

Dear Sisters and Associates/Companions -- Today, on this twenty-second week (June 10) of our 2024 Global Coordinating Group calendar, we are invited *to listen to the heart of the world* and hold in our prayers the Sisters and Associates serving in **India** as well as all the people in that nation.

The Sisters ministering in India belong to the Annecy, Chambéry, and Lyon congregations and serve in various ministries, including: empowerment of women, girls and children; education and adult literacy; health care in hospitals, clinics, village dispensaries, and with



people living with AIDS; vocation animation; support of street children and those living in marginalized areas; pastoral and parish work; prison visits; evangelization and faith formation; and social action, justice and peace, human rights, and inter-religious dialogue.

The Annecy Congregation first arrived in India in 1849. The Chambéry Congregation began its India ministry in

1851 when Sisters from Savoy arrived to strengthen the already established Annecy mission. Today, Chambéry has four Indian Provinces (Pachmarhi, Nagpur, Nirmala and Tanmaya). The Lyon Congregation began its mission in India in 1906 with six French Sisters who arrived in Madurai in the Tamil Nadu. In 2017, their General Chapter accepted the request of the Nava Jeevan Region to become a Province and for the Sisters' existing India Province to be renamed the St. Joseph Province – which includes 29 communities spread out in Andhra, Karnataka, Kerala Tamil Nadu, Assam, and Sri Lanka. This [recent article](#) written by Sr. Nirmala of Annecy's Visakhapatnam Province describes the collaboration

between the Lyon, Annecy, and Chambéry congregations in India and their collective efforts over the past two years to promote women's empowerment initiatives. For example, "... one prominent effort has been the establishment of Catholic Women's groups in various Visakhapatnam parishes as well as domestic women's groups ..." and by working with a local non-governmental organization to conduct awareness programmes on various topics including nutrition gardens, waste-to-wealth, and recycling (see image above).



Country Background: India is the world's seventh-largest country by area, the second most densely-populated, and the most populous of all global democracies. Historically, the subcontinent was home to the Indus Valley Civilization; however, during the Medieval period, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, and Islam arrived and Sikhism emerged - all adding to the region's religious and cultural diversity. In the mid-1700s, the subcontinent came under British East India Company control and, during the following century under the rein of the British Crown. A nationalist movement led to its independence in 1947 and the Republic of India was established three years later. Following market-based reforms in 1991, India has become one of the world's fastest-growing economies and yet continues to face significant challenges (poverty, corruption, malnutrition, and inadequate public healthcare). With a population of 1.4billion (2024), the Indian government's thinktank 'Note Aayog' has recently claimed a decline in poverty from 11.28percent to "closer to 5percent or less" during the first 40 days of 2024; however, a [recent Deutsche Welle article](#) noted that while "India has revealed that nearly 250 million people have been lifted out of multidimensional poverty... experts have raised doubts about the lack of relevant data". In this context, Amnesty International's 2023 report

continues to site several human rights concerns, including: freedom of expression and association, arbitrary arrests and detentions, unlawful attacks and killings, freedom of assembly and of religion, discrimination, women's rights as well as environmental degradation. Beginning in April 2024, Indian citizens voted in a seven-phase election. Last week, Al Jazeera news reported that "with all of India's 640 million votes counted following a six-week-long election, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), together with its National Democratic Alliance (NDA), has won a majority, despite a sharp reduction in their seat tally compared with the 2019 elections". This recent [Global Sisters' Report article](#) describes India at this crossroad. (Sources: Al Jazeera news, Amnesty International, Annecy Congregation website, Chambéry Congregation website, Deutsche Welle, Global Sisters' Report, International Centre website, Lyon Congregation website, Reuters News Service, SOS International, Wikipedia, World Bank, Worldometer)



United in prayer, the Global Joseph Family, 7850 Sisters, 5700 Associates, 34 Agrégées in 45 countries, listening to the heart of the world.