

# BRIDGES



February 16, 2024

## RJM FORMATION in 2024

The recent international meeting of RJM formators in Yaoundé, Cameroun, together with the data from the just released Annual Report of the Congregation, has called our attention to the importance of formation as we look to becoming more fully “One Apostolic Body.” This issue of BRIDGES offers an overview of current experiences and initiatives in our ongoing efforts to respond to the call that is ours in today’s world.



### *Annual Report Gives Overview of Formation*

Drawing on the data provided by RJM’s around the world, the Annual Report of the Congregation offers food for reflection on how and where we are growing, and where formation needs are the greatest.

Given below are some of the things we have learned:

- At present, there are **128** women in **initial formation**, the category that includes Postulancy, Novitiate, and the period of Temporary Vows.
- Breaking this down, there are **34** **postulant**, **30** **novices**, and **64** **junior sisters**.
- The majority of newer members, those in initial formation, come from **Africa (32)**, **Pakistan (24)**, and the **Indian Provinces**—which include missions in **Philippines and East Timor (50)**.
- In 2023, there were **14** **temporary professions** and **15** **perpetual professions**, bringing the total number of professed sisters in the Congregation to **961**.

### *INTERNATIONAL MEETING - Yaoundé, Cameroon*

From January 22 to 26, formation personnel from our 11 RJM Provinces and African Delegation, along with members of our general government, gathered in Yaoundé, Cameroun. The theme for the 5-day conference was: *Growing in Healthy and Just Relationships in Mission, in Community and with Family.*

Each day opened with Eucharistic liturgy accompanied by the sound of African drums and the delightful voices our young African novices. In her opening address, Sr. Monica presented formation as a lifelong process that begins in initial formation and is grounded in the deep personal experience of a good God. Other presenters included members of our general government along with RJM’s Teresa de Jesus Plaza (Spain), Ruth Otero (Argentina), M. Thomas Theophile Nug, a member of International Association of Communities of Christian Life and Soeur Leonie Toua, ODN, a professor in educational sciences. Time for reflection and small group meetings provided opportunities for integrating the presentations through a rich exchange of means for practical implementation and creative ideas for new approaches to formation. The cross-cultural experience was truly amazing!

The warm welcome by our African Sisters, the sharing of delicious African cooking, afternoon visits to local JM schools and other cultural sites, all combined to create an ambiance for a joyful and deep sharing among sisters. A culminating experience for me was a visit to the novitiate community in Yaoundé, Simbok that awaits our Haitian postulant, Marie Jo Desir.



- Sr. Mary Bourdon

## **INTERNATIONAL JUNIORATE - Valencia, Spain**

The juniorate continues in an intensive way, each one deepening from her own lived experiences, returning to her personal, community and social history.

It is a time to be grateful and discover how God is present in my walk, however, invitations also arise to return to questions, which have accompanied me throughout my process.

We have had several activities in these months, some significant ones were:



**Experiences in infirmaries of the Province of Spain**  
(on left, in Barcelona)



**Workshops and training spaces** (above):

JPIC Diploma (Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation)

ES.PE.RE (Schools of forgiveness and reconciliation).

We end this time with the celebration of the feast of Saint Claudine, uniting the communities of Valencia to celebrate.

I wish you a good time of Lent and happy Easter.

- Sr. Middia Doute

## **TERTIANS PREPARE FOR LONG RETREAT**

The International Tertianship, initiated in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century by the Congregation, has always been a tool for personal renewal as well as an opportunity for acquiring a wider knowledge of the Congregation, as RJM's met sisters from different parts of the world. In recent years, the program has alternated between English and Spanish-speaking groups. Tertians arrive at the Generalate in January for a 6-month experience that includes Congregational studies, the 30-day retreat, as well as time in Loyola and Lyon.

This year's group, pictured on the right, recently had a week of Zoom conferences with Sr. Rosemary Mangan in preparation for the 30-day retreat. The "zoom" meeting was something of a reunion with sisters she had met previously in Africa, India and Pakistan.

With their director, Sr. Shanty George, the group will soon be leaving for Spain, where they will visit Montserrat and Manresa before going to Loyola for the retreat, which begins on February 19<sup>th</sup>.

- Sr. Rosemary Mangan





## BRITTANY - 1st year of Profession

Over winter holidays I had the opportunity to return to the port city of Tangier, Morocco for a week, where the Spanish-Morocco province (new name change following the assembly at the end of the general visit) has both a home for girls whose current family situation prevents them from being able to live with their family and a preschool with 100 children ages three to five years-old. This time I travelled with María García, who is also in formation, joining Elvira and Carmen, two out of the three from the community in Tangier, over the New Year's Holiday.



This was my second time in Morocco, after having the opportunity this past summer to help with a summer camp at the school for a few weeks. I continue to be amazed by the people and culture in Tangier. Despite only having the narrow strait of Gibraltar separating Morocco from Spain, with clear views of Spain from the roof of the girls home, the two countries are very distinct with Morocco being a Muslim dominated nation with very strict rules on not evangelizing the people of Morocco in Christianity. In fact, we're not allowed to speak of anything related to Christianity as it would be considered a crime.

The city itself is beautiful with a lot of history, the city center, just a few blocks away from the house, is full of handmade crafts and local market ware, and the city in general is very well maintained with a lot of parks full of grass and areas for families to gather and children to play and that's not to mention the enormous white sand beach that runs along the center of the city and is a favorite place to cool off in the hot summers. The food is delicious with a lot of flavors, with curry being used in almost all the foods. The official languages are classic Arabic and French, but the common person speaks a form of Arabic called Darija.

Given the two official languages, students in school are required to learn both, which means they are learning how to read and write Latin letters from left to right and well as Arabic letters from right to left. Luckily in our home the four women who are employed to take care of the girls, spend time each afternoon helping the nine girls, aged 6 to 13 years, with their homework. As you can imagine, it's often hard for the students to keep straight when to write from left to right and right to left and the formation of the letters. That is in addition to neither language being their mother tongue! The girls in the home often are delayed in starting school especially depending on the age when they enter the home, so having the help is incredibly important.

María and I were able to enjoy time playing at local parks with the girls while also seeing what daily life is like with chores, studies, and playtime. We also spent days cleaning out two large rooms on the compound that were previously used by Franciscan sisters who used to have a school for deaf children. The rooms are being prepared for a holy week young adult retreat/experience we are having for a group from Spain as part of the provincial youth/young adult network. The space will also be used in the future for parent meetings and activities in the school.

And we rang in the new year in the most "inter" experience I've ever had, with a group of ten gathered from six different countries of origin, four different religious communities, and two women from sub-Saharan Africa living with some of the sisters temporarily as they make their way to Europe in search of a better life. Despite being in Morocco, the Spanish tradition of eating twelve grapes with each clang of the new year bell carried on, even though we had to modify it to six grapes and six slices of mandarin oranges because we couldn't find enough grapes.



- Sr. Brittany Galvin

## **ON-GOING FORMATION PROGRAM 2024**

Beginning in 2022, the General Government initiated a plan of on-going formation consisting of a series of webinars presented by RJM's. Although the plan was initially conceived for formators, videos of the sessions will be made available to others.

Most recently, **Sr. Patricia Santos** gave input and led a discussion on ***Empowering of Women***, the subject that was the focus of her graduate studies in pastoral theology. Patricia spent some time in the USA-Haiti Province, living at Sophia House while working for her licentiate in theology at Boston College.

Coming up in this program:

<b><i>New Trends in Theology</i></b>	Junkal Guevara, rjm	SPAIN	April 13, 2024
<b><i>Missionary Spirit</i></b>	Linda Abicha, rjm	GABON, AFRICA	June 29, 2024
<b><i>Forms of Slavery Today</i></b>	M. Paz Viniegra, rjm	MEXICO	Oct. 26, 2024
<b><i>Caring for the Common Home</i></b>	Patricia Lynott, rjm	IRELAND	Nov. 30, 2024

AS THE VIDEOS BECOME AVAILABLE, WE WILL LET YOU KNOW

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## **HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO THOSE WITH MARCH BIRTHDAYS**



March 7	Valle Chías González-Blanch
March 19	Middia Doute, RJM
March 26	Mary Crépeau, RJM
March 28	Anne Magner, RJM
March 31	Alice Ouimette, RJM

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## **STATEMENT ON HAITI**

On behalf of the RJM USA-Haiti Province, the Leadership Team signed on to a Statement calling for the restoration of order and democracy in Haiti.



The statement went to Congress and the White House on February 7, the day when Haiti's presidents are to hand over power to an elected successor, and urges Congress and the Administration support a Haitian-led process to prepare for free and fair elections, end the flow of weapons into Haiti, and invest in anti-corruption measures and criminal justice reform. RJM joined Quixote Center, the Sisters of Mercy, and the three branches of the Maryknoll Community in signing. The full statement is attached to Bridges.

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## Care of Creation Committee

A Message from Greenpeace: [www.greenpeace.org](http://www.greenpeace.org)

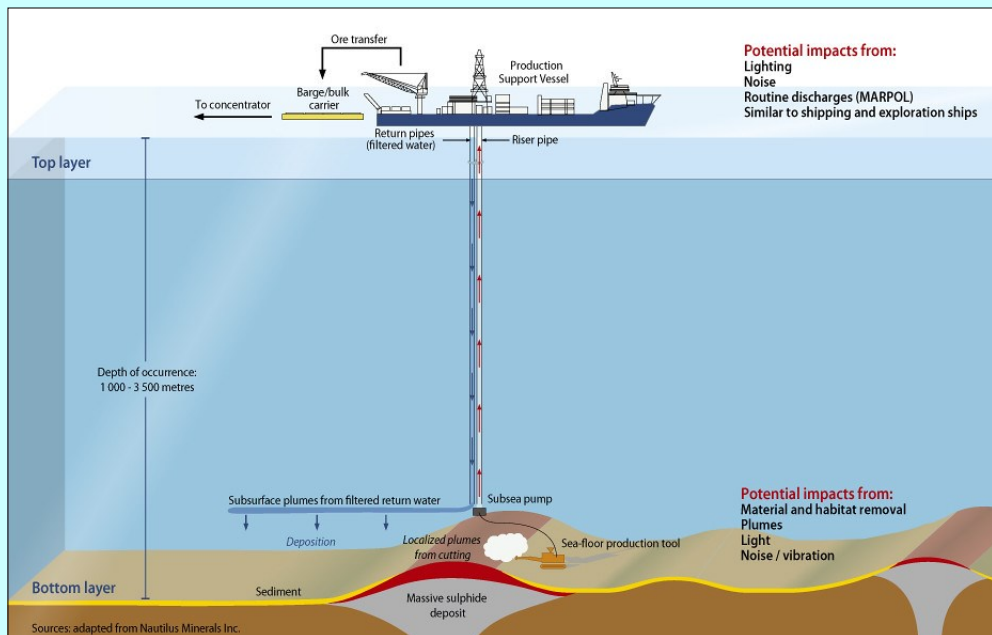
(Below is an excerpt of a recent Press Release, with internet graphic)

### Why is fighting deep sea mining so important?

The full environmental impacts of deep seabed mining are hard to predict as they're invading ecosystems we know too little about. But scientists are clear that deep sea mining will result in the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem functioning that would be irreversible on multi-generational timescales.

Mass amounts of carbon are stored in deep sea sediments as well as absorbed by ocean water itself.

We must call on our government to permanently ban deep sea mining in U.S. waters, block our ports from multinational corporations seeking to benefit from ocean destruction, and support a moratorium at the international level to stop commercial deep sea mining operations from launching in late 2024 or before sufficient regulations are in place.



- Submitted by Srs. Diane Dube and Doris Bissonnette



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## **MASS FOR THE FEAST OF ST. CLAUDINE THEVENET and 35<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF JESUS-MARY PARISH SCHOOL**

The students and faculty of Jesus-Mary Parish School celebrated their school feast day on February 3rd, the feast of St. Claudine.

On the right is the parade to the church, a video of which is attached to Bridges.



Students, preschool through ninth grade, animated the liturgy in honor of St. Claudine at a nine AM mass at Notre Dame de la Chandeleur Church in Gros Morne. The Concelebrants were Fr. Zacharie St. Jean, SMM, Fr. Dachemy Destine, Fr. Jeremie, and Fr. Alex Jean Pierre, SMM.

At the beginning of mass and several time during the mass, special friends of the school, who have gone on before us and who certainly shared St. Claudine's spirit, were remembered: Russell Kenney, Fr. Tony Coote, Sr. Mary Sullivan, RSM, Kathleen Crane Viola and our sisters Isa Sola and Nazareth Ybarra.

The liturgical dancers (below) were prepared by Postulant Mary-Jo Desir.



- Sr. Pat Dillon



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## PROVINCE OFFICE

February 19

Provincial Office closed for Presidents' Day

March 1

Next Bridges published (articles due by Wednesday 2/28 at noon)

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## MESSAGE OF THANKS

Below is a message from Jennifer Morse-Meisenkothen, Sr. Teresita Morse's niece, whom she describes as "a courageous fighter with a capacity to endure for the sake of her loved ones".



*Dear Sisters of Religious of Jesus and Mary,*

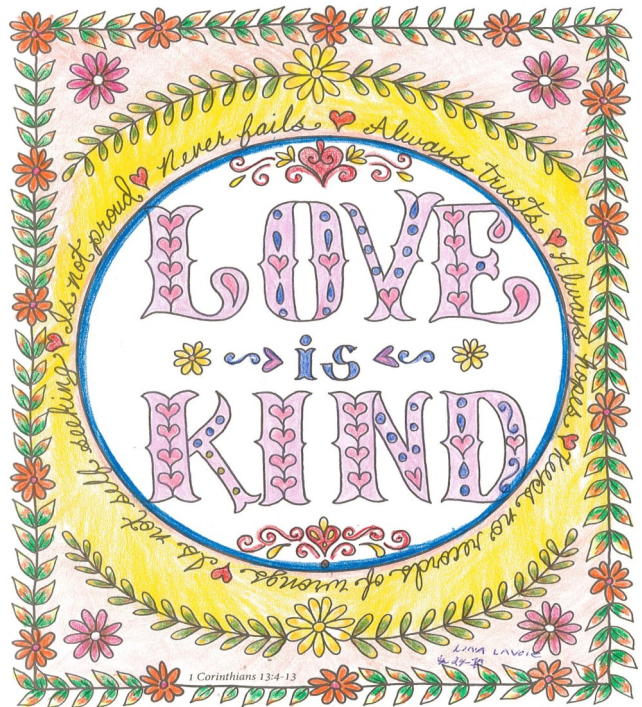
*Thank you for your prayers throughout my illness and treatment. I am so grateful for all of them. They were a constant comfort to me as I went through chemotherapy and surgery. I have finished all treatment. And the surgeons were able to remove all visible cancer. I am so happy to be feeling so much better and able to help my family again.*

*Love, Jennifer*

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## PRAYERS ARE REQUESTED FOR...

- Sr. Jacqueline Jacques who is now on hospice care at Life Care Center of Attleboro;
- Catherine Crowley, a long-term member of the Family of Jesus and Mary and generous donor to the RJMs, who is gravely ill;
- Sr. Claudette Lapointe, who is progressing in her recovery and seeks continued prayer that she is able to return home soon;
- Continuing Prayers for: Colleen Pusateri who is the daughter of Haiti Mission supporter Lorrie Kenney, and for Jennifer Morse-Meisenkothen who is the niece of Sr. Teresita Morse;
- The Meadows (Sr. Anne Magner), as this week's community for special prayer.



**WE ALSO PRAY FOR ALL THE NEEDS OF OUR RJM SISTERS,  
FAMILY AND FRIENDS.**

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**Praised Forever Be Jesus and Mary**