

VOCATION ALIVE - Partners in Mission **Julie Cachia on behalf of the Vocation-Animation Committee**

The *Mission Alive!* program facilitated by Sr. Dolores Clerico, SSJ, Philadelphia in Le Puy, France in September invited us on a journey of the heart into the history, mission and spiritual traditions of the Sisters of St. Joseph. We were encouraged to consider ourselves pilgrims open to exploring how this experience would stir our hearts and how God was calling us. My curiosity was learning how mission would more deeply inform my vocation ministry.

Sr. Dolores shared that a charism for any religious congregation is needed to live out its mission. I learnt that for a Sister of St. Joseph who has been called to live within the giftedness of this charism or Associates living within that same spirit, it is a profound experience, a deep desire drawing one wholeheartedly to embrace the CSJ mission of union love - loving and serving God and the dear neighbour. It is a mission that fosters an inherent unity that already exists within the heart of all creation; an inherent union which is God's design for all creation. As Thomas Merton, OCSO writes, "We are already one. But we imagine we are not. And what we have to recover is our original unity. What we have to be is what we already are."

As our group walked through the streets of Le Puy reflecting and praying at certain points of historical interest, I appreciated more profoundly how the ordinary work of these first six women was provided with extraordinary care. Their actions demonstrated that their mission of unifying love was an active, practical and real love. These women lived their call by tending to the sick, dying and orphaned. Through their actions, others came to know and experience God's unconditional love in simple and yet creative, courageous ways.

For centuries, the Sisters of St. Joseph have been widening their tent by living, inviting and sharing this dream of loving unity through their ministries of care, compassion and social justice. By their example, we are invited to make this mission our life's journey. We are called to be present to and bring this unifying love into the messiness, sufferings, and joys of everyday living. Author Kathleen Cahalan wrote beautifully that vocation is a relationship between our lives and God's purpose.



I am called
by God,
to follow,
as I am,
from grief,
for service,
in suffering,
through others,
within God.

We are called by God, to follow Jesus' mission of service for others sharing who we are and knowing that we are held in God's embracing love.

As our time in Le Puy came to end, what spoke to me was that vocation ministry with the Sisters of St. Joseph is about being a lay partner in mission – doing and being my best from where I am in this time bringing the CSJ mission alive! In fact, being a lay partner in mission is an invitation open to everyone. Every day, we are invited to participate with the Sisters in this dance of unioning love with Divine Love as our partner. How exciting, hope-filled and much needed for our future is this mission of unity where all shall be one!

