



OPENING ADDRESS - H. Monica Joseph RJM, Superior general.

What a meaningful prayer experience to commence this day, inviting us to live the 7 commitments of GCP. Thank you so much.

J Krishnamurthy a well-known Indian philosopher and educationalist once expressed his concern for humanity in these words: *We have come to a point in history, where we have to create a new culture, a totally different kind of existence, not based on consumerism, and industrialization, but a culture based on a real equality of religion. Now how does one bring about, through education, a mind that is entirely different, a mind that is not greedy, not envious? How does one create a mind that is not ambitious, that is extraordinarily active, efficient, that has a real perception of what is true in daily life which is after all religion”.*

Yes, my dear Sisters, AFJM members and Companions in Mission, we have gathered here to reflect and to build together, to create a new culture as J Krishnamurthy, St. Claudine and our Holy Father envisaged.

We have 2 important inspirational documents – the Global Compact on Education - GCE together with our JM Preferences, so as to be efficacious educators as Claudine would have desired.

My sharing will comprise of three aspects:

1. A quick and limited overview of the world
2. Some thoughts on our theme for this international meeting on Shared Mission.

PART I: Brief overview of the world:

We know that, to live deeply the charism of Claudine, we need to know how to read ‘the signs of our times,’ like she was able to do; to know and to understand the context in which we carry out our mission. And what a difficult task that can seem today!

I quote Pope Francis: *We are experiencing an era of change: a transformation that is not only cultural but also anthropological, creating a new semantics while indiscriminately discarding traditional paradigms. Education clashes with what has been called a process of “rapidification” that traps our existence in a whirlwind of high-speed technology and computerization, continually altering our points of reference. As a result, our very identity loses its solidity and our psychological structure dissolves in the face of constant change that “contrasts with the naturally slow pace of biological evolution”* unquote (Laudato Si’, 18). Message of Pope Francis for the Launch of The Global Compact On Education.





Coupled with this was the world-wide COVID -19 pandemic that gripped the entire world- young and old. All social ranks and cultures experienced pain, suffering and uncertainty of this unprecedented event. It turned global economies and policies upside-down and brought the entire universe to silence and stillness. Many children dropped out of school. It plunged us into a global experience of the inextricable interconnectedness and interdependency of all of life – human and not human that form the fragile web of life. In the field of education, on one hand, there was an increased use of technological devices which was an asset, it also enabled us to communicate easily and thus curb international and national travel which decreased the carbon footprint, but on the other hand, it is an area of concern, because of the rapid and rather opaque growth of all that surrounds - Artificial intelligence, robotics...etc... vis a vis the human person... It is interesting to note that Sweden's Minister of Education declared on 15 May, 2023, that she was putting on hold the classroom digitalization strategy. All brain research on children showed that they do not benefit from screen-based teaching. To combat this reading crisis, the Govt would allocate 60 million euros in 2023 , 45 million euros in 2024, so as to see more textbooks and less screen time in schools.

Scholars speak about 'the new physics,' 'the new cosmology,' altering our perception of the universe we inhabit. One American writer, **Joel Garreau**, says that we are at "an inflection point in history," and in a process of a radical evolution in which technology will change what it means to be human. For the first time, science and technology is not only aimed outward at modifying our environment. Genetics, robotics, the tsunami of information sweeping over us – all these are altering our bodies, metabolisms, minds, memories personalities, progeny. How deeply, we cannot now perceive.

Nor are we entirely sure of the consequences. What is destructive of human well-being, the well-being of our earth, and what is beneficial? And how to make sure that what is beneficial is available to all?

It is in this uncertain context that business groups use the acronym **VUCA** to describe the context in which they carry out their enterprise.

The letters stand for:

V- volatility,

U - uncertainty,

C- complexity,

A- ambiguity.

It could also be

V- vision, U- understanding, C- courage and A- adaptability.





This is the context in which we carry out our mission, this is the world to which we are sent, this is the vineyard that is ours in which to work. God has chosen to need women and men in every age to reveal his divine goodness and to make known the reality of the Incarnation. This is our age, our bewildering age. It is like the sea – vast, moving constantly, nothing sure beneath our feet. It is all we are given.

It is in this liquid society that we are called to educate, to create and construct a new culture not alone, but together ...and therefore the urgency for likeminded people from round our JM globe – to meet. I cannot stress enough the importance of this International meeting on SHARED MISSION – religious, AFJM members and Companions in mission.

- How to go forward?
- What must we not do?

Let us not seek security by denying the uncertainty, or by clinging to ways that no longer speak to our world and its people.

- What can we do?

As we open our minds and hearts to take in our reality as it is, let us be sure to put the person at the centre, **their** needs and sufferings at the center of our vision. If “the glory of God is the human person fully alive,” then the misery of any one of God’s children is an outrage against God’s will for that person. Need guides our service. The poor in all social milieu must be our guiding light. Solidarity, not individual pursuit of profit or glory.

And others can guide our service. A book popular in the USA some years ago has the title, Everything I Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten. One of the first things learned was, “When you go out into the world, hold hands.” In this complex society, no one person has all the answers. We need people from different perspectives. What do we read in Claudine’s history? “She, together with some of her friends....” set out to address the needs in her world.

There is no manual, no “How to Do” kit. But we can’t defer decisions until we have the absolutely correct answer and plan. Ambiguity nourishes learning. As the German poet Rilke says, “Let us learn to love the questions.”

Part II – Some thoughts on the theme of for this international meeting on Shared Mission.

Our objective of this meeting here is

- *To reflect together on Pope Francis’ proposal- the Global Educational Pact together with our JM Preferences. (I won’t go into this because you have read it and it is going to be dealt later)*





During these days we wish:

- *To delve into some of the commitments of the Pact, from different perspectives:*
 - *WE BUILD TOGETHER*
 - *We build HEALTHY AND JUST RELATIONSHIPS*
 - *We build DISCERNING*
 - *We build TENDERLY.*

Our desire is to conclude these days of reflection with something concrete –a PACT– to build/construct together a common declaration of commitment as one Jesus-Mary Apostolic Family. (The process will be explained later)

Dear friends, so we're here to renew our passion for education in every sense, to deepen our commitment to this mission, and to increase our understanding of how we might carry it out more effectively – TOGETHER.

Has anyone ever told you that: You're a dream come true! -- ? Well, for me, today, just looking at you, you are just that – a dream come true.

*You're the dream that produced an interesting thread in this tapestry, during the Bicentenary celebration of the Religious of Jesus and Mary in Lyon, when we felt the energy and creativity that came from joining with colleagues and alumni from all over the world, to reflect on our heritage and celebrate our charism. We asked then: *Could we dream of doing it again?**

*And we did! When we gathered in 2019 for our 37th General Chapter, to set a direction for our life and mission, it was a historic moment, for we had lay persons from every province and delegation who participated... and it was there that the phrase **COMPANIONS in Mission** was coined... yes, lay and RJMs alike, share this unique and precious gift of Claudine's charism and her mission. Their presence and insights contributed to another significant thread our document, **the JM PREFERENCES**.*

JM PREFERENCES: take a minute to look at it...

The experience of a merciful God impels us to live forgiveness and reconciliation and to work with passion for Justice, peace and integrity of creation.

We are sent to:

1. *To create spaces to experience an encounter with God*
2. *To build just and healthy relationships*
3. *To risk going to the peripheries*
4. *To go beyond our own boundaries.*

With preference for:

- *Youth,*
- *Vulnerable people – especially women and children.*
- *Our common home.*





One moment of silence.

It calls us to “**work with passion for justice, peace and the integrity of creation**”; it roots us in the commitment to forgiveness and reconciliation that marks our charism; and it directs us to community beyond ourselves, our vowed membership, as an indispensable component of our life and mission.

But what we may see as a step into the future – this “dream come true” of gathering with others who share our mission, is really a return to the vision, the apostolic style, the “way of proceeding that characterized a woman of 19th century France, Claudine Thévenet, Foundress of the Religious of Jesus and Mary. So, our first thread of connections, originates with the loom from the heart of St. Claudine

This meeting is about **SHARED MISSION- together we journey...RJMs and lay persons, AFJM and Com. In mission.** We continue this story of weaving with our multicolored threads.

An early history tells us that, for Claudine, “the greatest misfortune was to live and die without knowing God,” the God whom she saw as all goodness and love. To see children deprived of the love and care that reflected this good God impelled Claudine to action. The early sources tell us, “Together with some of her friends, she sought a solution to remedy this great misfortune.” [Positio, 540] “Together with some of her friends...”

My friends, during these coming days, let us together seek remedies. Remedies for what denies our sisters and brothers the fullness of life our good God wants for them. Remedies for the damage we are doing to our common home. We’re taking our cue from Claudine and her friends, about whom we read: “Assembled in committee, they planned the means to be employed...” [Positio, 540]

It is no coincidence that on the eve of the next Synodal Assembly, there will be an ecumenical prayer vigil in Rome, in the presence of the Holy Father, and the theme is ‘Together, Gathering of the People of God’ 29 Sept to 1st Oct. 2023.

And we, assembled here in Mexico City, are taking inspiration from Pope Francis and **THE GLOBAL EDUCATION PACT**. This document puts before us the realities of injustice and exclusion that mark our world, the millions of children excluded from education, things that cry out for a remedy. It indicates possibilities for healing, for acting.

7 Commitments of GCE – Which you not only know, it was our prayer this morning. **(a minute to read)**

1. To make human persons the Centre
2. To listen to the voices of children and young people
3. To promote women
4. To empower the family
5. To Welcome
6. To find new ways of understanding
7. To safeguard our common home.





It also echoes the sentiments and plan of action of our dear St. Claudine – who 200 years ago had the same vision... how privileged we are to have such a foundress, a woman for all times.

But/And the question that rings throughout its pages is: *What are you going to do?*

Yes, what are we going to do? What are we called to be and to do?

We're here because we want to respond.

As we move through these days, we will reflect on each of these challenges. But to begin, I want to say something further about the first of the four. Why is the fact of our being here, TOGETHER, so important?

Let us watch a very short video:

“Better work together”

Yes, its smarter to travel in groups. You notice all the ants same colour... so is the case with us... all share the same charism and the same mission...we are in it together.

You have re-arranged community, family and work obligations; many of you have travelled great distances because you want to be **TOGETHER** with others who care for the future of our children, vulnerable persons and our common home. You want to join with people who share your deep concern for that future. Your presence suggests that you agree with what our Spanish Province has adopted as the name of its foundation, an organization which has funded so many educational projects: *Juntos Mejor – TOGETHER is Better – COMPANIONS IN MISSION, AFJM, FORMER STUDENTS, COLLABORATORS, VOLUNTEERS WITH RJMS...an inspiration that springs from Claudine: a person who undertakes a long and difficult journey alone soon grows weary. On the other hand, those who travel together do so with confidence, courage and the benefit of mutual support.*

To BUILD TOGETHER – is better in a pragmatic sense because the rich diversity of insights and experience gives all of us tools for understanding our world and its people and cultivating that understanding in those we teach.

To BUILD TOGETHER – is better, because it does indeed take a village to raise a child, and the connections we foster in that task with families, civic, cultural and church organizations – the world around us – are essential to the enterprise.

To BUILD TOGETHER – is better, in the most profound sense, because together is what we are, together is who we are. Scientists now are telling us what mystics and poets have long intuited, and our own Scriptures powerfully affirm: we are inextricably connected on the deepest level of our being, not just with others in the human family, but with all who share our common home, and with that home itself.





The British astrophysicist, **Martin Rees** tells us: *Astronomers now trace our Earth's origins back to stars that died before the solar system formed. These ancient stars made the atoms of which we and our planet are formed. We, and our planet. Everything. The stones of this building. The flowers I admired this morning. The bird I heard singing. We are all stardust. And you – you and I; we are stardust come alive, and somehow conscious of being alive.*

That consciousness is not static. It is within us as a seed, one that grows and develops. *How?* Through others, through relationship. Only through relationship.

We are connected. What we need to do is to become more and more aware of it, more committed to living it, expressing it. The human condition is one of belonging.

Mother Theresa of Calcutta says, “We have forgotten that we belong to one another

Let us watch another short video.

How will we nurture our children and equip them for this world – the world they must navigate and the world they will make?

It's a big question, the question that brought about this call for a Global Compact on Education. As we wrestle with it during these days, I want to suggest three things we might keep in mind as we listen and speak, search and discern.

First, let us mine the riches of being TOGETHER, with one another.

That's why we've come here. You have wisdom and experience to give; I can learn from you. I have things to share; you can learn from me. Coming together, we mirror, and we act from the interdependence that is intrinsic to our very being as members of the human family, and the wider family with whom we share this Common Home.

Secondly, let us remember that we carry our mission TOGETHER, with all who form the village that it takes to raise a child.

We need them – the astrophysicists and geologists and biologists as well as the experts in pedagogy and curriculum. The parents who are the primary educators as well as the communities and cultures in which they make a home. We need them all if we're going to give the care of the world to people who understand what that care entails.

And finally, we educate by nurturing and fostering all that reveals how and for what purpose we ARE and MUST BE - TOGETHER.

We want to send into the world people who are imbued with that truth, committed to living in its light, and unflagging in working to heal bonds that have been broken – bonds with the human family, with what St. Francis called Brother Wind and Air, Sister Water, Mother Earth. We are here to create a new culture for our bleeding humanity.





We will talk and reflect during these days about building **healthy and just relationships**, at every level. We need to cultivate relationships that recognize and support what is central to our identity: we are members of one family, sharing a common home.

We will talk and reflect on **discernment**, learning to recognize what leads us into life-giving communion with others and our world, what choices help to create a world where it is easier for people to be what God made them to be – good.

And we will talk and reflect about the “revolution” Pope Francis calls us to, **the Revolution of Tenderness**. It is indeed a revolution, but it is not new. One image that depicts what I believe Pope Francis means comes from the 19th century. Two women are gazing at a sullen, dirty little girl, and one says, “What can you expect us to do with this child, ...?” But **Claudine says**, “She will be beautiful at eighteen...” [Positio, 574] You can feel the tenderness in this scene, just as you can in another one from 1st century Palestine, when Jesus says, “Don’t send them away; let them come. It is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.” [Matt. 19:14]

Part III - Finally, I come to the last part of this sharing where I would like to comment briefly on the logo.

Logo of SHARED MISSION knot: It is not a coincidence that the Commission chose this as its LOGO.

Multi colored threads, loosely connected /knotted at the centre, the heart ...God, the divine presence who draws each one of us to His centre into an intimate relationship with him, and thus all of us are connected, in a deep relationship, not only in Him but with each other. These multi-coloured threads comes and goes, representing not uniformity but diversity of our JM world and all we are. Thus creating a new culture of Union in diversity. Let this be our desire to connect and be knotted in a deep relationship with God, with each other,



for and with the young, the vulnerable and our Common Home.

This takes me to another place in time. We are in the land of the ancient indigenous people of the Americas. This logo reminds me of the Quipo of the Incas who were the largest civilization in the Andean Americas.

Quipo:

The Incas did not have a written language, but they had the quipu: This ancient “operating system,” called quipus, dates back to 2600 BCE. It was the native American form of writing, of communicating, of preserving all kinds of data – census, taxes, food production and of connecting and uniting far flung places. Cultures across the ancient Andean world used this system for thousands of years. They adopted, a unique system of recording information from their predecessors “They were like early computers, early counting machines,” says author Kim MacQuarrie. a portable mini laptop of today.





A quipu apparently looks simple to the eye, but it was a very complex system, a sophisticated assembly of a series of strings with knotted cords that stored data and communicated information. It recorded decimals upto 10,000. The number of knots, the size of the knots, the type of knot, the colour, and the distance between knots conveyed different meanings to the Inca. Only specially trained officials knew how to use quipus.

Let us watch a two minute video on the Threads that speak.

And so from the ancient times of the Quipo to the modern logo for the Shared Mission, we have a vital link with none other than our Foundress... who is for us the first fundamental thread that was woven to create the JM family.

Claudine and the loom:

Claudine together with her companions taught the children the art of silk weaving, not only as a means to be self-sufficient, but it was a platform to them to learn values for life via the loom.

Today, we each bring our colored thread from our sacred land... and we wish to continue the story for our times, weaving together, connecting with likeminded people, creating knots of new relationships, new processes...weaving together the tapestry to create a new culture.

Dear friends, I urge each one of you, to give a part of who you are to the other, and to accept the threads of friendship from the other, and thus make connections and knots, crossing bridges of language, generations, mind sets and cultural differences. Together we can continue the beautiful tapestry begun by Claudine with different multi colored threads of who and what we are.

At the end of these days, we wish to create a common declaration – which will be our JM tapestry on Shared Mission – a guide into the future.

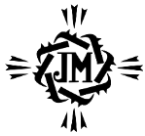
Let us conclude with a short prayer to Claudine to journey with us...

Prayer to St. Claudine (composed by our Irish RJMs)

Claudine,
You are the fundamental first thread women into the fabric of the
Jesus and Mary design which now spans all continents;

The one who risked the weaving,
Chose the colors,
Set up the loom,
Suffered the uneven shuttling
When the design showed little clarity.





Encuentro internacional JM de Misión Compartida



Only faith in a Good God
And the possibilities open to you gave you courage to continue.
Today we are gently bound by those silken multi-coloured threads –
Threads of future hopes and potential. Amen

We hope that the work of these days will bring us to a re-commitment, a pledge to re-dedicate ourselves to our mission. We know well that we cannot “remedy” everything. Of course not. But we can be together here – learning from one another, “enlarging our tent” [Is.54:2] – so that we return to the part of this world that touches us with a renewed vision for what is ours to do. To do that, to generate the hope and energy for the pact that will be the fruit of these days, we need one another, we need the gifts of every person here. Once more, I thank you for bringing yourselves, and all that you will give and share in the coming days. Thank you and may God bless you and bless this International Meeting on Shared Mission.

