



NOVITIATE TIMES

BY EEN

Welcome and goodbye!

It is the end of our one year journey together here, in the novitiate. The months of April and May were very rich for different meetings, encounters, celebrations, good byes and welcome.

Before saying words of thanks and good bye to our sr. Mary Joy, we were “invited” by her to the Philippines as she was sharing with us about her home country and province as a part of our cultural days. Besides seeing all the beautiful pictures and videos we could taste delicious food and cake prepared by Filipino sisters in our generalate community. To learn something more about Filipino cuisine, we were helping and assisting in preparation. The day was extended to the next day as we continued our being together with s. Mary Joy in a Filipino way by enjoying BBQ- grilled fish, chicken, kasawa and vegetable. To share our joy and experiences, we invited our novitiate companions- the SSND community of novices and sisters. In fact, it has been somehow saying good bye to Joy and her good bye to all the group. The Ursuline novices are having their 30- days retreat so they could not participate. So, and now, there is TIME as wise Cohelet says- “TIME FOR EVERYTHING AND A SEASON FOR EVERY ACTIVITY UNDER THE HEAVENS...” We say BIG THANKS and GOOD BYE to our dear

sr. Mary Joy. I am very grateful for having such companion and sister with me since very beginning as we started this common European novitiate. We have started with often spoken words “we will see” and I would use the words from the Book of Genesis and “and God saw, IT WAS GOOD” and with Mary Joy, “IT WAS VERY GOOD.”

As the life goes on, so with us too and we WELCOME in our small community **Sr. Matilda**, the student sister from Ghana. I am very glad that she is open to share her life with us in our



novitiate. And together with her we WELCOME **Thao** and **Veronika** who arrived to Rome last week and will begin their novitiate journey on May 20, on the feast of Mother Josepha. And this is not an end of farewells. Our **Ida**, **Lenka** and **Mirka** are ready to move on to their home provinces for 6 months apostolic experience. To welcome them is now on you.

“He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end. **I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live.** That each of them may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all their toil—this is the gift of God. I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it.” / Eccl 3: 1-13/ I will end with this wish for all of us. Being aware that everything is a gift, we are the gift to each other. Sr. Laura, SSps



St. Arnold's day in Rome

On January 15 our Novitiate community was invited to celebrate St. Arnold's day together with SSps and SVD Generalate Communities in the SVD Generalate. Program started with talk of Fr. Andrzej Miotk about Fr. Arnold's leadership qualities. We did our best to understand because the speech was in Italian, fortunately with help of the Holy Spirit we were able to catch the main points...virtues of humility, justice, strength and temperance. Holy Mass celebration was accompanied by many songs and dances from different countries and cultures in which participated both SVD's and SSps's with lay people – especially African and Philippine communities here in Rome. After Eucharist we were together also for festive lunch - we enjoyed especially beautiful intercultural communion among whole Arnoldus family full of joy.

German cultural day

On Sunday, February 12, the German cultural day was celebrated in our community. Ida in cooperation with her guests – sr. Miriam, sr. Maria Theresia, sr. Ortrud from Generalate Community and sr. Michaela Leifgen (who came to us from Germany for classes about vows) prepared for all of us a beautiful program: bilingual prayers, short videos about German culture (Do you know, how to celebrate Schützenfest or who is Berd das Brot?) Holy Mass was celebrated by Helmut Engel SJ from Collegium Germanicum. It was accompanied by nice singing of German



liturgical songs. After tasty lunch accompanied by an apple cake and beer sr. Michaela presented to us German province's communities and apostolates. We also a lot of fun with learning German language – a hover is translated literally as a dust sucker, or a slug as a naked snail. Thanks to all for nice time together – Danke schön!



Czech cultural day

Our monthly cultural day in march was Czech. Lenka prepared with support of our Slovak sisters in the community a tasty Czech day. During short lectures we were introduced into the history of the Czech Republic and we got to know some really interesting details. Did you know, that Czech Republic has more than 2000 castles and that is according to the number of inhabitants the highest number worldwide. We were also introduced to Maul, the Czech animated comic figure which is well known also in other countries. Beside that we had a very enriching day, accompanied by prayers and a creatively prepared way of the cross.



Retreat in Nemi

Supported by prayers of many benefactors (thank you all!) we spent our eight-day accompanied retreat in SVD Retreat House in Nemi. Our spiritual guide during this time was Sr.

Gracy Anthony SSpS who came to us from the Spirituality Centre in Steyl. We were also very thankful for Fr. Peter McHugh SVD, who celebrated Holy Masses for us. We enjoyed beautiful cooperation between Sr. Gracy and Fr. Peter, when our personal readings for every day given to each of us by Sr. Gracy were fitting together with Fr. Peter's homilies. All of us appreciated prayerful atmosphere of Holy Trinity Adoration Chapel – the Blessed Sacrament was placed



in the Globe held in hands of persons of the Father and Holy Spirit. It was a very meaningful symbol for us. We also enjoyed beautiful surrounding of the Retreat House – early spring on the meadows,

awesome sunsets above the sea, a peaceful lake, and the old town of Nemi with the church with statue of smiling Christ Crucified. We also felt very much at home in the SVD Retreat House – pictures of our founders, images of the Holy Spirit or Holy Trinity were in every corner. Finally the most important thing – the God's grace was with us and presence of Holy Spirit was felt strongly. We came back to our Novitiate full of joy a strength.

Classes on the Vows

Our main topic in January and February 2017 were religious vows. We had five classes with Sr. Catherine Joseph Droste, OP on "Theology of the Vows", starting on January 10th. We were meeting on Tuesdays together with OSU and SSND Novices. Further, our 2nd Inter-novitiate meeting was on "Emotions and Vows" with facilitators Sr. Michaela Leifgen, SSpS and Sr. Brenda Dolphin, RSM. Also the classes with Sr. Laura were on vows. And Sr. Ortrud kindly accepted an invitation to speak about Vita Consecrata.

This time was for us both the time for study and for reflection. The classes with Sr. Catherine were theologically profound and very practical at the same time. First session was on the vows in general, then we had one session on each of the three vows and the class was concluded with the vows and the common life. Each time we were given further readings although the class itself was very rich for further reflection. We were asked by Sr. Laura and Sr. Mary Joy to write down these our further reflections which was helpful in the sense of conceptualizing our thoughts and insights. What was also very enriching there was the space for questions and discussion at each class and also - less formally - during the breaks.

One of the ever-present messages throughout the classes was a need to know "the why". First day of the seminar on "Emotions and Vows"



was on introduction to emotions and the afternoon session was on the vow of chastity. Second day was dedicated to the vow of poverty and obedience. Sr. Brenda and Sr. Michaela were very nicely cooperating and complementing each other in presenting the topic. They also prepared several case studies and we were also invited to discuss the presented materials in pairs or groups. The classes were deep and penetrating, urging to further reflection. We are very thankful to Sr. Laura and Sr. Mary Joy for arranging for us these classes and to the sisters – speakers – for their elaborate preparation of the topics, for sharing their personal experience and for their openness to answer our questions.

Class on Mariology

One of our last classes in our first year of novitiate was on Mariology. Sr. Selvi, taught us in three sessions the situation and position of women in the time of Christ and the following centuries. We compared this image of woman and motherhood to the situation of today and we discussed the challenges women are facing in different cultures and societies. The background of the four Marian Dogmas in the church and the history and development to the today's point of view were other points in our class. In the beginning of every session one of us shared about a Marian shrine or pilgrimage place in our home countries and thus we got an impression of different devotions. Thank you, Sr. Selvi, for sharing your knowledge and experience with us, as we look back on a very enriching time with you!

Class on communication

How to communicate good news among people?! This question accompanied us through two sessions with the head of the world SSps communication office - Sr. Marides. We were introduced in the development of communication among the sisters and to the people in the world. In the beginning St. Arnold used print media to communicate his mission to the people. Also inside the congregations news were communicated through print media in form of newsletters and printed notes. However - every generation has to find own ways to spread the news of Gospel. Today we are facing the world wide web as basis to communicate (it saves not only paper...) and so our today's generation is called to be missionaries also in social media and websites. Our world SSps website (www.worldssps.org) was introduced to us and ways how sisters can share news among themselves and among people in the future. Sr. Marides explained us how the communication office is working and which challenges they are facing in countries with weak internet connection or communist governments. Beside the class we had long discussions during breaks and lunch and with gratitude we are looking forward for good news from the communication office!

Easter in Rome

Lenten time we spent in atmosphere of deepening our relationship with Christ especially through classes of Christology with main question: Who is He for me? During Lent we prepared special Way of the Cross every Sunday evening in our community too – for example meditations of Pope Francis with short parts of film Sophie Scholl - a young woman, who was executed in Germany during Second World War or another one with reflections about Christ's freedom in connection with missionary life of Sr. Veronika Theresia.

We had also great possibility to attend the way of cross in Colosseo in Friday before Holy Week. Palm Sunday we celebrated together in St. Peter's Square with Holy Father – we brought home also some blessed olive branches.... Holy Thursday liturgy and Memory of the Last Supper we spent together with Generalate Community in calm prayerful



atmosphere. During supper we remembered also Jewish traditions of Pascha. Good Friday our community spent in silence and in the afternoon we had a possibility to privately attend liturgies in different places in Rome – me, Mirka and Sr. Joy decided to go to Santa Croce di Gerusalemme, where we could honour relics of the Holy Cross brought to Rome by St. Helena. Ida went with Sr. Ortrud for liturgy in German language to St. Ignatius Church and Sr. Laura went to Slovak Collegio.



Easter Vigil we celebrated together in nearby St. Andrea Parish. We were very touched by baptism of 8-years old girl Greta there. Easter Sunday we celebrated in our community with mixture of our national traditions and Monday we enjoyed whole day again with Generalate Community. We are very grateful for all graces we received during this blessed time.

“I will give thanks to you, LORD, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonderful deeds.” (Ps 9:1)

Dear Sisters, we would like to thank you for accompanying us with your prayers throughout our canonical year of the Novitiate. We are grateful for your support, for your interest for us and once again we thank you for your closeness in the prayer.

The past year was a blessed time for us in many ways - there is really a lot what we are to be grateful for. For all that we give praise and thanks to the Lord for “He is good; His love endures forever” (1 Chr 5:13). And in Him we give thanks to Sr. Laura, Sr. Mary Joy and the Generalate Community for accompanying us here, to our provinces and all the sisters for their support, to all our benefactors and to all the people that God placed on our way.

We are now slowly preparing to leave for the 6-month apostolic experience to our respective provinces. We look forward and at the same time there is prudence in our eagerness since we do not know what is ahead of us. We trust that the good Lord has everything in His hands and we pray for the openness to receive what He prepared for us there. We thus would like to anew ask you for your prayers. And before we leave we have an opportunity to meet two future novices – Veronika and Thao. We look very much forward to welcome them here and to spend these two weeks together! May this our short common journey be a joyful experience for all of us.

