

**NEWSLETTER VOL. 2 No. 2  
FEBRUARY 2013**

**RETREAT WORKSHOP  
IN BOLIVIA  
DECEMBER 7-17, 2012**



The Sisters in Bolivia with Sisters Jean Moore, Sarah Hennessey and Linda Mershon, FSPAs

Sister Jean Moore FSPA had previously visited the TSSF Bolivian Region in January 2010 and organized a week of conferences around the theme of Franciscan conversion. This trip in December 2012 furthered the Franciscan elements of Franciscan spirituality in a retreat program designed around the theme of “Love one another as I have loved you”. The content served to address areas of personal and communal growth.

- God’s Abundant Love for Us; *Bonum* in all as Gift!
- Franciscan Relationships based on the Trinity
- Fraternitas/Sororitas: Living in Community as Sisters
- Franciscan Perspective of the Human Person: Personal Authority and Voice
- Franciscan Models of Leadership Authority and Structure
- “Coming Down the Mountain: What is Ours to Do?”

Sister Jean led the retreat presentations, Sister Linda was prayer leader and

Sister Sarah led the sisters in afternoon rituals/activities that helped to internalize content. 24 TSSF Sisters from Bolivia and Austria participated.

Sister Jean stated: *It was wonderful for me to renew my friendship with the TSSFs in Bolivia and for Sisters Linda and Sarah to initiate their relationship with them. Collaborative efforts between women who work to bring about God’s love and justice in the world are a powerful force with creative possibilities and unlimited consequences.*

The three FSPAs felt gifted to have the opportunity to see the missions and ministries of the TSSF in Ascención de Guarayos, El Puente, Yaguarú, Urubichá, and Santa Cruz. Unfortunately, time and distance mitigated against a visit to San Miguel de Vazquez and San Rafael. However, in their travels they got a wonderful idea of the scope and depth of the ministerial works of the sisters. Sister Sarah wrote: *My heart was stretched and the world became wider as I entered into their rhythm of life in the Bolivian jungle.*

Departing from Santa Cruz, the three sisters representing the Franciscan Common Venture wrote: *We savored our experiences here. We’ve learned so much, experienced lots of new tastes, sounds, smells, and sights, and have been touched deeply by the person and ministry of each of the Sisters here.*



Bolivian Village photo by Sister Jean Moore FSPA

## NEW PARTNERS, BIG IDEAS A CONVENING OF SISTERS AND FOUNDATION REPRESENTATIVES

October 22-23, 2012, St. Paul Minnesota



Among the participants were Sister Marlene Weisenbeck FSPA and Sister Joyce Meyer PBVM, pictured in the center second row

With the Congregation of St. Joseph St. Paul Province and the CSJ Ministry Foundation, the GHR Foundation sponsored “New Partners, Big Ideas,” a two-day convening of sisters and representatives of foundations with an interest in women’s religious life in the U.S. and Africa. It did so with hopes of fostering a community of learning, giving participants the opportunity to consider the future of women’s religious life, develop new relationships, share ideas, explore opportunities for collaboration, and learn about and inform foundation strategy and practice.

In attendance were twenty-seven participants:

- Foundations represented: 5 (1 primarily domestic, 4 international in outreach)
- Participants: 1 religious brother, 10 lay women and men (including GHR representatives), 16 sisters (12 Americans and 4 Africans)
- Geographic scope: participants working directly in the U.S. and 9-plus African countries.
- GHR support: representatives from 10 funded projects (4 with U.S. focus, 6 with African focus)

The program included prayer, five structured conversations, and a panel of funders with representatives from Porticus, SC Ministry Foundation, Hilton Foundation, Hilton Fund for Sisters and GHR which answered questions from participants about how foundations thought about and responded to the needs of

sisters. One evening featured a dinner and visit at the Minnesota Historical Society

Participants were interviewed in advance; their input served as the basis for an agenda built around three topics:

- **Prepared:** to be prepared for leadership, for religious life and for ministry
- **Resourced:** to have the resources to ensure congregational vitality and effectiveness
- **Networked:** to engage others—congregations and faith traditions—to advance mission.

Although no participant was positioned to commit the organization she or he represented to any course of action in real time, they were asked to think more concretely about what it would take to realize some of their hopes and visions.

### ***What would it take to be prepared . . .***

- to ensure our senior leaders’ wisdom is at the disposal of the next generation?
- to increase sisters’ educational attainment levels in Africa in a collaborative way?
- to prepare the next generation of leaders to navigate tremendous institutional change?

### ***What would it take to be resourced . . .***

- to promote vocations to religious life?
- to ensure that religious congregations are sustainable and vital?
- to empower African congregations to develop and steward resources?

### ***What would it take to be networked . . .***

- to prepare sisters to engage Islam productively and mutually?
- to help people throughout the world better understand the nature of religious life?
- for support organizations (e.g. International Union of Superiors General, Leadership Conference of Women Religious, and other national conferences) to better meet the changing needs of religious congregations?

One participant observed: ***I think this group has and will continue to affect change in the world.***

*From the Report published by GHR Foundation  
Used with permission*

The Franciscan Common Venture received substantial grants from the Hilton Fund for Sisters in 2009 and from the GHR Foundation in 2010.