



AHF in the world

Glory to You, Christ!



150 YEARS

CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS
OF THE HOLY FAMILY OF NAZARETH

During this Jubilee Year, I am especially happy to be able to address a few words to all of the Members and Friends of the Association of the Holy Family, as well as to all of the responsible Sisters engaged in this ministry.

The celebration of the Congregation's 150th Jubilee is first and foremost a time of thanksgiving for God's faithfulness and all that He has done in and through Nazareth over these many years. It a good time to reflect on how the Lord has led us and the good fruit that has been brought forth. One of the blessed fruits is the presence and continued growth of the AHF. Therefore, you are all very much a part of this Jubilee celebration and thanksgiving. So I thank you for your valued contribution to our mission and for being united with us in living our charism and Nazareth spirituality, each one in their own unique way and according to their vocation.



Yet, as I shared with the Sisters at the start of our Jubilee Year, this is also a time for looking forward, for asking the Lord, "What next?" To what new thing is He calling us to? So I share this question for your reflection as well.

As we continue in this 150th Jubilee Year, in conjunction with the Jubilee Year for the Universal Church, I pray that the Lord will bless you and your families, that He will grant you strength to bear the challenges of life with faith, and that together we can discern "what's next" and move forward in trust along the path upon which the Lord guides us.

**In the spirit of the Holy Family,
Sr. Angela Marie Mazzeo
Superior General**



Let's open our hearts



This is the third time we are publishing our International Newsletter of the AHF. I would like to thank Bożenka and Janusz Malec from the Association of the Holy Family at the Warsaw Province, who also

this year undertook the preparation of the Newsletter. I deeply appreciate your humble readiness to step in "when no one else volunteers" and your dedication of time and effort to bring this Newsletter to life. I also want to thank everyone who submitted photos and articles describing the activities of the Association in various provinces.

The first AHF group was established in the USA in 1985, while the youngest group was formed in October 2024 in Spain. In the following articles, we will see how much good is

happening within AHF, regardless of when it was founded, the number of members, or the country. It is God who inspires the desire to walk with Him in the Nazarene charism, spirituality, and mission. This is our shared way—the way of Love. As Blessed Franciszka Siedliska said: : Love went out from Nazareth to the whole world. This is the way we are all invited to walk.

The Newsletter includes the talk “Listening to God in the Ordinary” given by Sr. Marie Kielanowicz for the Association in Philadelphia. Sr. Marie shares her experience of God speaking to us through the most ordinary events of our lives and invites us to listen attentively to His Voice and His Will. Especially in this year of the Jubilee of the Church and the Jubilee of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth, let us open our hearts to the graces God wishes to bestow upon us.

In 1300, Pope Boniface VIII called the first Jubilee, also known as a “Holy Year,” since it is a time in which God's holiness transforms us. By participating in the Holy Year, one is granted a plenary indulgence.

As a Congregation, we have also received the grace of a Jubilee indulgence for the entire year (from the First Sunday of Advent, December 1, 2024 until November 30, 2025).

I would like to wish for all of us to joyfully draw from the treasures of this Jubilee year, to listen attentively to God's voice, and to allow Him to transform our hearts and lives.

sr. Speranza Grzebielec
general coordinator of the AHF

A few updates:

- We extend our sincere gratitude to Sr. Maria Magdalena Rybak for her dedicated leadership of AHF in the USA over the past several years, and we warmly welcome Sr. Jean Marie Pisula as the new AHF Director.
- In October 2024, a new AHF group was established in Benicasim, Spain (Asociación de la Sagrada Familia).
- International Meeting of Province Directors and Representatives of the AHF will take place in Rome from June 12–17, 2025.
- The closing Mass for the Jubilee of the Congregation will be celebrated at the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome on November 30, 2025, at 2:00 PM.

JUBILEE INDULGENCE

150 years of the foundation of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth
December 1, 2024 - November 30, 2025

The indulgence can be granted to all under the usual conditions for:

- Reciting the prayer to the Holy Family:
O Holy Family, bless and protect all the families of the world. Safeguard their unity, fidelity, integrity and dignity. Enable them to live according to God's law that they may fulfill their sublime vocation. May their lives be a reflection of yours and may they enjoy your presence forever in heaven. Amen.
or:
- Visiting our chapels and praying individually or participating in any form of community prayer.
or:
- Participating in the Jubilee liturgical celebrations organized by us and which may also take place outside our chapels.





Holy Family Province, USA



Founded in: 1985
 Director: Sr. Jean Marie Pisula
 Sisters engaged: 13

 Groups: 14
 Members: 191
 Women: 177
 Men: 14
 Married couples: 13
 The children of Nazareth: -



ANNUAL MEETING OF AHF MEMBERS

On Saturday, April 20, 2024, over 60 members of the Association of the Holy Family from the Mid-Atlantic area came together at Mount Nazareth in Philadelphia for their annual Associates gathering. Filled with enthusiasm and excitement at meeting up with friends, seeing the Sisters and making new connections was a sure sign of the Holy Spirit at work in our midst. The day was organized and carried out by Sisters Dolorita Nachajska, Eileen Therese Przybylowski, Jean Marie Pisula, Marcella Louise Wallowicz, Michele Vincent Fisher and

Virginia Rozich who serve as leaders and spiritual guides for our local groups. Sister Marie Kielanowicz, CSFN, came in from Chicago to offer the day’s presentations on “Discerning The Will of God In Everyday Life,” a theme that touched the hearts and spirits of everyone who participated.

After our opening prayer and introductions, everyone moved to the chapel where members from each of our local Associate chapters addressed the question: “How have you discerned the will of God in your life?” Each Associate who spoke drew from events in their own lives that witnessed to their seeking and



searching for what they believed was God’s will in the very real circumstances of their lives. Hearing these stories before Sister Marie’s presentations confirmed the truth that God’s will is deeply embedded in the most ordinary events of our daily lives and that we must learn to see and listen from our hearts and from the deeper places of prayer that we cultivate.

Sister Marie’s presentations challenged us to widen the lens of our perception of how intimately God is involved in our daily lives and how personally and uniquely He reveals himself and His dreams for us in the most surprising and unexpected ways. Using examples from situations and circumstances that we could easily relate to and using the words of Sacred Scripture and Mother Foundress to enhance her message, Sister Marie encouraged us to take a deeper dive into the very real circumstances of our live to remove our sandals, and realize that like Moses at the burning bush, we are standing on holy ground.

In between Sister Marie’s two presentations, there was time for small group sharing followed



by the celebration of the Eucharist. From the altar of sacrifice to the dining room tables, we renewed the bonds of friendship and fellowship which strengthen and inspire us.

The day's festivities ended in the chapel with the commitment ceremony of Melissa Black, our newest member, the re-commitment of current members and the beginning of the inquiry process for several prospective new members. We concluded with a presentation of roses to Sister Virginia Rozich who completed her term as Area Coordinator of the Association after more than 12 years of service as both National and Area AHF Coordinator. We are so very grateful for everything Sister Virginia brought to this ministry and ask the Holy Family to bless her as she continues to serve as a local AHF leader and spiritual guide. In the same ceremony, we welcomed Sister Jean Marie Pisula as our new Area AHF Coordinator and who has since been named as our National Director of the AHF. May the journey ahead be full of grace and blessings!

Plans are currently underway for two gatherings in 2025 in honor of our 150th Jubilee Year.

Sister Michele Vincent Fisher



Holy Spirit Province, Australia

Founded in: 1986
 Director: Sr. Rita Marie Apura
 Sisters engaged: 2
 Groups: 3
 Members: 43
 Women: 30
 Men: 13
 Married couples: 9
 The Children of Nazareth: 5



GRATEFUL AND BLESSED

As a newly inducted member of the Associates of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth I am invited to a renewed call to holiness and be more aware that I must be active in living my Christian life as model of love, care and concern for the other and be part of members of the largest community. As

a new member of the Associates, the Holy Family especially St. Joseph as the loving father and protector of Jesus and Mary inspired me to imitate them. Mary is the quiet and consistent loving presence around Jesus who is the centre of her love and devotion. Following our Blessed Mother Mary, it is an invitation for my life our lives that we must centered our gaze on Jesus especially during this season of





Christmas. I hope to increase my devotion to the Holy Family and enrich my spiritual life by attending meetings and participating in activities designed to broaden my knowledge of God and love of neighbours. I hope that I and we desire to serve our community and support members to live lives in conformity

with the gospel teachings. Thankful, Grateful and Blessed to be part of a larger family of the Holy Family.

**By: Julie Nunez
Holy Spirit Province**



PILGRIMS OF HOPE, CRADLE OF PEACE

In Nazareth’s quiet, where love first arose,
 A spark was ignited, a flame that still glows.
 From humble beginnings, in prayer and in grace,
 The Pilgrims of Hope set forth on their chase.

One hundred- and fifty-years’ journey, now told,
 Of Sisters and Associates, both young and the old,
 With hearts set ablaze by a mission so pure,
 To spread light and love that forever endures.

They walked from the cradle of hope, far and wide,
 Carrying peace as their guide and their stride.
 In the footsteps of Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd,
 they ventured each day,
 To bring kindness and mercy in God’s tender way.

Through valleys of sorrow, across mountains of pain,
 They sowed seeds of joy in sunshine and rain.
 With hands that were steady, and hearts full of song,
 They lived out the calling to which they belong.

From Nazareth’s cradle to cities unknown,
 Their message of love in the world has been sown.
 Through centuries passed, and those yet to come,
 The Pilgrims of Hope, they journey as one.

The sisters, devoted, with vows ever true,
 And Associates walking with hearts that renew,
 In unity, they live out the dream,
 Of a world transformed by love’s gentle beam.

And now, in this moment, as we celebrate,
 The 150 years of grace that await,
 We honor the mission, the life they have shared,
 A legacy of hope, of which we are all spared.

So let us rise up and carry the light,
 Of love that will guide us through darkest night.
 For the Pilgrims of Hope have shown us the way,
 To love one another, and walk in His sway.

With hearts full of gratitude, hands stretched to the sky,
 We give thanks for the journey, as time passes by.
 For in Nazareth's shadow, the story began—
 And it lives in us still, in the heart of God’s plan.

**By Sr. Rita Marie Apura, CSFN
 Holy Spirit Province, Australia**



Jesus the Good Shepherd Province, France, Europe

Founded in: 1991
Director: Sr. Luiza Chrzęstowska
Sisters engaged: 1
Groups: 1
Members: 38
Women: 22
Men: 16
Married couples: 16
The Children of Nazareth: 13



"EMMAUS AIRLINES TO POLAND"

"Nothing is difficult for those who want it," as the Polish proverb says. We dreamed so much of traveling to Poland, traveling by our own plane and for free. A trip for 120 people...

Is this possible? When you have the nature of a Child of God, everything is possible. It was like that this time too. A private plane from Emmaus, private airport, tickets, qualified pilot and professional team of stewardesses. All this only in Emmaus.

The flight to Poland took place in the afternoon. After boarding the plane and taking our seats, the cheerful Emmaus Airlines team gave us important tips to make the flight safe and pleasant.

The responsible stewardess greeted all travelers in different languages, which was nice, because we come from different parts of Poland. In case of turbulence, we had masks on hand that could be used in many ways. The sun was shining brightly, not a cloud in the sky and then we were in the sky. What views! First we reached Krakow.



And there were crowds of friends and relatives waiting for us. My heart rejoiced. And this Krakow music, dancing and singing. Something beautiful. The children's performance was moving, in Krakow costumes of course, and there was also a Lajkonik.



A Krakow flower girl sang especially for us her favorite song: "buy my flowers, I have a whole big basket of them here...", with what elegance she later sold them - such things are found only in the Krakow market.



I also have to mention the wonderful guides from Krakow who showed us many valuable places. It was sad to say goodbye to Krakow, but...



We soon returned to the plane, and enjoyed a glass of refreshing water and regional snacks. This time the plane's crew took us to Kielce.



And there, what a surprise! Prince Emeric himself was waiting to receive us. What a manor, what a beautiful castle, what hospitality, what wealth and splendor! The young prince showed us around the area himself.

He showed us the precious place where he met the angel.

When he was hunting near Łysa Góra, he saw a huge deer, so he started running after it, leaving his entourage far behind.

He aimed his bow at the deer, and was about to release an arrow... Until suddenly he saw a luminous cross between the antlers.

Emeric lowered his bow and the animal vanished into thin air. Then he noticed that it was completely dark and there was not a living soul around him. He blew the hunting horn, but was answered by silence. So he sat down under an old oak tree, but the sounds of the forest seemed more and more terrifying to him. He instinctively reached for the reliquary hanging around his neck. Then he noticed a strange light among the trees. After a while, an angel appeared.



He promised that he would lead the prince out of the thicket, but wherever he ended up, he should leave what was most precious to him. Following the angelic light, Emeric reached the monastery on Łysa Góra, where he was welcomed with open arms. The next day, the prince left the monks an extraordinary gift - his reliquary with a splinter of the Holy Cross framed in gold. Each of us wanted to have a souvenir from this holy place, so the prince called all the court and local painters who painted pictures with the image of the Holy Cross especially for us. It took a while because the order was large. I must admit that the area Kielce was a bit dangerous, a lot of forests where Baba Yaga and her mysterious friends roamed around.



From Kielce, Emmaus Airlines took us to Rzeszów. How many people I know... A nice welcome again. A dance song group came especially for us from the Rzeszów area. How beautiful they looked in their regional costumes! The best local tailors made tailor-made outfits so that the team could represent itself with dignity. They sang and danced, and there were endless repetitions. What talented people!

In Rzeszów we received an invitation to Warsaw. It's hard to miss the capital, even though we don't have much time left. It was also interesting in Warsaw. Only the greatest opera and theater stars. We didn't expect this. Even the Czerniakowska Band came to make this time more enjoyable for us.



In the evening of the same day we returned to Emmaus safe and sound. The captain and stewardesses received a lot of applause from the passengers. How good it is to have Private Airlines.

sr. Luiza Chrzęstowska



Most Holy Name of Jesus Province, Warsaw, Poland

Founded in: 1996
 Director: Sr. Michaela Pietrzak
 Sisters engaged: 18
 Groups: 16

 Members: 254
 Women: 145
 Men: 109
 Married couples: 106
 The children of Nazareth: 183



GRATITUDE



As I reflect on the events of the past year, 2024, I am filled with gratitude to the Lord God for the many graces He has bestowed upon us. I am thankful for the numerous events we've had the privilege to participate in: retreats, weekend sessions, pilgrimages, and journeys. I am especially grateful for every encounter with another person, each opportunity to enter into the story of a person's life.

Retreat Moments



In 2024, the Association of the Holy Family welcomed 8 new members: three couples and two women. Unfortunately, we lost our dear Stanisław, who passed away in October.

This year, we held three series of winter retreats, six series of summer retreats, and two series of retreats for seniors. This year, once again,



it was possible to experience an active retreat on kayaks on the Warta River. In addition to the usual spiritual challenges of the retreats, there was also the opportunity to challenge oneself against the swift water and physical exhaustion.

The winter retreats continued with the theme of the "Way of the Disciple," where we transitio-





ned from the Gospel of Mark to the Gospel of Matthew. Meanwhile, during the summer retreats under the theme "The Power of Sacraments," we explored the beauty and strength of the sacraments, often undiscovered or underappreciated due to the routine of our lives.

Throughout 2024, we held six weekend gatherings in various

locations across Poland, each offering a unique opportunity for growth and learning. One such event focused on St. Hildegard of Bingen, the 12th-century Doctor of the Church, whose work on healthy living, herbal medicine, and plant-based remedies continues to be relevant today.



During a workshop led by AHF Oborniki member and expert Justyna Mułek, participants had the chance to engage in hands-on activities like baking bread, and learning practical skills inspired by St. Hildegard's wisdom.

Many good things also happened during the "Extraordinary Dad" workshops for fathers in Żdźary during March, and in Lublin during November. These workshops brought together fathers of various ages who, through conferences, exercises, and men's sharing, discovered how to become the best fathers for their children.

Additionally, AHF local conventions took place on the theme "Holiness in Everyday Life." These weekends provided not only a chance to build deeper connections with one another, but also an opportunity to reflect on our personal paths to holiness. Thanks to these gatherings, we were able to meet representatives from neighboring communities and learn from each other's journeys.



"Our" missionary of the Holy Family!

A source of great joy for all the members and friends of the AHF in our province was the solemn profession of perpetual vows by Mateusz



Dańczak, which took place on September 8, 2024, in Kazimierz Biskupi. Mateusz had been attending AHF retreats with his parents, Beata and Zbyszek, and his older brother since 2004. Thanks to the collaboration between the sisters and the Missionaries of the Holy Family, Mateusz had the opportunity to observe the ministry of the missionaries and discern his vocation. After graduating from high school, he entered the congregation. The initial formation in the Order culminates in the perpetual vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience, marking a full commitment to the community. Naturally, the Nazareth



Sisters and representatives from the Association were present to join in the celebration.

There is always time for a Marriage Date

Since 2016, the Warsaw branch of the Association of the Holy Family (AHF) has been organizing marriage dates in various cities. These events have taken place during retreats, in local communities, and have also been open to couples not directly associated with AHF, such as parents of children attending Nazareth schools or kindergartens.

This year marked the beginning of an ongoing collaboration among couples who lead these events. In addition to online meetings, a workshop was held in November, led by Bożena and Janusz Malec from AHF Lublin. The workshop focused on the topics and structure of marriage date meetings. As a result, seven couples were commissioned and sent out to serve in this ministry, supporting other married couples.

Families for Families

AHF members willingly get involved in various actions in their parishes, towns and cities in support of marriage and family. One such action is



the Marches for Life and Family, which take place in many Polish cities and are a testimony to the value of human life (beginning at conception) and to the family (based on marriage between a man and a woman, who are open to welcoming and raising children) Whole families take part in these events, manifesting with joy the beauty of the domestic church that is each family.

In June of this year, the AHF community from Lublin, in collaboration with the Nazareth Sisters, once again co-organized the Second Archdiocesan Family Day at the Marian Shrine in Wąwolnica. About 2,000 people, mostly families with

children, participated in the event. This inspiring, yet logistically demanding initiative, provided an excellent opportunity for witness and close cooperation with other communities, all working together for the benefit of families.

Our Jubilee

As we join in celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth, we in the AHF also seek to



discover what the Lord is calling us to do and how He wishes to inspire us. Throughout the upcoming year, beginning December 1, 2024, we will be guided by the Signposts of Blessed Francesca Siedliska. These are monthly reflections featuring selected thoughts from Mother Foundress, accompanied by a brief reflection and a question for personal contemplation. The Signposts were thoughtfully prepared by Sister Marcjanna Szajkowska.

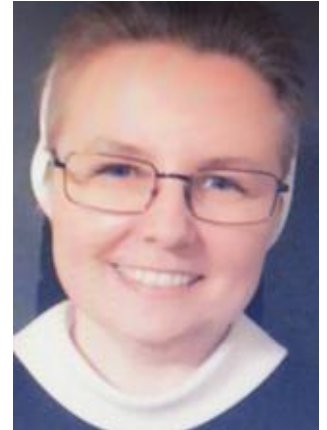
Another meaningful way we are participating in the Jubilee is through monthly overnight adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, undertaken by the AHF community in Ostrzeszów.

Adding to our joy is the release of a newly expanded edition of Bożena Malec's book, *Woven of Love: The Story of Blessed Franciszka Siedliska*. Originally published in 2010 and warmly received as a book for family reading, this new edition includes 11 additional chapters and features an introduction by Mother General Angela Marie Mazzeo. We hope that it will be a good way of getting to know and building a deeper connection with the Foundress of the Congregation of the Holy Family of Nazareth.

Most Holy Name of Mary Province, Krakow, Poland

Founded in: 2000
 Director: Sr. Elżbieta Kuczmarska
 Sisters engaged: 11
 Groups: 16

Members: 109
 Women: 66
 Men: 43
 Married couples: 42
 The children of Nazareth: 96



The Association of the Holy Family of the Krakow Province of the Holy Name of Mary



has expanded by two new family communities. On April 21, 2024, on Jesus the Good Shepherd Sunday, at the request of families from Dobre Miasto, a community of families was established at the Parish of the Holy Savior and All Saints. The community meets regularly to implement the AHF formation program. The families enjoy the pastoral care of Fr. Marcin Wrzos, vicar of the local parish.

On May 10, 2024, a community of families was established at the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Leśniowska - Patroness of Families in Żarki.

Thanks to the kindness and pastoral care of Father Prior Piotr Stanikowski, as well as the



commitment of our Sisters, the community is developing.

For the past few years, including this year, there were weekend retreats for women "Debora, a woman in leadership" and men "A man open to the Holy Spirit". Women could



learn how to be grounded in God and history and to be women of influence, and men learned to be open to God's guidance.

"Gifted and Sent" is the theme of this year's series of family holiday retreats, which touched on the topic of giving, reading God's gifts in us, mission and sending. "The life of each of us on this earth has a purpose, God has gifted us and invited us to a mission: to love, to create, to share the goodness that I have." (BK Kusik)

The Night Rosary Way is an interesting initiative of the newly established AHF community in Leśniów. A group of fifty people started the Night Rosary in the Leśniów Sanctuary with the Eucharist. It was chaired by Fr. Bishop Andrzej Przybylski. The Way of the Rosary ended at the Jasna Góra Sanctuary in Częstochowa at 6:00 a.m. also with the Eucharist. The pilgrims walked all night long, praying the rosary constantly for married couples and families.

The course for parents of teenagers is an initiative of AHF from Bielsko-Biała undertaken to provide support to parents of adolescent children. We also continue courses for spouses, the aim of which is to strengthen marital bonds.

Empathic communication workshops are also a new initiative of the couple from AHF Gdynia. To meet the needs of increasingly better communication in families, this year we started empathic communication workshops, which took place in our home in Olsztyn near Częstochowa.

There was also a Family Pilgrimage to Jasna Góra, in which over two hundred people took part. The families entrusted themselves to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Thanks be to God for the gift of new communities and creativity in taking new initiatives to strengthen the love of spouses and love in families.

Sr. Elżbieta Kuczmarska



Mary of Nazareth Province, Phillippines

Founded in: 2007
Director: Sr. Mary Michael Banquil
Sisters engaged: 9
Groups: 9
Members: 146
Women: 110
Men: 36
Married couples: 13
The Children of Nazareth: -



Members of the Associates of the Holy Family during the pilgrimage on Nov. 9, 2024, visited Manila Cathedral, St. Augustine Church, Quiapo Church, UST Church, Christ The King, Sto. Domingo Church Prayed the Holy Rosary, Divine Mercy Chaplet and the Station of the Cross

At the Christ the King Church



At the Senatus



One of the activities of The Associates of the Holy Family, giving Pre-Cana sessions wherein the facilitators dine with the participants during lunch break

Pre-Cana Facilitators with participants



Home Evangelization program



Pre-Cana Facilitators Formation with Fr. Glenn Cantos



With the children and parents



Relaxation moment



Baptismal Celebration



Renewal of Membership in AHF



One of the families evangelized. The father of the family, Mr. Ronaldo had his kidney stone dropped by putting the image of Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd on his tummy and constantly prayed the Chaplet of the Holy Family



Parish visitation

Blessed Martyrs Province, Belarus

Founded in: 2009
 Director: Sr. Marianna Aleszczyk
 Sisters engaged: 2

 Groups: 7
 Members: 37
 Women: 22
 Men: 15
 Married couples: 14
 The Children of Nazareth: 45



FAMILIES FROM BELARUS MEET IN WARSAW FOR THE THIRD YEAR

In October, about 10 families gathered for the first meeting of the 2024/25 formation year. After 2 years of the community's existence, 2 families have already joined the Association.

The Association of the Holy Family in Belarus and Poland formation meetings take place at the same time in Warsaw - this facilitates the technical organization of the event. The groups have Masses and formation meetings separately, although the children play together. Additionally, there is time for shared conversations and greetings in between. The communities also carol together, participate in the annual pilgrimage to Żdźary and a picnic at the end of the formation year.

Highlights of 2024 for the AHF in Belarus



We began the year with the traditional New Year's meeting in Navahrudak. Each community (Minsk, Hrodna, Lida, Maladečna, Smarhoń, Hlybokaje) held regular monthly gatherings. We continued the tradition of separate formation meetings for the women and men of Nazareth. For the first time, we organized retreats for Nazareth youth, which was a grassroots initiative of the members. During the summer, as every year, week-



long retreats were held for community members in Navahrudak. Additionally, two days of spiritual focus were organized for members of the Association. This year, one new family joined the Holy Family Association.

Why Am I in Nazareth?

A few months ago, a family joined the Association, one that had been participating in the formative meetings of our movement for many years. They are wonderful people—a father and mother of three children, always active and willing to help. However, their journey to officially becoming members of the Association took many years. Why? We are sharing the testimony of Anastasiya and Aliaksandr.

"Glory to Christ! We are the Darashenka family from Belarus: father Aliaksandr, mother Anastasiya, and our three daughters—Aniutka, Alinka, and Alionka. In October 2024, we became members of the Holy Family Association. What was our journey like?

Anastasiya: I have known the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth for more than half of my life.

Even in my youth, we spent a lot of time together, as they served in our parish of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross in Lida. We went on

pilgrimages, attended retreats in Navahrudak with both girls and youth groups, and often visited the Sisters. Later, during my university years, I maintained "contact" with the Sisters, as I was also studying in our town. Even when I studied at university in Hrodna, I often met with the Sisters.

I also attended catechetical school, where I took courses with a Sister of the Holy Family of Nazareth. You could say that throughout my life, I have always been connected with the Sisters. Later, after I got married, family meetings organized by Sister Marianna began to take place in our town. From the very beginning, we attended these meetings. Then came joint trips to week-long retreats in Navahrudak, meeting families from different cities, and living in community.

I quickly felt that I wanted to officially and permanently become part of Nazareth. When I learned about the Holy Family Association and that, after some time, we could become members, I was thrilled. But I wanted to do this together, as a family. However, my husband did not share the same desire because he didn't understand the purpose or the reason for it.

Aliaksandr: At first, I agreed to attend family meetings because of my wife—she really wanted this.

That's how it was for a long time. She always asked me to go, persuaded me, and I agreed, even though I didn't really want to.

Gradually, I got to know other men, had many conversations, and saw their example of serving their families. I also began to sense how God was slowly working on my heart. The final turning point for my decision was attending a retreat led by Father Mikalai Tsikhanovich. With God's help and Mary's support, he was able to "reach" my soul, so to speak. After the retreat, when I returned home, I felt that I, too, wanted to become a member of the Holy Family Association of Nazareth.

I called Sister Marianna and informed her of our decision. My wife was overjoyed and celebrated the fact that, after so many years, we could all finally become members of the Holy Family Association together."



Mission Homes – Spain

Founded in: 2024

Sisters responsible for the groups:
Sr. Katarzyna Nowak
and the community

Groups: 1
Candidates & interested persons: 10



ASF (ASOCIACIÓN DE LA SAGRADA FAMILIA) ESPAÑA

Since the beginning of our mission in Spain, we have been involved, on various levels, in accompanying families. Seeing the wealth of charisms and communities in the diocese of Segorbe-Castellon, we tried to reach out to everyone, to get to know the families, to be with them. At the same time we had a

common conviction that this was not the time to propose something “ours” and to limit ourselves to being with a small group of people.

At the beginning of this pastoral year, Yolanda (whose testimony I include below) came to tell me about her desire to share the charism and spirituality with us, to receive deeper formation, so as to be able to live the sacrament of marriage to the full. She knew nothing about the Association of the Holy





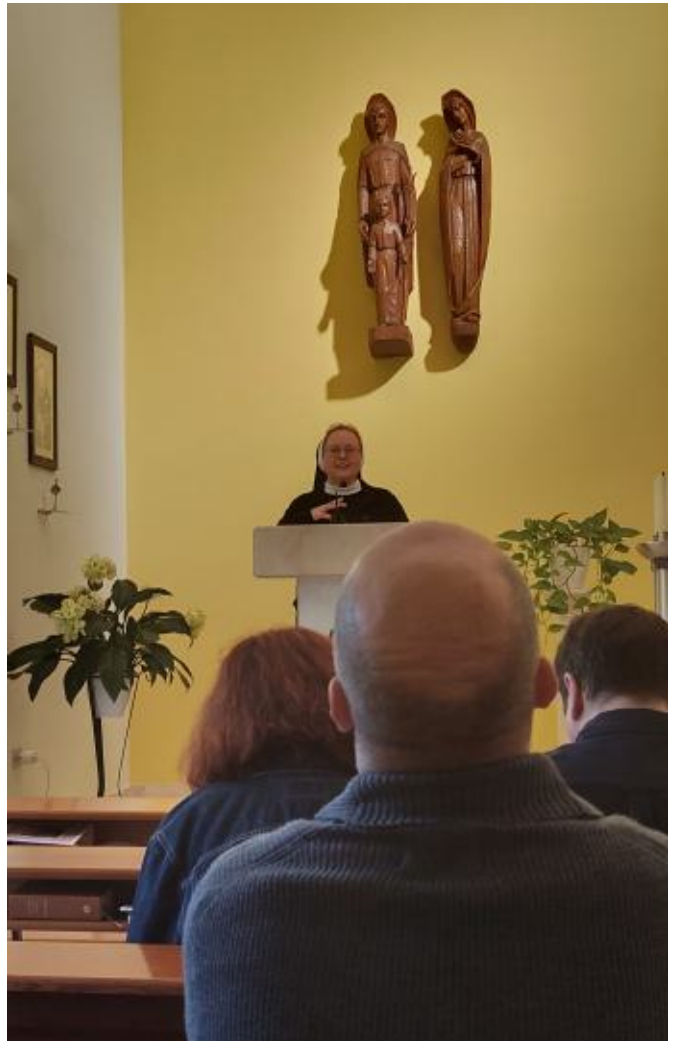
Family, but when I told her about it, with a beaming face she commented: "this is exactly what I am looking for!"

After consulting the community and the Superior General, at the October Diocesan Meeting of Marriages I briefly presented the idea of the Association and invited interested people to our home on October 23. That was when the first meeting took place with five couples interested in our Association.

Since then we have been meeting every Wednesday: meditation on the Word of God precedes a short introduction, and then a time



of common prayer. They come faithfully every week and... ask for more formation! They want to explore John Paul II's theology of the body, the entire teaching of the Church on the family. Once a month we have a day of



formation, prayer and deeper knowledge of our Congregation and its mission. We recommend ourselves to your prayers!

Sr. Katarzyna Nowak with the entire community

LIVE THE CHARISM OF NAZARETH

My name is Yolanda, I am from Castellón, Spain. I have been married for 22 years and have four children. I have always been in the Church, although I do not come from a family of believers or faith-practitioners. However, the Lord called me from a very young age and gave me the gift of faith. A faith that I have always understood that I have to live in the Church, as part of a large family.

Meeting the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth was a gift from Divine Providence, which wanted them to come to Spain. I met them at a meeting for married couples. Their testimony of love, joy, simplicity, always available to welcome me and my family with all their affection and love, led me to strengthen ties with them. Through them I have been able to experience being Church, members of the same family.

As I said, I have always been in the Church, participating in different movements and realities, but I did not feel that this was my place. In this last year, the Lord has made me see more clearly that He asks me for a greater commitment. With the help of spiritual direction I began to discern what the Lord was asking of me and this discernment led me to do spiritual exercises. It was there that the Holy Spirit gave me the clarity of seeing that

He calls me to share the charism of the Sisters, to be a reflection of the love of the Holy Family in the world, starting with my own family, allowing this Love to circulate among us as it did among Jesus, Mary and Joseph. As a result of this, I have been able to understand and give meaning to my own story of salvation, in which the Lord has always been with me, accompanying me and leading me by the hand. He leads me to be a witness in the world of the same charism as the Sisters, wherever He has wanted to place me. To be like an arm that extends the charism to reach every corner from my vocation to marriage.

Knowing that I am called to live with the same feeling as the Sisters has given me much peace; I see that this is my place in the Church.

The Sisters have welcomed this news with great joy, aware that it is the Holy Spirit who acts and inspires in hearts the gift of the charism, to share it and live it each one from his or her reality, thus giving fullness to the sacrament of marriage that I have received. As Saint Teresa of Jesus said: "whatever awakens you to love more, do that."

Yolanda Fernández Ramírez



Listening to God in the Ordinary

Presentation to Holy Family Associates, Philadelphia, PA, April 20, 2024, sr. Marie Kielanowicz

How does God make his 'will' known to us in the midst of the hustle, bustle, and noise of our everyday lives?



that God created us as free and intelligent human beings. Her writings give evidence that she did not subscribe to a theory of irrational obedience.

We come closer to the authentic meaning of God's will when we think of it as God's hope for the world, God's vision and intent, God's design for human beings who have been created to share His very life. St. Paul describes in these simple words: "This is the will of God – your sanctification (that you

THE MEANING OF THE WILL OF GOD

Through the centuries, theologians have struggled to articulate the meaning of 'God's will.' Obedience to the will of God is essential to Christian discipleship and it is also an essential value in Nazareth spirituality. It is critical, then, that we understand this Gospel imperative accurately because we run the risk of misinterpreting its deepest meaning. Obedience to the will of God has sometimes been obscured by understanding it as 'conformity' to some directive outside of us. This perspective, though, is too small and narrow, unable to carry the weight of the mystery which this rich reality signifies.

Gospel obedience is not about mere compliance, nor is it about reducing personal autonomy and freedom to immaturity, passivity, or an abdication of responsibility. Obedience to God's will is not about trying to discover some static, preconceived 'plan' ordained by God. It is not about trying to 'crack some mysterious code' or 'blueprint.' It is not like 'military obedience' and simply following someone else's orders. If we look at how our foundress understood obedience, we see that she recognized clearly

become holy.)" God wills that, in our daily, ordinary lives, we make choices that reflect our discipleship as followers of Jesus and what we learn from the values He came to show us. God wills that our vision, understanding, and the choices we make come from hearts and minds that are steadily being transformed into the image of His Son, and that we do what is pleasing in God's sight. "Be transformed by the renewal of your minds that you may do what is good and pleasing." (Romans 12:2) The psalmist says: "I will do what you desire, O God." Scripture is full of sayings, teachings, and stories that illustrate what that dream for the world is. It is what we refer to as 'the Kingdom of God – God wants his people to live in peace, justice, freedom, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Every time, we contribute to making this a reality in our daily lives, we are fulfilling the will of God.

The word for "obedience" comes from the Latin verb 'audire' which means to listen, to hear. The prefix 'OB' signifies an intensification of the verb. From this, we get the word 'obaudire,' listening that is much more than superficial hearing' rather is listening that is profoundly attentive, like we do when we strain to catch the slightest whisper of what is being said and to

really understand what is being communicated.

In any authentic relationship, whether human or divine, we are led beyond ourselves and compelled by our love for the other to notice, to hear (obaudire) and respond to the desires, happiness, needs, wants of the 'other.' Authentic love matures us and shifts our center of gravity from concentration on self to awareness of what delights the one loved.

This dynamic is always at work. Listen and respond. Obedience to the will of God, then, is essentially a call to prayer, to pondering in one's heart, to digesting God's word so that it becomes part of us (as Jeremiah indicates with the words: "When I found your word, O God, I devoured it... it became the joy of my soul..." or as Isaiah does when he is ordered to 'eat the scroll' of God's law. Faithful listening means letting God's word 'marinate' inside us and making choices in accord with what we hear. This is the essence of obedience to the will of God; faithful listening to the Spirit.

By faithfully responding to God's call revealed in each moment, our patrons, Jesus, Mary and Joseph stand as models for all who seek to follow God's call. To live the virtue expressed in our congregational motto 'Fiat Voluntas Tua' presupposes that we have cultivated a relationship with God which prompts us to a generous, courageous effort to seek to live as God desires, that is, in faithfulness to the Gospel. We fulfill the will of God when we make all the gifts which He has entrusted to us – every gift of mind, heart, body, and spirit available to be instruments through which God's dream for our suffering world can be fulfilled - one person, one circumstance at a time.

DISCOVERING THE 'WILL OF GOD' IN ORDINARY EXPERIENCE

We discover God's will in the ground of our life experiences. Our foundress, Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd, searched for the divine will in her human life, listening with a disciple's ear to hear God's voice in the

Scriptures, the teachings of the Church and the words of her spiritual director, but also in her everyday duties, her normal relationships, the events of the day, the demands of the ministry to which she and the Sisters were called. Once, when she was in America on an official visit to the Sisters, she encountered some significant matters which she had to address; there were many difficulties, complicated situations with pastors, with sisters, etc. etc. etc. All she wanted to do, if she were to follow her human instincts, was run away...**My heart is just running to Rome...**" However, she also knew, in the depths of her weary soul, that she had a responsibility to stay and sort through the mess, to endure the frustration, worry, anxiety...this, she knew was, a



clear indication of God's will. In another place she wrote, "**God's will calls me to Rome through the needs of my sisters...**" Most often she instructed the Sisters that we do God's will in the fulfillment of our daily duties.

Where will you discover the will of God? In the needs of your family – your spouse, your children, your neighbors. In your relationships with the larger communities of which you are a part - your parish, your workplace, the social organizations to which you belong. God's voice often comes to us disguised, from the most unlikely sources, in things we would probably never even think of as remotely 'holy.' We have to listen for the Spirit everywhere!!! 'God's will' is not found outside of life; rather doing God's will is an embrace of the surprising experiences

that God places in our lives and a response nuanced by the Gospel values that sustain us.

We are not only obedient to the will of God in the big moments of our lives. If obedience is about “having the mind of Christ within us,” and we strive to act in accordance with Jesus’ teaching revealed in the Gospel, then we are fulfilling God’s will in the innumerable daily, unheralded events of our life. Our congregational motto and the prayer we say each day - “THY WILL BE DONE - invites and challenges us to live our ordinary lives contemplatively, to awaken to the sacredness of the commonplace, so that we can hear the subtle stirrings of the Spirit within and around us, listening to the mystery of my life, of our life together from the standpoint of faith so as to discern how to live with greater depth, greater awareness, greater

each circumstance, those that are great and the many more which are daily and simple. Obedience is a vibrant YES to life, acting in integrity, making decisions from a stance rooted in faith, made in trust, carried out in love.

Obedience to God’s will requires that we cultivate listening hearts so that we can hear the voice of God that comes to us ‘...not in the storm or whirlwind, but in the gentle breeze’ as we read in Exodus. We have to ‘take off our shoes’ and draw close to the burning bushes of our lives and read their meaning. As Jesus says, we must “...draw away to that lonely place, to enter our secret room and shut the door” and be with God who speaks to us in the silence. There, in the stillness of a reflective heart, we prayerfully weigh the situations before us and listen to God speaking through the realities and demands of

our lives. Then, we will have made it possible for God’s voice to break through all the noise that surrounds us until we discover what furthers the Kingdom, God’s design in our world.

Discovering God’s will is a peaceful exploration into the terrain of our spirits. ‘Where in the midst of my hectic, busy, or very ordinary days, has God been active? Do I hear God calling me in the inconvenient needs of those around me? Do I respond or turn away? Do I miss God who speaks to me in my life because I am looking for an answer somewhere else?’ In the chaos of our daily lives, we might overlook God calling. In the stillness of our hearts, we can train ourselves to see and hear more attentively.

Most often, we do God’s will in responding to the demands of our ordinary human life. We fulfill God’s will by listening deeply to our human experience, to what life asks of us in every concrete situation, and then freely responding to whatever challenge or invitation presents itself in as generous, free, attentive, loving, compassionate, humble, prudent, honest, godly a manner as possible. **While God does not control the details of my life, God wills that I bring all my gifts,**



authenticity.

Mature obedience to the will of God requires that we cultivate a heart open and available to the touch of God, one that accepts one’s life-and all that comes into it, with a spirit which stands undefended before God and others. It is to live in a posture of heart that creates the space in us to follow Christ through all the twists and turns of life, to say a YES that is continually renewed in



values and talents to the enthusiastic fulfillment of the duties of my state of life in as loving a way as possible.

Recently, I was reading a brochure about the Annunciation. The author wrote: “Living with a heart open to God’s will has enormous implications. Different people will realize that God’s will calls them to different things. For an adolescent, it may mean resisting peer pressure to take part in drinking or [use of drugs.] For the single adult, it could require offering personal time in service of a needy person. A businessman or woman may find that honesty and fairness require a certain course of action. A married couple may realize that they will adopt a child. A frightened pregnant woman may understand that she should resist the temptation to have an abortion. A sick person might have to accept his illness and join his suffering to that of Christ.”

A father might have to choose between a job that takes him away from his family for long periods of time or one that pays less but keeps him closer to home. A Chief Executive Officer and leadership team might be called to make a

decision to open unused space in their facility to migrants. A parish might decide to use its gym on weekends as a homeless shelter. A principal might make the decision to integrate a school when she knows she will meet resistance from the neighborhood. A woman, just settling into her new dream house, makes a decision to travel back and forth for months on end to care for her dying sister. Families in Poland open their doors to desperate Ukrainian refugees. A Benedictine community with hundreds of acres of property decides to let their land be used for community gardens to feed the hungry in their area. A parent chooses to help a struggling child with his/her homework when he or she would rather watch a movie or football game undisturbed. An adult child sells her condo, gives up her independence and moves into her family home to care for her mother

who has Alzheimer’s disease. Someone heard information that might destroy another person’s good name or reputation. They stop the cycle of gossip and keep the information to themselves, turning instead to do an act of kindness. A friend hurt another friend by an unthinking comment, and although the friend wanted to withhold forgiveness, when the first friend apologized, she accepted it and the two reconciled. –

In each case, and hundreds more like them, we ask ourselves the question: “what would God have me do in this circumstance? What would be pleasing to God?” How do we know what to choose? We look at the values revealed to us in the life and teaching of Jesus, as we reflect on the Scriptures which point the way: “This is what Yahweh asks of you: Act justly, love tenderly, walk humbly with your God.” “Whatever is good, noble, beautiful, and true, think on these things.”

The Kingdom of God is not a matter of eating or drinking but of justice, peace, liberty and the joy of the children of God.” “Whatever you do to the least, you do to me.” “Turn from evil and do good.” “Keep my commandments.” So, in the final analysis, ‘Fiat Voluntas Tua’ means that we

courageously seek to live as God desires, that is, in faithfulness to the Gospel.

THE GOD OF THE EVERYDAY

Now that we have explored what finding and fulfilling the will of God means, let's turn to the question of how to recognize what God is asking of us as we live through the circumstances of our ordinary lives. We will find God's will for us in the sanctuary of our home, our family and community lives, in our workplaces, where we rejoice and where we suffer.

First of all, as Associates of the Holy Family, sharing our Congregation's spirit and mission, you are probably already aware that Nazareth spirituality is a way of life that challenges us to discover and celebrate the immanence or closeness of God. Sometimes, we may feel that God

is very distant, far removed from the thoughts, feelings, and events of our daily life. The ordinary circumstances of our lives may seem too normal to be a place for an encounter with the living God.

However, the awesome beauty of the mystery of the Incarnation is that, through the cooperation of Mary and Joseph, the infinite God came to live among us in Jesus, Emmanuel, a word which means 'God-with-us.' The great surprise is that God's glory and divinity were hidden in Jesus of Nazareth. Everything looked so common and so normal that no one would have guessed that the Son of God lived in this humble family. The Gospels tell us that even his relatives and the people of his village were astonished when Jesus returned to Nazareth and started to preach there. "Where did he get this wisdom? Isn't he, after all, Joseph's son? Don't we know his brothers and sisters?" Like us, these humble residents of Nazareth could not grasp the wonder in their midst.

Yet, in the unglamorous, unspectacular life of the Holy Family, God revealed Himself precisely where He seemed to be absent: in the inconspicuous happenings of daily life. He lived there, as He does for us now, in unspectacular ordinariness. It is so simple that it is almost

shocking! Listen to what our Mother Foundress came to realize about the humble life of the Holy Family: **"In the...life of the Holy Family of Nazareth,"** she says, **"there was nothing extraordinary in appearance, nothing brilliant, nothing to attract human attention, nothing to claim the praise and admiration of others, but in that obscure life what great virtue..."** She continues, **"The house of Nazareth was not distinguished by anything unusual performed externally and yet divine favor rested upon it**



because the minds, hearts, feelings, and wills of its residents were focused on God...and engaged in performing ...the tasks given them by God."

When we reflect on Jesus' life with Mary and Joseph in Nazareth, we find ourselves face-to-face with a reality almost too good to be true. It is the truth that, since the Incarnation, we do not have to look far to find God. He has become very close to us, as close as our human life. "God is now found where we live, in our kitchens, at our tables, in our wounds, and in each other's faces." Several years ago, I came across a statement by the deceased American Cardinal Avery Dulles which I absolutely love because I think he captures so well what the mystery of the Incarnation is all about. He says: "Jesus enables us to believe that human life with all its contradictions, is the place where God is pre-eminently to be found...the Incarnation gives us strength to face up to the harsh realities of our fragmented world, to feel and to transmit the touch of God's reconciling love. The Incarnation does not provide us with a ladder by which to escape from the ambiguities of this life and scale the heights of heaven. Rather, it enables us to burrow down deep into the heart of the planet earth and find it shimmering with divinity."

God, who walked this earth in Jesus of Nazareth, shrouded and hidden in his human flesh, walks among us still. For all time, God has also ‘pitched his tent among us.’ Quietly and unobtrusively, Jesus ‘fits in,’ not disturbing or disrupting human life. Without our noticing, God walks among us. This is how God is present in our world, how He operates: not outside, above, or beyond human life and history, but right in the middle of it. Nazareth spirituality invites us to pierce this opaque veil behind which God hides and to discover “a world charged with the grandeur of God.”

Nazareth spirituality is a very simple, direct path to God. But it is by no means an easy path. It requires that we cultivate a special kind of attentiveness in our hearts, one that is rare and difficult in our busy, distracted lives. Most often we do not see or hear. We are asleep, distracted, or unconscious and so we fail to discern (recognize) the presence of God within and all around us. Like the men in the Old Testament, “...we entertain gods unaware...” The busyness and distraction, the ordinariness of our lives can easily dull our awareness to the point that we do not experience the glory that surrounds us, and we often fail to hear the voice of God calling to us in the heart of our lives. To discover what God



wants of us, we must develop the capacity to see, hear, and touch God-among-us. We must look very carefully to see the face of God lurking in the tired eyes of one’s husband searching for his cup of morning coffee or your wife multi-

tasking between preparing supper, doing laundry, and supervising homework. God speaks to us, not only in holy-sounding words, but also in the music of life, and in the noise and roar of everyday events, in the laughter of children and the boisterous, endless chatter of teens, in whispered words of love or forgiveness, in anguished tears. It takes attention and reverence to train ourselves to feel the tender touch of God in the arms of a loved one, or in the re-assuring hand of a friend on our shoulder.

Sometimes, as we all know, our ordinary life seems far from beautiful. It also brings sorrows that threaten to break our hearts. We, ourselves, or someone we love is diagnosed with a serious illness, the impact of inflation on our economy and rising prices create serious challenges, people lose their jobs and worry about how they will make ends meet and support their family. Marriages collapse or spouses wonder how they will ever cope with devastating loneliness when a husband or wife dies suddenly. We may see our children or grandchildren headed on roads that we know can only lead to disaster. Does God will, does God send these anguishing moments to us? NO. God does not deliberately inflict suffering on people; instead, we must be clear – while pain and anguish are an inevitable part of the fabric of human life, God does not send these afflictions on us. They are an inevitable part of human life which is filled with blessing and burdens. In such times, although we may need to search for a long time to find meaning in those circumstances, they also can be a doorway to an encounter with God who never abandons us. What God wills is that we bear the cross courageously.

In the silence of Nazareth, where great mystery was concealed beneath the quiet simplicity of daily life, the Holy Family teaches us to pay attention, to gain a contemplative heart, to discover the ‘living spring of life’ within us.

We might ask: how do we overcome the distraction, routine and sameness which dulls our senses and numbs our awareness so that our normal, ordinary lives no longer speak to us of God? We must re-discover our capacity for wonder. In the play, *Joan of Arc*, George Bernard Shaw wrote a segment in which the Dauphin of France complains to Joan about the ‘voices’ she hears. It reads: ‘Oh your voices, your voices...

Why don't the voices come to me? I am your king, not you.' And from the center of her contemplative awareness of God, Joan answers: 'They do come to you, but you do not hear them.

You have not sat in the field in the evening listening for them. When the angelus bell rings, you cross yourself and have done with it; but if you prayed from your heart, listened to the thrilling of the bells in the air after they stop ringing, you would hear the voices as I do.'

This is the quality of life to which we are called, the cultivation of a sacramental imagination, of finding a spark of the divine in the midst of what appears, at first glance, to be a very unlikely venue for the sacred. Once we learn to 'wake up,' to 'see' with new eyes, to be deeply present to our experience, the ordinary is transformed into the extraordinary.

We find God in ways we least expect, hidden just below the surface of our consciousness, in the unsuspected moments of our days, and its unquestioned routines – washing clothes, and cooking dinner, correcting a child, and making up after a fight with your husband or wife, staying up all night with a sick child or family member, caring for an aging parent, in the intimacy of a loving relationship, or patience in suffering. Then, the raw material of our everyday lives – both its agony and its ecstasy – offers us the opportunity to respond faithfully to what God would have us do in each situation. The dust and clay of everyday life carries us into the mystery of God; our normal human experience holds the potential for a sacred encounter where we enter a qualitatively different awareness of life, something we call contemplative awareness, an extremely delicate, subtle realization of fullness, homecoming, depth, quiet joy. Following God's will, then, does not only involve the big decisions of our lives; it is not just about the "capital letter" occasions. Gradually, obedience to God's will becomes a habit of the heart, a habitual sensitivity, an almost second nature way of faithfully responding to what life presents to us.

I once was talking with one of our Sisters, a

parish minister in the United States, and she told me about a young woman who, prior to the birth of her first child, used to come to Mass faithfully every morning. Then she had her child and was no longer in Church every morning. Finally, one



Sunday, after Mass, beaming with joy and pride the new young mother introduced her baby to Sister. But afterwards, she said, sadly: 'Sister, I feel that I am neglecting God since I had my baby, but I really cannot be here every morning now; she takes up every second of my time.' Very wisely, Sister replied: 'But don't you realize, this is exactly where you will meet God if you open your eyes...in this beautiful child He has given you to love and care for.' If I can encourage you at all, it is in this way. 'Look for God and His will for you where you least expect to find Him, in your home, your family, your work, your sorrows, and your life will suddenly become newly charged with a deep sense of peace even in difficult moments.'

Many people today are rejecting an image of God that seems to 'float above human life.' And that is why, perhaps now more than ever, the lessons and spirituality we learn from the Holy Family of Nazareth can be a great benefit. Such a two-feet-on-the-ground path can bring new life to those who are consciously and unconsciously starving for an authentic experience of God, a God within human life, in the humdrum, the chaos, and the incredible beauty and the anguish of all that it means to be human. God is there. The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council said this of the Church, the body of Christ on earth:

“Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts.”

The Incarnation has profound implications for our lives, much deeper than we think. Living in the awareness of God with us and following His Will is an absolute essential of our spirituality as Sisters and Associates of the Holy Family of Nazareth. Ronald Rolheiser, one of my favorite contemporary authors asks with deep puzzlement: “Why do we go on pilgrimages to holy places and not sit instead barefoot and feel the holiness of the soil of the earth? Why do we go to places like Lourdes and Fatima to see where the Blessed Virgin might have cried and not notice the tears in the eyes of the person sitting across the family table from ourselves? Why are we enthralled by a person like Padre Pio who carried the wounds of Jesus in his hands and feet and blind to the wounds of Christ in the face of the emotionally needy person we try so much to avoid?” He continues: “The God who is love and family, who was born in a barn, is a God who is found, first of all, in our homes, in our families, at our tables, in our sunrises, in our joys, in our arguments...To be involved in the normal flow of life, giving and receiving, as

significance of the family, saying: “The Christian family is a communion of persons, a sign and image of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.” Did you hear that? Your family is a sign and image of the Blessed Trinity!

Have you ever thought of your family life as sacred? As the meeting place of the holy? What, you might think!?! My messy, muddy, chaotic home with its endless bustle, piles of laundry on the floor and dishes in the sink, babies crying, dogs barking, teenagers arguing, lost keys and scraped knees, hospital beds...My home and family is a ‘domestic church?’ YES! This is the first place we meet God and where God’s will is revealed to us - in the love of spouses, parents, children, brothers, sisters, grandkids. It is the birthplace of faith and all the deeply held values that shape us for a lifetime. So, dear friends, look deeply into your everyday life, your family relationships with all their ordinariness, monotony, joys, sorrows, moments of insight and goodness and beauty and remember that ‘The Word was made flesh and lives among us,’ still, here, in this place, now. These are the ‘small s’ examples of the sacramentality of life in the world. What a dignity, what a noble vocation! Honor the ordinariness of your lives!

I pray that you will find some simple ways to help yourself discover this liturgy of life going on in your family life everyday. Maybe it is getting up a few minutes earlier, to start the day in your favorite chair, praising God as you watch the sunrise. Maybe it is keeping a journal. Maybe it is reading a good book that helps you contemplate the beauty, wonder, and grandeur of God around you, or listening to music, or joining a prayer group. Whatever you can do to nourish this awareness of the sacred all around and within you, do not delay, do not deprive yourself of this most precious

gift. You will find God there, if you take the time to look. You will discover, once again, that “the Word became flesh and lives among us – still – full of grace and truth.” This is where we discover God waiting to reveal His will to us, this is the deep example of the Holy Family of Nazareth, the mysticism of the everyday.



flawed and painful as this might be at times within any relationship, is to have the life of God flow through us.” This is where we discover what God wills, and how to faithfully do our part to make God’s Kingdom, God’s vision and dream for the world become a reality.

We find God in the communion of love we call the family. The Catechism of the Catholic Church speaks very profoundly about the

HOLINESS IN EVERYDAY LIFE



The theme is taken from Pope Francis' exhortation 'On the call to holiness in the contemporary world'. It is worth pausing and reminding each other where and what path we are all on. Every vocation is a path to the Father in heaven and He Himself gives us a clue: "Be holy, for I am holy" (Leviticus 19:2).

Holiness is another name for love, and yet each of us was created out of love and desires it most in our lives. We don't always know how to receive it and show it, but Pope Francis repeatedly asks us: DON'T DIE!!!... You have the power of the Holy Spirit to make holiness possible. In another place he goes into detail: Are you married or are you married? Be holy by loving and caring for your husband or wife as Christ did for the Church. Are you an employee? Be holy by fulfilling your work

honestly and competently in the service of your brothers and sisters. Are you a parent, grandmother or grandparent? Be holy by patiently teaching your children to follow Jesus. Do you exercise authority? Be holy by fighting for the common good and renouncing your personal interests.

The Pope also warns against the concrete dangers of contemporary Gnosticism and Pelagianism, which weaken the faith. He contrasts such attitudes with the Gospel beatitudes, which reveal the various dimensions of happiness hidden under the word BLESSED.

It is also worth recalling the characteristics of holiness in the modern world. These are: endurance, patience, gentleness, joy and humour, boldness and enthusiasm, community and constant prayer.

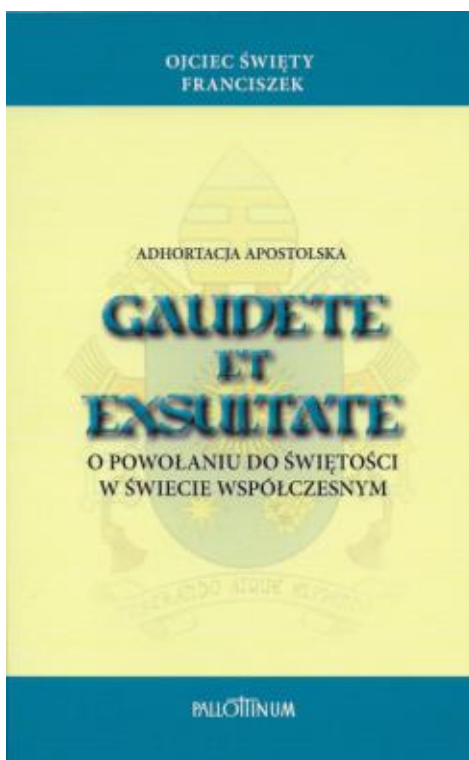
I found a very Nazarene passage in Pope Francis' document that I want to share at the end: Community life, whether in a family, in a

parish, in a religious community or in any other, consists of many small daily details. This is what the life of the holy community formed by Jesus, Mary and Joseph consisted of, in which the beauty of Trinitarian unity was reflected in a model way. The same was true of the community life that Jesus led with his disciples and the simple people

The Word of God, called by Pope Francis the great rule of conduct, became our prayer and was also used for sharing in small groups. I encourage you to take Scripture at your leisure and

listen to what Jesus wants to say to us in this word (Mt 25:31-46).

sr. Angelina Cieszko, AHF Warsaw



LOVE AS A PATH TO HOLINESS

The [Lord] wants us to be holy and does not expect us to be content with a mediocre, watered-down, empty life (GeE 1). It is about holiness as the inner dynamic of life, the main direction and goal, as a task for each day, as a real perspective of our daily life. Today, in the 21st century, the sanctity of marriage is not only possible, but necessary. Marriages will either be sacred or they will be replaced by all sorts of "free unions", dependent on socio-economic conditions, unions that are not based on mutual, difficult and sacrificial love!

The Church shows us witnesses who have walked the path of love towards Heaven.

Witnesses of love



Blessed Maria and Luigi Quattrocchi are a married couple who lived their love as a path to holiness. "They lived their ordinary lives in an extraordinary way", said JP II during his beatification in 2001. Their holiness consisted not in heroic deeds, not in WHAT they lived, but HOW they lived their lives. In their ordinariness, they were able to live out in an extraordinary way their devotion to each other and thus also to God. That is love and that is holiness.

"My earthly life - my whole life - was permeated by a desire, aroused by God Himself, to make my beloved happy," wrote Blessed Mary in the "Radiography of Marriage" after 46 years of living together, following the death of Aloysius. Love for one's husband does not in any way interfere with love for God, because that love is the basis of everything. Time devoted to loved ones becomes time

devoted to God, and love for God is realised, among other things, through love for one's spouse and children.

Their journey of faith was to live deeply the grace of the sacrament of marriage. From their example, we see that marriage is an ordinary, everyday reality in which God can be experienced.

What is most striking about Blessed Quattrocchi is the sense of closeness, of experiencing everything together, both the joyful moments and the difficult, painful ones. The joy of simple chores done together, trips taken together, rest, but also the hardships, worries and sufferings experienced together. Sufferings received and experienced together, so that one felt the pain of the other, or both carried the burden of suffering together, supporting each other.

Both Maria and Aloysius were an extremely happy couple, happy to the point of being saints!

The Samaritans of Markowa

We look upon Blessed Wiktoria and Józef Ulma and their seven children as martyrs for the faith. Their death is a confession of faith practised, that is, of active faith, a confession of fidelity to Him in Whom they believed. The Ulmas responded to the



plea of the Jews with a love that was stronger than fear, stronger than death.

When we look at the photographs of the Ulma family, we see many pictures of everyday life there: working, playing, resting, walking. On the faces of the wife, children, you can see smiles, peace, a sense of security, kindness. There are pictures which show mutual help, joint work of the children, parents, some division of duties, mutual care of the children for each other. When the Ulmas decide to take in Jews, they also show the children how to share with others what they had, which was not much. They were a poor family with many children, living in extremely modest conditions. Their sensitivity of heart did not allow them to stand idly by when others needed support, shelter and bread. They gave not only what they needed to live, but they offered themselves, they became a gift to others. This is also what they taught their children.



Love, love, love...

From her birth, Franciszka Siedliska was in poor health. After the founding of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth, her every day was full of activities, meetings and conversations. In spite of her pain and physical suffering, which increased with each passing year, Franciszka was full of God's joy, delighting those around her with her radiant smile. For the last eight years of her life, physical suffering was a constant companion; nevertheless, Francisca visited houses in the United States, made numerous trips to London, Paris, Krakow, Lviv. Returning to Rome, she undertook the daily duties of Superior General, kept up an abundance of correspondence late into the night, gave conferences, talked, admonished, counseled, showed concern and love. She got up at the sound of the bell and was the first in the chapel.

The congregation at the date of her death numbered more than 370 sisters, but many of them were young nuns in need of formation,

direction, time to develop, and there were so many needs, so many houses in which to undertake further apostolates. It is too much on the shoulders of a healthy person, let alone a woman who is so sick. She experiences and, importantly, ACCEPTS her bodily frailty, but also her spiritual frailty. Here she gives space for God alone to act! Her strength, her refuge, her defence is the Lord Himself, His Sacred Heart. He himself, Love, is in her the source of love for every day, for every person she meets, for every work she undertakes despite the weakness and fragility of her body. Francis walked because she knew that this was what the Lord was calling her to do, because Love was calling her.

Love, love, love, my sisters," she said in her last conference, a few days before she died. It's like a testament, but it's also what she lived, what was the essence of her life and what

consequently became her path to holiness. Mother's physical infirmity does not withdraw her from life, from responsibility ... it does not withdraw her from love, from giving love, it does not excuse her lack of love.

Holiness begins by quietly closing the door, said St Francis de Sales. So it's not that our everyday life becomes different because we start doing other spiritual activities, but by looking at it INHERENTLY and living it INHERENTLY. To look at one's everyday life in a Christian way is to look at it in a different way with love, to see in it what one does not normally see, to look into the depths, into the mystery.

God calls us to holiness, to be the salt of the earth, in this reality, state, profession, family in which we have come to live!

Bożena and Janusz Malec, AHF Warsaw

Above is a summary of the conferences that accompanied us during the AHF local conventions under the theme "Holiness in Everyday Life."

Way of the Cross

"Adoptive/Foster Family".

We are beginning the Way of the Cross. We are invited to walk this path with Jesus and with those who are struggling with infertility or the experience of an adoptive or foster family. Even if this problem does not affect us directly, perhaps it is worth listening to the hearts of those around us who are experiencing doubts, dilemmas, various sufferings, in order to better understand and support them.



Who suffered wounds for us....

STATION I JESUS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

P: We bow down to you Lord Jesus Christ and bless you

W: that Thou hast redeemed the world through Thy Cross and Passion.

Lord, are we also doomed not to have offspring?

By not being able to have children in marriage, do you want to tell us something? Sometimes we feel like we are doomed....

What is your plan for us? Are we to go through some path that you call us to? Perhaps it is the path of adoption, or perhaps the path of foster parenting?

We ask you, Jesus, for good discernment of the path and the courage to undertake it.

Our Father...Who suffered wounds for us....

STATION II JESUS TAKES THE CROSS ON HIS SHOULDERS

Yes, we undertook this journey just as you, Lord Jesus, took up your cross and set out on the road. We don't know what it will be, whether the child we will welcome into our family will be healthy, or whether it will be the child of our adoptive dreams....

Should we even have dreams and expectations for the child we will welcome into our family? We know that it is you, Lord, who prepared this path for us, you are already in this event.

Jesus, give us the strength to say our YES.

STATION III JESUS FALLS UNDER THE CROSS FOR THE FIRST TIME

The path of adoption or foster care is not an easy road. It is bumpy, winding, many signposts misplaced, but it is important to read it with the heart in connection with You, Lord, falling under the weight of the cross and not giving up. You, Lord, have your goal, you want to save the world. And us? What purpose do we have on our path?

Jesus, take away the fear, anxiety and temptation to give up.

STATION IV JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER

We probably think more than once about the biological parents of our child, especially the mother... How could she leave her child, who she carried in her womb for so many months... You call us not to judge, because each of us is different, not everyone had the chance to grow up in a true loving family. Not everyone knows how to love, not everyone has come to know You, Lord Jesus, enough to place their lives in Your hands. This mother also loves.

Jesus, to Your Mother we dedicate all women and their children.

STATION V SIMON OF CYRENE HELPS CARRY THE CROSS TO JESUS

We are like Simon the Cyrenean, we want to help children, although we know it's not an

easy task. This help has changed our lives, just like Simon's. To carry the cross alongside Jesus is an honor, it is a grace, it is a deed of mercy towards another person. One must not give up the desire to help. Jesus is in the other person, Jesus is in this CHILD. Jesus, teach us how we should be Simon to the children.

STATION VI VERONICA WIPES JESUS' FACE

Just as Veronica helped Jesus, so on our adoption or foster care journey we meet those who help. Family, friends, acquaintances. They often appear unexpectedly, are dedicated, selfless, and just want to be with us. You could say: angels sent by the Lord, who takes care of us so that not a single hair falls from our heads - He sends Veronica to wipe the sweat from a face weary of parenthood and problems. Thank you, Jesus, for those you place in our path.

STATION VII SECOND FALL UNDER THE CROSS

Many difficulties can be encountered on the chosen path and many falls can be scored. The constant waiting for that important phone call. Maybe we are already losing patience and want to give up because, however, no one calls from the adoption center? Maybe we are waiting too long? Maybe someone tried to mislead us by telling us about the baby? Maybe we are just facing one of the most difficult decisions in life, because we want to terminate the adoption, we want to dissolve the foster family? Lack of adequate material support, the adopted child fell ill... such situations make it seem that we can't cope. A lot of difficulties, adversity around, but did Jesus have an easy road? Do we go to salvation on a highway or a narrow bumpy road? Let's not rely only on ourselves, let's call on the name of the Lord.

Jesus, give us the strength to arise, to take up anew each day our daily cross.

STATION VIII JESUS MEETS THE WEEPING WOMEN

The path of biological parenting is not easy,

the path of adoptive, foster parenting is even more difficult. Although it is difficult on this path, but there are many moments when we are happy, smile, experience a sense of fulfillment and dying for the sake of others. We know that there are other adoptive parents, foster parents. Let's not leave them if they have problems, if they are crying, like those women on the road of Jesus. Let's be there for them, let's comfort them, let's support them, let's share our experience. Who else can understand them, if not us? Jesus, show us to whom we should go for comfort.

STATION IX JESUS FALLS UNDER THE CROSS FOR THE THIRD TIME

Downfalls are inherent in our lives. We can't cope with parenting: the rebellion of a 3-year-old, a 5-year-old, teenagers growing up - it's hard to communicate with them, arguments with the husband, with the wife. Added to this is the struggle with bureaucracy. Meetings with the biological parents of the children we took in. In addition, sleepless nights because the children cry, because the children's medical or psychological diagnosis is wrong, problems at school. All this without Jesus we will not survive, we will not get through. Without faith in His presence in our lives. Without the certainty that He loves us and is with us, that it is for us that He got up for the third time.

Jesus, teach us to pray.

STATION X JESUS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS

The whole truth about Jesus and his mangled body has been revealed. Have we learned the truth hidden in the heart of a wounded child, or have we bent with understanding and empathy over the fact that he was beaten, molested, starved, that he took part in such events in which he should never have taken part? Someone from humanity inflicted such inhuman suffering and irreversible consequences on them. Now we can only love them in his pain.

Jesus, heal the hearts of wounded children.

STATION XI JESUS NAILED TO THE CROSS

We love, we sacrifice, we raise, we give all we can to provide adopted children with a better world, a different future. We secure materially, so that they do not lack anything. We protect them. We hope that they will not follow in the footsteps of their biological parents. But that is exactly what can happen. Despite the effort of raising adoptive parents, foster parents, children may want to live differently... Is all lost, can all the effort of raising be in vain? Will Love prevail?

Jesus, multiply our faith in Your victory on the Cross.

STATION XII JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

I heard the diagnosis, I am infertile, I am infertile. It's death to parenthood. Is it really? Can this death turn out to be life? Jesus can bring good out of the worst evil.

There is the adoption route, there is the foster parenting route - we can become parents. It's not the end, it's the solution that will make us have a family, I will be a dad, I will be a mom. From the cross Jesus said, Son, behold thy mother. Woman, behold thy son.

Jesus, thank you for hope.

STATION XIII JESUS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS

Mary looks at the inert body of her Son - he is in great pain and there is nothing she can do. She can only hug and abide. Maybe we, too, have sometimes suffered as a father or mother, looking at the bad choices of children, and then the consequences they suffer. And there was nothing we could do... Because they are adults, because they do not want to listen to their parents, because they want to try themselves, because they are rebelling, maturing, because they want to live differently. Let's trust in God and what He has prepared. Let's love and stand by them as Mary did. Everyone has their own path to salvation.

Jesus, we trust in You.

STATION XIV JESUS LAID IN THE TOMB

Let's put in the tomb of Jesus everything that is beyond us, that troubles us at the moment. Maybe the lack of offspring, maybe the lack of courage to decide to adopt. Maybe the fear to adopt a child, because we don't know if it will be healthy, and we would very much like it to be so? Or maybe we are afraid, will we love this child? Will it love us? How will the family, friends react? Maybe we want to help children, we want to be a surrogate mom or dad for them, but we lack the courage. It was love that led Jesus to the cross, this road is not easy, but Jesus will help carry the cross, and Mary will always be right next to him. Joseph also raised a child who was not his own. Through his obedience, he received strength from God and entrusted his life to God. And me, and you, and us?

Jesus, help us to fulfill Your will to the end.

COMPLETION.

Jesus, during the Way of the Cross you touched our hearts. We are here because we believe that love is the most important thing in the lives of each of us and our families. Through the intercession of Mary and Joseph, we entrust all parental and educational difficulties. In Your Cross we learn our way of faith, hope and love. And through Your Resurrection we walk with confidence to the Father's house. AMEN.

Ela and Krzysztof Pogorzelec, AHF Warsaw (they have been a foster family for several years)

The service took place on September 21 in Częstochowa during the XL National Pilgrimage of Marriages and Families to Jasna Góra



DEAR AHF MEMBERS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD!

What you have just read and seen is only a small part of what is happening in our provinces, in our communities, in our families. The Holy Family of Nazareth visits our homes to bring the Kingdom of God's Love into them. Let us share this joy of meeting God and people, bringing hope where darkness reigns.

Celebrating the Jubilee Year with the entire Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth, let us thank the Lord for Nazareth!

Bożena and Janusz Malcowie
AHF, Warsaw