospitals.

The advanced age of many Associates and the long geographical distances, make it difficult to interact with members from other communities. Members from two groups do not meet regularly.

## **PROVINCE OF THE NAME OF JESUS – POLAND, WARSAW**

**Director:** Sr. Maksymiliana Dojcz CSFN

**Sister present:** Sr. Michaela Pietrzak CSFN

**Representatives:** Małgosia and Tomek Gniadzik and Bożenka and Janusz Malec AHF

### **General information:**

**Members:** 230

**Groups:** 16 (Jastrzębia Góra, Kalisz, Kolumna, Konin, Leszno, Lublin, Łuków, Oborniki, Ostrzeszów, Poznań, Rawa Mazowiecka, Supraśl, Warsaw, Wytyczno, Zakopane, Żdźary)

**Sisters involved:** 18

**Married couples:** 95

**Children of Nazareth:** 168

### **Characteristics:**

AHF is a road where we discover the Holy Family during meetings of local communities of the AHF, 7-day retreats (in winter and summer), pilgrimages, workshops, weekend sessions, in which about 800 people participate annually. We invite the Holy Family to our homes through the enthronement of the icon and as part of the peregrination of the icon of the Holy Family and the relics of Blessed Franciszka Siedliska and Blessed Martyred Sisters. We care about healthy relationships between spouses thru organizing dates for married couples (during retreats and in 10 cities), marriage course (about 100 couples participated). Each member of the AHF has a "Guardian Angel," which is a Sister of Nazareth. Every year, as part of the "Adopt a Nazareth Sister" campaign, members pray for the random Sister. AHF is a GIFT for families and for Nazareth sisters. Together we form a community in which we pray, we support each other every day, we expand the Kingdom of God's Love, we look for new ways in which the Holy Spirit wants to lead us.

### **How do the Sisters see the cooperation with AHF?**

The Sisters see the AHF as links between the Congregation and the "world" in which the associates bear witness to their belonging to the Holy Family of Nazareth, creating catholic environments that understand the tasks of Christian spouses and parents. AHF is an inspiration for the Nazareth Sisters to

explore the spirituality of the Holy Family and not to focus on themselves, and at the same time, gives them strength through their service during retreats, and meetings with families. The increase in the number of the members of the AHF, is greater than the increase in new vocations in the province. At the same time, the Nazareth Sisters note that they do not go out enough to the families of the associates for common prayer and time to be with them, that there is little involvement of the Sisters in the communities of the AHF. The Sisters Warsaw Province, see the need to use the potential and professional skills of the members of the AHF, during retreats and meetings, and in other apostolates of the Sisters. There is a need to form members of the AHF in the spirit of evangelization as well as the missionary spirit, so that they can go forward towards other families.

#### **How do members see cooperation with the Congregation?**

AHF is a place for spiritual growth, getting to know and deepen our relationship with the Holy Family, experiencing the Church, as well as the individual, marital and family formation. We are families that create cordial relationships with each other, bonds in which we help each other. Remaining in Nazareth really protects our marriages and families from disintegration. Being in AHF allows us to draw on the spiritual richness of the Congregation. Cooperation with the Congregation is not only mutual prayer for each other, but also concrete help in the homes of the Sisters or participation in various actions and activities of the Sisters. Together we also reaching out to other families where we live and work; through dates for married couples, marriage courses or various workshops.

We discover that we are given to each other and ... we are a challenge for each other. Sometimes this is not easy. However, this "polishes" us on the way to holiness.