

Dear Sisters and Associates/Companions -- Today, on this third week (January 29) 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 **Bolivia** as well as all the people of that South American nation.

From this [Global Sisters Report](#), we learn that Congregation of Chambéry began its mission in Bolivia in 1981 with five sisters originally from Cochabamba whose ages crossed four generations and who lived and worked in one of the poorest sections of that region. Their works included education, training, Pastoral care, community food kitchens, and various social activities. In 2017, their service was recognized when Sr. Zelinda Rosin received the Bolivian national "Manager and Defender of the Cultural Heritage" award for managing 14 soup kitchens as part of the Sisters' social project called 'comedores' (community kitchens). Four comedores continue to serve



hundreds of children and seniors. At their January 2022 [regional assembly](#) (see photo) in the city of Cochabamba, the Sisters celebrated the growth of the region and the expansion “of our tent as four

missionaries joined us in 2021 to embrace interculturality and inter-Congregationality” - building on their commitment to weave new horizons of interculturality into community life (read [more here](#)). Today, the Sisters continue to serve where the need is greatest – in education, health care, social work and ministries, and spiritual direction.

In addition to the Sisters of the Chambéry Congregation, today we remember our Sisters of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie who also ministered in Bolivia: Srs. Carolyn Schan and Margaret Cushman served in an orphanage for girls from 1987-89, and between 1991-94 Sr. Carolyn returned to Bolivia to set-up a library in a remote region as part of a Mennonite sponsorship project.



Country Background: Prior to Spanish colonization in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Andean region of Bolivia was part of the Inca Empire while the northern and eastern lowlands were inhabited by independent Indigenous groups. Since the establishment of the Republic of Bolivia in 1825, it has endured various periods of political and economic instability - including the loss of various peripheral territories to

its neighbours. Today, Bolivia is the fifth largest country in South America with a population just under 12.5 million (2024). It is a multi-ethnic, diverse nation with Spanish as the official and predominant language and 36 indigenous languages also spoken and with official status. Economically, Bolivia is the poorest country in South America and while the country has made advances to reduce extreme poverty from 38percent (2005) to 17percent (2017), it continues at around 16percent (2022). In addition to poverty, [Human Rights Watch](#) has cited several concerns in its 2023 report, including: political interference in the judicial system and resultant lack of judicial independence, protest-related violence and abuses, and Indigenous rights. In addition to these concerns, there is growing alarm regarding Bolivia's fragile ecosystems which are increasingly vulnerable to the effects of global climate change. (Sources: Chambéry Congregation website, Global Affairs Canada, Human Rights Watch, MacroTrends, Wikipedia, Worldometer).



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