



HIGHLIGHTS

“It’s very important for us to be with our residents on Christmas day. The sisters want them to feel that they are not alone, that they are loved... and for them to be able to remember this day with a big smile”

Soledad López, Superior of the Paris community and the head of pastoral care at “Maison Sainte Germaine”, tells us how they prepare for and celebrate Christmas in this centre, dedicated to caring for people with functional disabilities.



Sister Soledad López, HSC

Advent, a journey towards Christmas

Advent is an important time for all of us: for the community of

sisters, our collaborators and residents of “Maison Sainte Germaine”, run by the Sisters Hospitallers in Paris (France). We start thinking about Christmas at the start of November, and preparations take shape on the first Sunday of Advent.

Mid way through November, I got together the entire pastoral team, made up of another sister from the community and two members of staff, as well as residents of the home, to think about how they would like to experience this new Advent season. I feel it is important to prepare Christmas with them. I

try to involve them in all the plans, because in spite of the joy of the birth of Christ and the festivities that surround this holy news, Christmas can be a time of sadness for some of our residents. Many of them spend Christmas day far from their families, and every year, more and more people are finding themselves in this situation.

When preparing for Christmas, during the period of Advent, we pay close attention to the symbols of this liturgical time, which are present in our Sunday mass. Every Thursday we get the residents together and ask them

“Together we think about how we can express the meaning of this time of year that leads up to Christmas. They are often simple gestures of fraternity, of love... which prepare our heart to receive Jesus”

what they would like to do. Together we think about how we can express the meaning of this time of year that leads up to Christmas. They are often simple gestures of fraternity, of love... which prepare our heart to receive Jesus.

Christmas Market

The Christmas spirit takes hold gradually in the centre. The Christmas decorations begin to appear the first week of Advent. This is also when we hold our traditional “Christmas Market”. In order to do this, in the months prior to this, **our residents are very busy creating arts and crafts, such as Christmas cards, which are then sold at the “Christmas market”**. After a beautiful mass, held at 11am, we open the doors to our market at around 12pm, which includes a “Crafts” stall, a tearoom, and an art exhibition.

Professionals at the centre also take part in this event, in the form of a “wheelchair tour”. The purpose of this action is to raise awareness among those taking part of the difficulties involved in getting around in a wheelchair. This activity is organised on the same day as the “Christmas Market”, on 3 December, coinciding with World Disability Day.

Christmas Pastoral

The second important day in December is when we celebrate what we call the “Christmas Pastoral”. This takes place the week before Christmas, on 19 December. We created this event so that the residents, staff, volunteers and sisters could all celebrate Christmas together, before people go away on holiday. This day is organised by the Pastoral care team, with a view to encouraging a festive



Christmas Market and Christmas Pastoral



Christmas Party

atmosphere and promoting social harmony among all of us who belong to this little world that is "Maison Sainte Germaine".

The day begins with a theatrical representation of the Christmas story, in the centre's chapel. The story, performed by the residents, describes the birth of Jesus according to the Old and New Testament (Book of Isaiah and the Gospel according to Saint John). Beautiful songs enhance the story, which concludes with a live nativity scene. **Watching our residents make their way from the back of the chapel to the altar, with their beautiful costumes, fills us with satisfaction. They are proud and happy. What a beautiful symbol!**

Then we share a fraternal lunch. The menu is festive and perfect for Christmas. Finally, in the afternoon, lots of different activities take place so that the fun continues, and we share unique moments and celebrate the future birth of Christ.

Christmas Party "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us"

Just like everywhere else in the world, we begin celebrating the birth of Christ on the evening of 24 December, Christmas Eve. Mass is held at 7pm in our chapel. Many people come every year. This mass is excellent and very lively. People come to support and be with our residents; because there

"... Christmas Eve dinner begins, held in the "Drawing Room", and we invite all those we know and who surround us, especially those we know are alone or isolated, to celebrate the birth of the Lord with us. At the end of the evening "Father Christmas" makes a surprise visit"

are lots of children, at the end we are always delighted to offer them some little chocolate treats.

Then, Christmas Eve dinner begins, held in the "Drawing Room", and we invite all those we know and who surround us, especially those we know are alone or isolated, to celebrate the birth of the Lord with us. At the end of the evening "Father Christmas" makes a surprise visit, with a huge sack filled with presents, to the delight of our residents, who welcome him with beautiful carols.

The following day, 25 December, Christmas Day, at 11am we hold a solemn Eucharist. Baby Jesus is in his crib. We sing joyfully about the birth of the Lord and we praise this beautiful moment unfurling in front of our eyes. Straight after this, we enjoy a magnificent lunch, followed by various musical performances. The residents dance and sing with the staff and sisters from the community.

Joy, fraternal love for one another, and camaraderie are the values that pervade the entire day. It's very important for us to be with our residents on Christmas day. The sisters want them to feel that they are not alone, that they are loved... and for them to be able to remember this festive and joyous day with a big smile.

INSTITUTIONAL

II edition of the “Charisma of Lay Hospitallers”



Minutes from the II edition of the “Charisma of Lay Hospitallers” congress in Portugal

On the 20 and 21 October 2017, in the Province of Portugal, we held the second edition of our “Charisma of Lay Hospitallers” congress, inspired by the central theme **“Lay and Religious Communities: two Charismas, one Spirit”**. The first day’s events were held in Fatima (Portugal), to chime with the first Centenary of the Appearance of Our Lady of Fatima in that place. The second day, events took place in Lisbon, in the auditorium of the San José Psychiatric Clinic run by the Sisters Hospitallers.

A total of 153 people took part in this event: 131 from various centres in the Province of Portugal, 6 from the Province of Spain, and 15 from other institutions, as well as Sister Ana Lucía Castro, Third General Councillor, representing the Institution’s General Governing Body. This event also featured 10 guest speakers.

«Light, Yeast, Salt»

The central theme of “Lay and Religious Communities: two Charismas, one Spirit” aims to highlight that lay people have their own charisma within the Church. They are not a faceless mass, or ‘simple’ Christians as we sometimes hear. They are at the heart of God’s People, just like yeast in dough, salt in food, and light in the world... they are the expression of a faith that is lived and breathed, which is received, transmitted, and passed on.

These lay people, together with the Sisters Hospitallers, are driven by the same Spirit of God; they experience the same spirituality in their diversity of

vocations. For this reason, the slogan of this congress was «Light, Yeast, Salt».

The programme

The programme at this Congress was based on the words of Pope Francis: “The Church needs an active laity to spread the values of the Gospel to the world”.

The first day’s activities, dedicated exclusively to the Lay Hospitallers within our Institution, helped to: increase mutual knowledge, share the paths being followed by groups, gain more in-depth knowledge of 15 years of operations in Portugal, and celebrate the commitment of the “Lay Hospitaller” movement. In a climate of simplicity and profoundness, this celebration of worship brought together and moved everyone, renewing everyone’s individual commitment, supported by the force of Hospitaller charisma.

The atmosphere at Fatima was powerful, as was the love everyone felt for the Mother of Jesus, who appeared in this place, as well as during the visit to the ‘holy places’ of the Cova da Iria, experienced with the joy of someone returning to the maternal home.

On the second day, which was open to everyone, participants heard two conferences about: «The charisma of the laity in the Church» and «Living and transmitting faith in the family», complemented with various first-person testimonies about the



experience of the Christian faith in the light of the charisma of a consecrated life, showing how faith is translated into everyday deeds.

The subjects

"Experiencing lay spirituality in light of the charisma of a consecrated life" was the subject of the first conference. Participants in the Congress witnessed an illuminating dialogue between laypeople who experience their Christian vocation in direct relation with consecrated institutions. Diversity, in terms of the ways of integrating spirituality and in the mission of the different institutions, is consolidated with the unity of the Spirit that calls to and guides everyone. *It was beautiful to see the richness that springs forth from common commitment, in the realisation of the Church's sole mission, which goes beyond the different modes tested out in each place.* Sharing experiences enriches and moves everyone, to open and travel along paths of participation and joint responsibility.

The second conference dealt with the subject of "Living the mission through faith", offering the testimony of Lay Hospitallers from the Province of Portugal, and also virtually staging the experiences of the Congregation of various places in this same sphere. *It was a lovely way to bring home the universality of this proposal in our Institution.*

Several lay movements from our Institution were present through videos and images: the Sisters and Brothers of San Benito Menni in Cameroon; the Hospitaller Families in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Hospitaller Disciples of Latin America. These testimonies created a very positive climate of reflection and welcome, of enthusiasm and commitment... which was very clear in the final assessments of this Congress. Many participants were overcome by emotions when they saw, in the midst of so much need, how Laypeople in Africa selflessly commit to helping those most in need.

Performance by those in care

To the sound of the songs "Nunca es tarde para soñar" and "Estoy aprendiendo a ser feliz", a group of users delighted the participants with a performance, which showed the difficulties faced by people with mental illness when trying to win their place, in the different areas of their life. As well as the beauty of the sound, lights, gestures and the poem they performed, the attitude of the people who took centre stage during those moments was very impressive.

**Laurinda Faria, Sister Hospitaller and
Vicar for the Province of Portugal**

The comments of some of the participants...

"The challenge is taking myself seriously in my role in the Hospitaller Laity, in the day to day, in my way of thinking, in what I do and what I am".

"It was a life lesson in feelings and enriching moments of communion, joy, hospitality, identity, and a sense of belonging to the Hospitaller charisma".

"This encounter has left us with a wealth of questions and personal proposals for reflection. It has offered us three challenges: creating places of discernment, strengthening the bridge between the Church and the world, as well as moving from collaboration to complementarity and joint responsibility".

INTERVIEW

“Obtaining the accreditation of excellence from the «*Joint Commission International*» (JCI) is an opportunity for growth, which aims to improve the care and safety of our patients”

Barbara Piazza



Barbara Piazza, head of Quality at the Villa San Benedetto Menni Centre run by the Sisters Hospitallers in Milan (Italy), tells us how they have gained accreditation from the “Joint Commission International” (JCI), and explains to us what this organisation is.

First of all, what exactly is the “Joint Commission International”?

Currently, the “Joint Commission” (JC) is the most experienced organisation in healthcare accreditation in the world. It is an American organisation and has been working for over 50 years to improve the quality and safety of healthcare and socio-healthcare organisations. It currently

accredits close to 20,000 organisations around the world. In turn, it uses the information and experience obtained by inspecting these organisations to update inspection standards periodically, in order to tailor them to changing healthcare services.

Within this organisation, the “Joint Commission International” (JCI) was created in 1996, a division of the “Joint Commission” that seeks to improve the quality of care provided in the international community, providing accreditation services throughout the world. To ensure the international applicability of standards, these have to be agreed by a group of experts and opinion leaders from the five continents. The inspection process conducted by the JCI is designed to adapt to the legal, religious and cultural characteristics of each country.

But how does a centre such as Villa San Benedetto Menni prepare for such an important commitment?

The first thing is to believe that the accreditation of excellence offered by the JCI is an opportu-

nity for growth, which aims to improve the care and safety of our patients.

Then, we review their manual, which contains over 360 standards, and having compiled all the information, we study, plan and establish valid pathways to respond satisfactorily to each of them. It is a complex undertaking that requires a cultural change, because it is based on a logic of prevention that we are not really accustomed to.

Furthermore, the accreditation process cannot ignore a constant confrontation, as well as the integration of the different professional areas present in the Centre, the management and the clinics, who must work together, respecting the roles and needs of both parties.

How was the visit conducted?

The visit, in other words, the inspection, took place over four days, conducted by two inspectors, who, accompanied by the director of the centre and each of the departments, visited every single corner of the structure (loft, boiler room,

laundry room, etc.).

They also checked all the documentation of our quality and safety systems (certificates, protocols, all kinds of records), interviewed the staff, spoke to the relatives of our users... in short, they asked a lot of questions!

Finally, were you awarded accreditation?

Yes, we are very proud of that. During the visit, we were able to show the two international experts, who did not know the Centre, our daily commitment to caring for people by providing comprehensive and individualised care, in line with high quality standardised protocols and procedures, on a par with any solid and efficient organisation.

Which aspects were most appreciated by the inspectors?

- The dedication of our collaborators in caring for the patients and their families.
- The good condition and level of cleanliness of all the areas they visited, both inside and outside.
- The on-going and effective commitment of our management to monitor critical processes in order to reduce the risks faced by users and professionals.
- The hospitality and transparency with which we have worked and collaborated with them, during their inspection.

In short, I would highlight the words of David Loose (one of the analysts from the JCI), who during our last meeting said: *"If I had a relative or acquaintance who lived here and needed care, I would definitely advise them to come to this centre"*.

What does accreditation from the "Joint Commission International" mean for the future?

For the moment we are celebrating the achievement of this important milestone and we would like to thank all the professionals who have contributed for years with their seriousness, hard work and passion, making Villa San Benedetto a centre of excellence, recognised by the "Joint Commission International".

Inauguration of the Mental Health Unit

Province of England



The first three patients in the unit, together with the staff

The Mental Health Unit at the "St. Benedict Menni Health Center" run by the Sisters Hospitallers in Monrovia (Liberia), officially opened on 2 December in the presence of the Minister for Health, the National Catholic Health Council and the Archbishop of Monrovia, among others. Sister Begoña Pérez, Provincial Superior for the Province of England, and Mikel Tellaeche, manager of the Hospital Aita Menni run by the Sisters Hospitallers in Mondragón (Spain), also attended the celebration.

The unit opened its doors to the first three patients on 16 November, a date that marked "a new era for the community of Monrovia", said Sister Florence Adebor, Superior of the community of Monrovia. The three women were moved to this new unit, where they will spend some time before they return to their families, having previously been at the "Grant Mental Health Hospital", the only psychiatric centre in Liberia, run by the Ministry for Health, with very limited human and technical resources.

The "Step Down Unit", as it is known, aims to care for and rehabilitate patients with mental health problems, who come here from the "Grant Mental Health Hospital", and to educate and raise awareness among their families about this illness.

To help run this project, the health centre has one psychiatrist and a nurse (both Spanish), as well as a mental health professional from Liberia.

25th Anniversary

Province of Spain

To celebrate 25 years of the Menni Brain Damage Network, run by the Sisters Hospitallers in Spain, the Hospital Aita Menni organised an event at the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao (Spain) on 28 November.

This event, which looked back at the history of the network and the changes that have taken place in terms of caring for people with brain damage during this period, was attended by Sister María Esther Berruete, Second General Councillor, and Sister Matilde Porras, Provincial Superior for the Province of Spain. They were accompanied by various local authorities and experts in brain damage, as well as collaborators and friends of our Institution.

During the celebration, the director of the Hospital Aita Menni, run by the Sisters Hospitallers in Mondragón (Spain), Mikel Tellaeche said: *"we have been caring for people with brain damage for 25 years, helping patients and their families during this disease, focusing on ambulatory rehabilitation, the adaptation of homes, etc."*

This network was set up in 1992, with the creation of its first Brain Damage Unit in the Hospital



25th anniversary of the "Menni Brain Damage Network"

Aita Menni. Over the course of its extensive and successful trajectory, it has cared for a total of 14,006 people, and currently has specialist neuro-rehabilitation centres in the Basque Country, Madrid, Valencia, Valladolid, Santander and Tenerife.

All centres in this network have specialist units focusing exclusively on brain damage, with multidisciplinary teams of professionals, which emphasise patient rehabilitation. The most frequent causes of acquired brain damage are cardiovascular accidents (ictus) and traumatic brain injury.

Meeting of the Vocational Youth Ministry

Province of Latin America

Members of the Vocational Youth Ministry (PJV) social team from the Province of Latin America got together between 26 October and 2 November. The sisters taking part were: Mónica, Catalina, Judith, Maria Zilda, Geovana, Marilene and Nayara. The theme chosen to reflect on over these days was "expanding the store of hospitality", and the main challenge was "discovering how to do it".



Sisters taking part in the meeting

During the meeting, the sisters worked on evaluating the Latin America programme in this area, reflecting on the youth reality and vocational culture on this continent and commenting on the main priorities of the PJV team. The sisters were overjoyed to see how much effort is channelled into developing PJV activities in the different Latin American countries..



Hospitality without borders...



Staff and activities at the centre

The "Guardian Angel Learning Centre" was created in 1999 by the Congregation of the Sisters Hospitallers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, with a view to educating and helping, financially and socially, children and young people from the most vulnerable and disadvantaged families in the area. This school, located in Northwood Village, Pasig City (Philippines), facilitates the development and all-round growth of pupils by taking a holistic approach to education.

Education programme

The centre offers a complete education programme in the following academic years:

- Pre-school: nursery and early years education.
- Primary Education: from year 1 to year 6.
- Special education: for children and young people with functional diversity.

Furthermore, at all levels, a series of additional services are offered, such as: individualised tutorial programmes for each pupil, occupational therapy, language therapy, summer programmes... in line with the school's primary objective to foster the complete development of children, not only at an academic level but also in spiritual and moral values that will offer them autonomy in the future, the school activities available include the following: seminars for parents, catechesis and prayer meetings to share the Word of God.

By improving the human and Christian education of the pupils and their families, they are provided with valid tools to cope with and resolve problems that they come across in their everyday life, in a way that is in keeping with the teachings of Christ.

The majority of pupils come from nearby municipalities. Since it opened, the centre has received over 4,000 children, who have continued their studies in various secondary schools. It currently has around 200 pupils in total.

Association "*Insieme si puo. Per una solidarieta piu viva*" ("Together we can. For livelier solidarity")

The association "*Insieme si puo. Per una solidarieta piu viva*" ("Together we can. For livelier solidarity"), based in Italy, collaborates and provides valuable assistance to our learning centre in the Philippines. Through a complete sponsorship programme, this association enables numerous children with no financial means to receive an education at our "Guardian Angel Learning Centre".

Merry Christmas and a Happy 2018!



"Maison Sainte Germaine" run by the Sisters Hospitallers in Paris (France)

May the star of newborn Jesus light our path and fill us with joy, love, peace and hope!

Important dates: December, January and February

- General Meeting of the Vocational Ministry, at the Headquarters in Rome (Italy) from 29 November to 6 December, organised by Sister Ana Lucía Castro, Third General Councillor.
 - * Within the general meeting of the vocational ministry, the sisters taking part also attended a Congress about the Vocational Ministry and Consecrated Life: Horizons and Hopes, from 1 to 3 December, organised by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, at Regina Apostolorum University, located in Rome (Italy).
- II Hospitallers of Africa Meeting in Dapaong (Togo) from 8 to 16 December, in the presence of Sister Anabela Carneiro, General Superior, Sister María Asunción Riopedre, Vicar and First General Councillor, and Sister Andrea Calvo, Fourth General Councillor, and member of the CHAF.
- VII Mental Health and Psychosocial Rehabilitation Congress, on 19 and 20 December in Madrid (Spain).
- Meeting of the Health Ministry, entitled "Health Ministry in the Service of Life", from 19 to 22 January, in the provincial headquarters for Latin America in Sao Paulo (Brazil).
- World Day for Consecrated Life, 2 February.

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