

WHO ARE THE SISTERS OF THE CONGREGATION IN CENTRAL AMERICA?

Interview with Sister Ercilia Janeth Ferrera Erazo, CND, adapted by Carmen Aguiluz
 Photo Search: Josée Sarrazin

I think we are sisters who have had very enriching experiences. For example, in Central America, we have lived under the same roof with sisters from the United States, Canada and Japan. Also, we ourselves come from different countries, Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador. This rich diversity is very important when we think about formation. At the moment, there are three professed sisters from Guatemala, one from El Salvador and thirteen from Honduras.

It makes me think of a beautiful and varied garden growing in our region. We also have two American and five Canadian sisters. It is clear that the number of founding sisters is decreasing. However, their departure does not mean that they take with them the basic ideas like charism, openness to internationality and to diversity. This wonderful richness inspires in us sincere gratefulness to the first sisters who came to this region to evangelize and to work with the people.

We must first thank the Lord for the richness that allows us to be small local communities with that multicultural diversity that is part of who we are. Even if we come from the same region and speak the same language, there are also some differences – but these differences are also blessings. During the 51-year presence of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame in Central America, we are very grateful for the constant advancement of the mission and for the faith in the progress of the region demonstrated by our elder Canadian and American sisters. We thank the Lord for this garden. I now tell the sisters that we, the small troop that we form, must give colour and flavour to the whole Congregation.



Ercilia Janeth Ferrera Erazo, CND with Social Justice Network members Ms. Monica Lambton and Ms. Bineta Ba



MARGUERITE BOURGEOYS'S CHARISM AS IT IS LIVED IN CENTRAL AMERICA

To talk about Marguerite Bourgeoys's charism is to talk about her passion. I think that charism is lived very profoundly in the region because we feel recognized, involved, and passionate about Marguerite Bourgeoys and the way she lived her life. Charism inspires us to imitate her in the way she saw life, the way she gave herself to others, the way she performed even the smallest tasks and always in the spirit of Visitation.

Because Central American people are welcoming and hospitable, this charism finds its cradle here and is deeply rooted in our lives. We visit others, the sick, the ones who need to be heard, the ones who are alone. We provide a presence, even if it is a silent presence. Charism takes form and is important for the Central American sisters in a special way because we identify with Marguerite Bourgeoys and her work. Still today, this charism is relevant to us, because even after so many years since Marguerite Bourgeoys took on God's project, it is still valid and important to us.

The act of visiting is to bring God to the other person and to find God in that person. The charism of Visitation and Pentecost present in the harsh reality of the people in Central America is hope, life, joy; it is God among the small and the poor. The Central American sisters live charism differently. We are currently looking for new ways to deeply-root it in its different forms. When we talk about the charism in Central America, we talk about life. Again, Marguerite Bourgeoys brings to our daily lives the spirituality of Visitation and Pentecost in order that we inspire life in others.