

FEBRUARY 2026



SSpS MISSION

Called by the Spirit · Embracing the World

Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters | USA & Caribbean

RETURN TO ME

*With Your
Whole Heart*

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holy spirit sisters usa



Dear Partners in Mission,

Once again, we find ourselves embarking on a new Lenten journey, and our cover theme, "Return to Me with your whole heart," (*Joel 2:12*) coupled with Sr. Evelyn Lobo, SSpS's Lenten Prayer Service, "Turning Back, Returning Home," can set the tone for this journey.

This year we, Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters, celebrate 125 years of missionary service in the USA. In these 125 years, our Sisters have served the people of God through many and diverse ministries—education, healthcare, parish ministry, pastoral care, care of the elderly, catechesis, ministry to migrants...—as the Spirit has led us. We are grateful, inspired, and animated by the great missionary spirit of Mother Leonarda and her small group of companions, Sr. Alexia, Sr. Clara, Sr. Foureria, and Sr. Martina, who laid the foundation stone of our missionary work here in the USA. We will share some more about this important milestone in the life of our Congregation in our next edition. On a Congregational level, our focus for 2026 is "Unity in Diversity." Sr. Rose Therese Nolte, SSpS, our JPIC Coordinator, shares a reflection on this theme from the perspective of Justice and Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC).

Those of you who are especially attentive may have noticed that our logo has changed. Included in this issue is an explanation for that change and a reflection on the meaning of our new logo by our Congregational Leader, Sr. Miriam Altenhofen, SSpS.

We are delighted to feature an interesting article from Deanne Drozd, who, along with her husband, Tom, is a longtime friend of the SSpS and a HSMA member. Deanne, in her piece "Bringing Mission to Life with the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters and the Sisters of Christian Charity," shares with us some of her wonderful experiences and insights about mission. The selfless commitment of Deanne and her husband, Tom, to missionary service is truly inspiring.

Our Sisters in Jamaica give us an update on the response to the destruction caused by Hurricane Melissa, which struck the island in October of 2025. While there were upwards of forty-five fatalities and severe damage, it is uplifting to read how swiftly and generously people responded.

On a spiritual note, we continue our Bible study with Sr. Gabriele Hölzer SSpS. In her reflection from Mark's Gospel (Mk. 6:30-44), we read how Jesus invites His apostles—and us—to "Come and rest a while." This Lenten season, I pray that each of us may find time each day to respond to this invitation to "rest a while" in His presence.

Sr. Ann Ita Walsh, SSpS

Our New Congregational Logo

Sr. Miriam Altenhofen, SSpS (Congregational Leader)



Missionary Sisters
Servants of the Holy Spirit

It has been a long and challenging process, to find a logo where we all can identify with. This new logo is not just a design, it's a symbol, a reflection of our identity and mission, crafted with deep thought, prayer, and discernment. It embodies who we are and calls us to be who we are becoming. And so, I want to begin not with the design, but with the Spirit.

THE SPIRIT WHO MOVES US

At the heart of our new logo is a dove. But not just any dove, this one is alive with motion. It reminds us of the Spirit who hovered over the waters at creation when everything was chaos (Gn. 1:1-2). The Spirit who spoke through the prophets and prophetess. The Spirit who is capable of giving life back to what is dead (Ez. 37:4-14). The Spirit who made possible the incarnation in Mary's womb (Luke 1). The same Spirit who descended upon Jesus at His baptism and confirmed His divine affiliation (Luke 3:21). The Spirit who filled the room at Pentecost with wind and fire, with courage and boldness (Act 2:1). The Spirit who was given to the disciples and to us.

This same Spirit breathes into our lives, calling us anew each day. She is the breath in our discernment, the voice in our silence, the wind that pushes us beyond our comfort zones. She leads us into new places, unfamiliar lands, into brokenness, into resurrection. And yes, sometimes even into change.

This dove in our logo looks forward because she is present in the whole history and in the cosmos. She is not still. She moves. She invites us to be present and at the same time to look forward... to read the signs of time. We are invited to enter into this dance. We are never static. We are always on the way. Can we feel Her breath today, moving among us? Can we welcome the life She brings?

THE CROSS WE EMBRACE

Flowing with the dove is the cross. Not a heavy cross of shame, but the cross of love—the kind Jesus bore willingly for the sake of others. The cross in our logo has the same shape as the cross that we wear [sic]. This cross is subtle, but firm. It stands quietly, reminding us of Christ's love that redeems all things. Jesus himself took our fragile and limited condition and devoted himself to deliverance and healing. He made no one suffer and when he was able to condemn, he exchanged punishment for forgiveness.

The cross takes on its true liberating and healing meaning when the risen Jesus makes it a sign of good news. Yes, the world is broken, and so are we. But we do not run away. We stay. We forgive. We stand. We serve, and by doing that we, SSpS, become Good News for all those who encounter us. The cross teaches us to give ourselves fully, as our Chapter Direction invites us: "We vow to radically live our consecration", to live the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience, not as rules but as signs of radical love.

The cross invites us to see God even in what is cracked, wounded, and unfinished. And to reflect that same compassion to others. "We boldly join with our God of compassion, as instruments of transformation in the world." (Congregational Directions Epilogue.) The cross says: Your love, when given freely, is transforming.

THE GLOBE THAT HOLDS US ALL

This globe is not a circle of perfection. It is a world in motion. It symbolizes our global mission, yes—but more than that, it reflects the wide, open heart of our Congregation. We live in times of increasing rejection and fear of the other, and old fears and rivalries that we thought we had overcome have resurfaced. We are called to recover the basic condition that we are sisters and brothers. Called to be able to enter other lands without being hurt and without hurting, because we are anointed by the same Spirit and capable of accompanying in fragility.

A globe that can be seen as "open arms." We SSpS receive all. Our communities are places where anyone can enter and feel embraced, accepted as they are. Our intercultural living is a sign of hope for today's world. As "Fratelli Tutti" invites us: "Let us dream, then, as a single human family, as fellow travelers sharing the same flesh, as children of the same earth, which is our common home, each of us bringing the richness of his or her beliefs and convictions, each of us with his or her own voice, brothers and sisters all!" Hospitality was at the core of our Founding Generation. Therefore, we do not build walls. We do not cling to comfort. We go. We cross borders. We listen. We learn. We serve.

The openness of the globe says: "There is still more to do. More to love. More to embrace." It is a gentle call to stay flexible, faithful, open, and fearless.

Turning Back, Returning Home

Sr. Evelyn Lobo, SSpS | Director of HSMA

Leader: Loving God, as we enter this Lenten season, draw us closer to You. Quiet the noise around us and within us, help us to slow down so we can hear Your voice, Your message more loudly, see your signs, Your will more clearly.

All: Let this Lent be a journey, a return to your loving embrace, our true home. Amen.

Reading: Joel 2: 12-18 Even now, says the LORD, return to me with Your whole heart, Rend your hearts, not Your garments, and return to the LORD, Your God. For gracious and merciful is he, slow to anger, rich in kindness, and relenting in punishment.

Reflection (choose one)

Imagine God pleading to you “return to me with your whole heart”. Notice what moves in you. Speak to God about it.

Which of God’s qualities (gracious, merciful, slow to anger, abounding in love) do you most need now?

How would “returning to God with your whole heart” look like in your life right now?

Song: Come back to me (Hosea)

Leader: Like the prodigal son, we return to You, merciful God, rich in love and tenderness, to receive us and restore us.

Response (All): Into Your loving embrace, enduring love

Draw us back from busyness to stillness, from scattered living to centered lives, draw us back...]

Draw us back from noise to stillness, from constant striving to quiet trust.

Draw us back from fear to courage, from hiding our wounds to letting You heal them.

Draw us back from surface living to deep surrender, from outward motions to inward truth.

Draw us back from pride to humility, from shame, guilt and pain to change.

Draw us back from separation to communion, from isolated hearts to gathered people.

Draw us back from wandering to homecoming, from all that pulls us away to all that draws us close to You.

Pause to add your personal intention

Draw me back from to

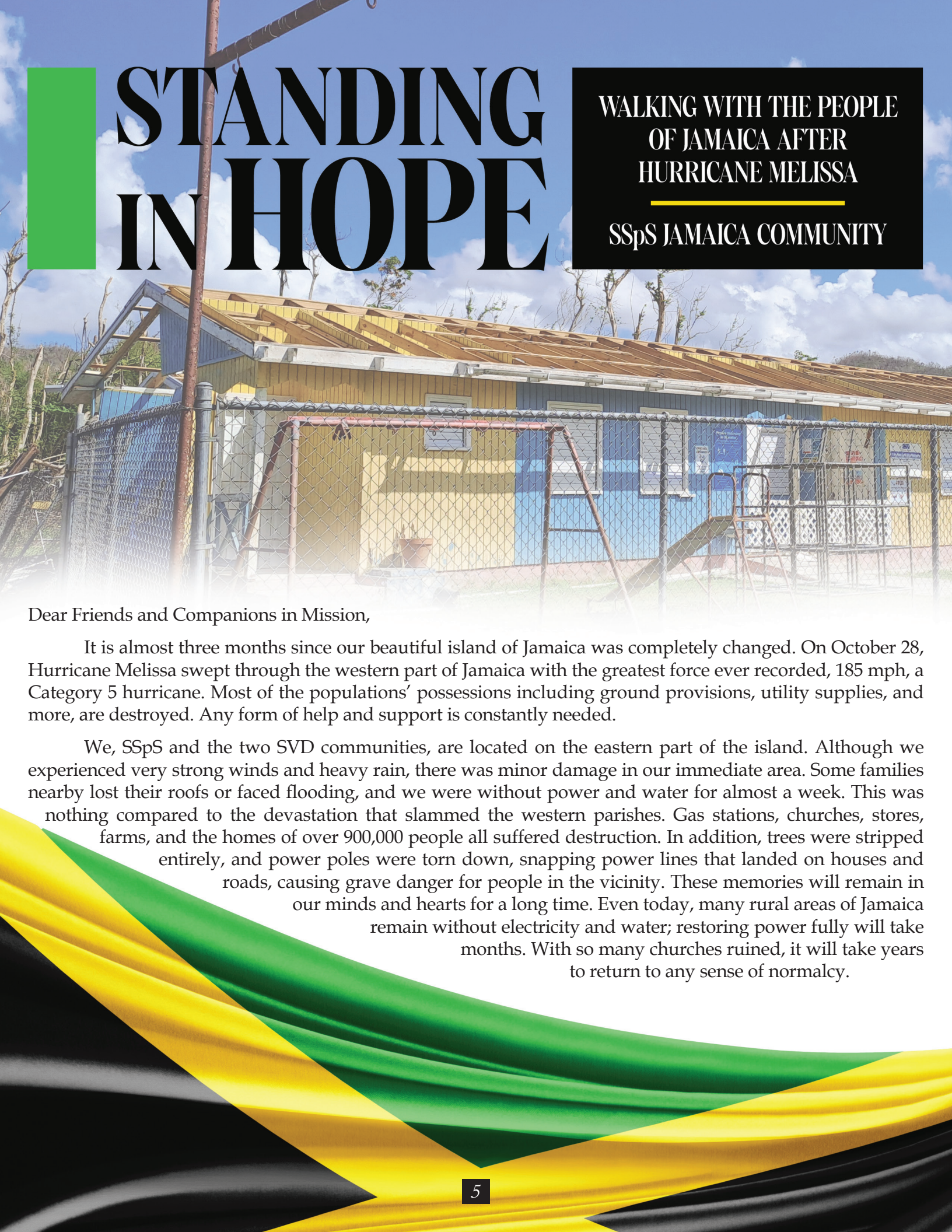
Our Father

Leader: We pray,

All: In love, of love, through love, You have created us, in Your image and likeness. We re-turn to You with our whole being, heart, soul, body, mind. Always ready to welcome us home, into Your hands, we commit our lives. AMEN

“Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love. With patient unfailing love, I have drawn you to myself.

Once again I will build you up, and you will be rebuilt, my dear people.” - Jeremiah 31:3-4



STANDING IN HOPE

WALKING WITH THE PEOPLE
OF JAMAICA AFTER
HURRICANE MELISSA

SSpS JAMAICA COMMUNITY

Dear Friends and Companions in Mission,

It is almost three months since our beautiful island of Jamaica was completely changed. On October 28, Hurricane Melissa swept through the western part of Jamaica with the greatest force ever recorded, 185 mph, a Category 5 hurricane. Most of the populations' possessions including ground provisions, utility supplies, and more, are destroyed. Any form of help and support is constantly needed.

We, SSpS and the two SVD communities, are located on the eastern part of the island. Although we experienced very strong winds and heavy rain, there was minor damage in our immediate area. Some families nearby lost their roofs or faced flooding, and we were without power and water for almost a week. This was nothing compared to the devastation that slammed the western parishes. Gas stations, churches, stores, farms, and the homes of over 900,000 people all suffered destruction. In addition, trees were stripped entirely, and power poles were torn down, snapping power lines that landed on houses and roads, causing grave danger for people in the vicinity. These memories will remain in our minds and hearts for a long time. Even today, many rural areas of Jamaica remain without electricity and water; restoring power fully will take months. With so many churches ruined, it will take years to return to any sense of normalcy.



We were amazed by people's responses. Many organizations arrived quickly to bring relief to the most affected areas, setting up pumps and filters to make river water drinkable, providing hot meals, and distributing tarpaulin for temporary shelter. More help arrived in the weeks following the storm; many people are facing a long term of difficulties.

We Sisters had the opportunity to visit several parishes to deliver food and water. As missionaries, we stand in solidarity with the people to bring hope and let them know they are not forgotten.

Visiting one of the churches seven weeks after Hurricane Melissa, we still could not hide our emotions seeing the great devastation, meeting people carrying water from the river, or searching for food to feed their children. One of our major responses to these needs has been purchasing zinc sheets, nails, and hurricane straps to help families rebuild their roofs. We know that a safe, dry space brings families back together after being scattered in search of shelter. Although we purchased the zinc over a month ago, we are still waiting another month for the delivery, as the factories have a massive backlog. We wait patiently, knowing that while our assistance is but a drop in the ocean of need, it will make a difference to those we serve.

As people of faith, we have learned much about the Jubilee Year of Hope. We now have the opportunity to put those lessons into practice, to bring hope to others, and to be that hope for them. We must not forget them; we must keep them in our hearts through our prayers and our active deeds of hope.

COME & REST AWHILE

(Read Mark 6:30-44)

In Mark's Gospel, immediately following the sending out of the Twelve (Mark 6:7-13), the scene shifts.



Sr. Gabriele Hölzer, SSpS

Herod's Birthday

Mark takes his readers to the palace of "King" Herod. There, a weak, fickle ruler reigns. He celebrates his birthday with his generals and the nobility of his kingdom. They serve the finest food and drinks in abundance. A sensuous atmosphere prevails among the guests. A minor princess is offered half the kingdom for her erotic dance. At the end, she is served a bleeding man's head on a meat platter. Herod, although deeply moved by John's teachings, was incapable of making a clear decision to follow God's law. On the contrary, he succumbs to his wife's deceitful manipulations and readily follows her lead. He sacrifices the prophet and has him beheaded.

The First Multiplication of the Loaves

After a few verses, the first multiplication of the loaves follows (Mark 6:35-44). Approximately 5,000 men, along with their wives and children, are fed. This contrasts sharply with what is happening in Herod's palace: here is the lively and joyous feast, and there the many starving people. The king's inept leadership is causing the people to starve. Thousands are on the move, searching for a better life. More and more people are realizing the unjust social situation in the land.

The Return of the Disciples

At this time, the apostles return from their first missionary endeavor and gather together with Jesus. He had sent them out with a clear mission, and now they have returned to report to him everything they have done, taught, and experienced. Since Jesus is surrounded by a crowd, he invites the apostles, "Come away to a secluded place where we can be alone and rest a while!" They didn't even find time to eat because so many people were coming and going. Jesus wants to share an intimate meal with his "great" disciples, to whom he has just delegated his authority. They get into a boat and sail to a secluded area to be alone. However, the crowd, seeing them go, ran ahead on foot and got there before them. When Jesus gets out of the boat, he sees the crowd and feels compassion for them. They are like sheep without a shepherd. And he teaches them at length. Here, Jesus reveals himself as the true King after God's own heart and as the Good Shepherd of his people. He teaches and feeds his people.

The Role of the Apostles

In his gospel, Mark uses the title "apostles," which means "those sent out," to refer to the Twelve. While Jesus has many disciples who follow him to listen to his teachings and to learn from him, this group of apostles has a very special relationship with him. Jesus initially sent them out to cast out demons, heal the sick, and teach in God's name and authority (Mk 6:7-13). In this scene they actively participate in feeding the crowd (Mark 6:35). The special function of these twelve (representing the twelve tribes of Israel) is to prepare and gather the people of God into the New Israel.

Invitation to Silence

In Biblical language, Jesus' invitation to a solitary place has several levels of meaning. At first, we hear it as an invitation for the apostles to come and rest. It is also an invitation for them to come away together to reflect with Jesus on their mission experiences so they can be encouraged and strengthened by him for the next step.

The place itself has a symbolic meaning because the Gospel describes a setting that is akin to a desert. In the Hebrew Scriptures, the desert is known as the site of encounter with God, as a place of retreat and preparation, and for the 40-year journey to the Promised Land.

This narrative, however, leaves out some intriguing information. We are told that the apostles tell Jesus "everything." But we, the readers, learn no details. All we are told is that the apostles carried out Jesus' mission in word and deed – Mark leaves it at that.

The People's Reaction

In contrast, the reaction of the people is described in detail: countless people, some from afar, are on their way to Jesus. They come and go. The people are out and about and are clearly in great need. Presumably, as was so often the case in antiquity, there was hunger, want, and a shortage of food. That is why the people are out in the streets, that is why they follow the departing boat in large numbers, and why Jesus will first nourish them with words and later with bread.

The Crowd Follows Jesus

The crowd follows Jesus and gathers on the riverbank to welcome him. Jesus reacts to this sight with compassion, literally "with exasperation and deep shock." He recognizes that they are leaderless (they have a king who is solely focused on himself). First, Jesus instructs the disoriented people "at length" and (literally) "many things." Here, too, we learn nothing about the content of Jesus' address, just as we do not know the details of what Jesus discussed with his apostles.

What do these gaps in the information tell us?

In literary studies, such "gaps" in a text are described as prompts to the reader. Readers are invited to fill in these blanks themselves: What might Jesus have said to the people? What fits this situation? What is He likely telling these disoriented, hungry people?

Significance of the gaps

Such gaps often lead to a strong identification with the text because one actively fills the void with one's own knowledge and, of course, with one's own imagination or longing. These gaps can be understood as spiritual calls from the Gospel to identify with the Twelve or with the people.

What do I desire?

What am I yearning for? Which word of Jesus would be an encouragement to me? What need draws me to Jesus? What do I hope for from him? This brief passage packs a punch. Mark extends a special invitation to us. On the one hand, he shows us the people, who are disoriented and whose salvation begins through Jesus and the apostles. At the same time, he also invites us to inner reflection and contemplation. If we continue reading, we learn that everyone ate and was satisfied, and a large quantity of food was left over (Mark 6:43). In Jesus' presence, no one needs to worry about going hungry.

Bringing Mission to Life

with the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters and the Sisters of Christian Charity

By: Deanne and Tom Drozd



What began ten years ago as a quiet, faithful response to the "call to love" has become a living witness to mission, relationship, and community. A small Hearts Afire study group from St. Norbert Catholic Church and Our Lady of the Brook Parish felt moved to reach out to the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters and the Sisters of Christian Charity at the Holy Spirit Convent during the Christmas season. With little fanfare and no expectation of growth, they assembled Christmas stockings, brought simple gifts, and sang carols—offering not just items, but presence.

Those early visits revealed something profound: mission is not measured by scale, but by sincerity. Over the first three years, the bonds between parishioners and Sisters deepened. What started as a gesture of seasonal kindness evolved into shared prayer, shared stories, and shared joy. Out of these encounters, the annual Christmas Social was born—an expression of faith that continues to grow because it is rooted in relationship.

As the years passed, the outreach expanded in both scope and spirit. The mission now includes not only Christmas gifts but also the collection of specific, practical items needed to support Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation (JPIC), coordinated by Sr. Rose Therese Nolta. This intentional shift reflects a deeper understanding of mission—one that recognizes the Sisters not only as recipients of care, but as partners in advancing Gospel values through service to the wider world.

Participation has steadily broadened, drawing in parishioners and friends from Faith, Hope and Charity Parish, St. Catherine LaBoure Parish, Holy Spirit Missionary Association, and beyond. What was once a small circle has become a network of generosity—people united not by obligation, but by a shared desire to bring Christ's love to life.

The Christmas Social itself has become a celebration of the universal Church and the beauty of diversity within it. The Divine Word Knights of Columbus lead the singing of Christmas carols, culminating each year in a powerful moment when *Silent Night* is sung in eleven different languages. In that moment, the convent becomes a sacred space where cultures, histories, and vocations converge—echoing the Sisters' own missionary call to serve across borders and traditions.

Joy takes many forms during the celebration. Santa's visit—made possible by the St. Norbert and Our Lady of the Brook Men's Club—brings laughter and lightheartedness. Bingo is played, gifts are shared, and Santa took time to visit Sisters who are unable to leave their rooms. These quiet visits are often the most meaningful, reminding everyone present that mission is as much about listening and accompaniment as it is about action.

The true impact of this ministry cannot be captured in numbers or inventories. Its fruit is found in relationships sustained over a decade, in volunteers who return year after year, and in Sisters who feel seen, valued, and connected. It is found in the way faith moves from study and reflection into tangible acts of love. This ministry embodies the Gospel call to "go and do likewise," demonstrating that mission is not something we send—it is something we live.

Through this ongoing commitment, the Christmas Social has become more than an event. It is a shared expression of gratitude, solidarity, and hope. It reminds us that when we show up with open hearts, the Holy Spirit does the rest—transforming simple acts into lasting mission.

Many Voices, One Mission:

JPIC as Unity in Diversity

Sr. Rose Therese Nolta, SSpS



Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) is sometimes spoken of as a “ministry” alongside others. Yet in truth, JPIC is less a single program and more a way of seeing—one that invites us to recognize how deeply connected we are to one another and to all of creation. When viewed through the lens of unity and diversity, JPIC presents itself as a shared mission expressed through many voices, cultures, and lived realities of SSpS and our lay partners.

Unity does not mean sameness. In our Congregation and in the global Church, we encounter a rich diversity of languages, histories, and economic realities. A Sister advocating for clean water in her community, another accompanying migrants with necessities, and another working for peace in their school may appear to be engaged in very different efforts. But beneath all these different ways of serving there’s one thing we all share: respect for every person and care for creation..

JPIC reminds us that our struggles are interconnected. Environmental degradation disproportionately affects the poor. Armed conflict uproots families and devastates land. Economic injustice erodes both peace and human dignity. When we recognize these links, unity emerges, not because we all do the same work, but because we are responding to the same Gospel call in diverse contexts.

Scripture offers us a powerful image as an example. St. Paul speaks of the Body of Christ as having many parts, each essential to the whole. JPIC lived through unity and diversity reflects this truth. Some voices speak loudly in advocacy spaces; others work quietly through presence and accompaniment. Some ministries focus on immediate needs; others challenge unjust systems over the long term. None is sufficient alone, but together they form a living witness to God..

In an increasingly polarized world, JPIC also calls us to practice unity across differences. This is not easy work. It requires listening—especially to voices that are marginalized or uncomfortable. It asks us to stay humble when things get hard and not get caught up in comparing pain or competing for attention. Unity in JPIC is forged not through uniform opinions, but through shared commitment and mutual respect.

Ultimately, JPIC rooted in unity and diversity is an expression of hope. It proclaims that another way of living together is possible—one where justice and peace are not abstract ideals, but daily practices shaped by compassion, courage, and faith. When many voices join in this mission, the message becomes stronger, clearer, and more credible: we are one human family, entrusted with one shared home, called to walk together toward fullness of life for all. Each of us are called to live out JPIC as a Sister, a Mission Partner, or a family. It is done through prayer, educating ourselves, advocating and acting where we are. Different, but together! Only if we work as one and in a united way will we make the world a better place. Thank you for your efforts..



LENT DAY OF REFLECTION

PAUSE · PONDER · PRAY · PREPARE · RENEW

Join us for a sacred time to pause, ponder, pray, prepare, and renew as we enter more deeply into the grace of Lent.

ALL ARE WELCOME.



LOCATION

Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters
Convent of the Holy Spirit
319 Waukegan Rd
Northfield, IL 60093



DATE

Saturday,
February 21, 2026



COST

Freewill offering
(Supporting the missions
in the Caribbean Islands.)



TIME

9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.



REGISTRATION

Please register by **February 16**
Contact: Sr. Evelyn Lobo, SSpS
Email: hsma.usa@ssps-us.org



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The Sisters Thank You for Your Support!

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

The Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters are an international—intercultural community of 2,783 Catholic, religious women, serving in 48 countries. Missionary activities include pastoral work and catechesis, education, nursing and health care, social work, adult education, and many other services to promote human dignity.

