

## REPORT FOR THE INTER-CONGREGATIONAL MEETING IN ROME

May 8-11, 2023.

It would be fine if I could say that our community is growing and getting younger! But unfortunately, from year to year the Congregation is getting smaller, and the age of the sisters is getting older. The Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady - Zagreb currently has 45 sisters, and the average age of the members is 71.5 years. We are less and less able to act as much as we would like and in relation to the needs. The largest number of sisters (17) are between the ages of 71 and 80. There are 9 sisters between the ages of 80 and 92, who need some help from the younger ones, although many of them contribute themselves to the daily functioning of the community.

### PLACES AND SERVICES OF SISTERS

The sisters are divided into eight communities, seven of which are in Croatia and one in Serbia. We have three communities in the capital city of Zagreb. The monastery in the downtown (Primorska 20), with 11 sisters, is the Generalate house. The second one is located in the green part of the city, near the Medvednica mountain, where 19 sisters live and where there is a space for elderly and infirm sisters. The activities of the sisters in our communities are varied. Most of the sisters are involved in duties of maintaining the household and functioning of the community. Two sisters are employed as professors at the Catholic Faculty of Theology of the University of Zagreb, one teaches religious education and catechetics, and the other teaches church music. In addition, they hold responsible positions as head of the Department and head of the Institute and perform many other duties in their professions. Another sister works outside the community as a nursery teacher in a kindergarten. The third community in Zagreb is in the parish house in the immediate vicinity of our Generalate house, where two sisters act as sacristans, help with the administrative affairs of the parish and with household chores.

Two sisters work at the diocesan seat in the town of Bjelovar, one in administrative affairs in the diocesan office, and the other as a sacristan in the cathedral. They also hold spiritual meetings for girls and young people and provide charitable assistance for poor families.

A community of four sisters lives in the town of Osijek. One works as a religious education teacher in an elementary school, and in addition helps to animate the

youth in the parish. The other one works as a catechist, preparing children for first communion and performs administrative and sacristan work in the parish. The other two sisters are older, but they take care of the household and visit the elderly parishioners.

Two sisters live and work in the parish in the village of Davor, participate in pastoral work with children and visit elderly and lonely parishioners.

In the parish in the village of Gunja, there are also two sisters who are involved in parish pastoral care and household management.

In the town of Subotica in Serbia, a community of three elderly sisters in poor health lives in our monastery. They are helped by medical and other support staff that we hired to make their everyday life easier.

Our Congregation has not had a single new member for about fifteen years. It is difficult to talk about the reasons for this. One of them is probably our unpreparedness, as well as the unpreparedness of the entire Church in Croatia, for the challenges brought by new social changes. On the other hand, these changes themselves include a new understanding of the role of women in society, in which the position of women, and especially nuns in the Church, is difficult to fit into. The circumstances in which we found ourselves encourage us to be more patient with each other, but also to be open to the needs of the people around us so that in our later years we do not lose the significance of our mission.

I would like to conclude this short report with two thoughts from Dr. Jessie Rogers' lecture, who impressed me the most.

1. *"Wisdom means that we live our lives in accordance with reality so that we can achieve the highest good."*

2. *"We are called to be open and receptive to what God is doing. In the present moment, which lies in the gap between the past we think we know and the future yet to come, we can embrace uncertainty with curiosity. We are asked to be attentive because what God does cannot be predicted, but it can be discerned if we are alert and attentive."*



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