

Czech Republic

In 1998 a house was established in Brno to facilitate a discernment process for some Czech women. They had encountered the writings of Nicolas Barre during the process for his beatification (1999) and wanted to find out more. One of these young women discovered she wished to become a Sister. Following a period of Formation in England and Ireland, she made her first commitment in 2005 and is once more in Brno with another Sister. The mission continues.

God's ways are unfathomable. How true it is that God writes straight with crooked lines!

The story of our Institute in the Czech Republic is linked to that of the Friars Minim, the order to which Nicolas Barré belonged three centuries ago. Minim monks had settled in Vranov in the 17th century as our Institute was coming to birth in France. Their presence was marked by the many vicissitudes of Czech history and they had to leave their monastery several times.

After the fall of communism in 1989, a community of Czech monks returned to live in Vranov, near Brno. In their church was a copy of Nicolas Barré's Prayer of Abandonment. Some young women saw this prayer during the time of preparation for the beatification of Nicolas Barré. Their interest in it led them to ask questions about its author.

The outcome was that the monks put these women in contact with the Infant Jesus Sisters in Italy and they were invited to visit the country to see the life and work of our sisters there. They stayed for a period of three years, during which they had the opportunity to learn Italian, studying and working with the sisters, especially in Calabria. These young women felt that our spirit had something to say to their own people. Their dream was to implant an Infant Jesus Sisters community in their own country.

Concrete steps were taken in 1998. It was decided to buy a house in Brno and to spend some time discerning where the future lay. A group of young Czech women came to live there, and members of the central team and others came to stay and support them and begin a time of deeper discernment with them.

It became evident to two of these Czech women that religious life was not their calling. One young woman, Veronika Reháková, wanted to continue and went to England, where she experienced various forms of ministry and community life. She made her first commitment in February 2005 as a member of the province of England and Ireland. She then returned to the house in Brno with a sister from Ireland, and carries on her ministry mainly as a teacher. Sr Veronika took her final vows in Oct 2011.

[Update](#)

It was with great joy to announce that, on 26th October 2013, Sr Klára Malinakova, 30, pronounced her first vows as a IJ sister, offering to God her whole life, while being aware that this step goes beyond her understanding. How to express something so intimate, so untranslatable, so difficult to communicate as the mystery of God's call and a person's response? Yet the celebration, abundant with images, colours, sounds, words and taste, spoke in a way that could not have been imagined.

The Liturgy of the Word offered a first series of “food” for our senses. It aimed straight to the heart of our being human – love and relationship. The Song of Songs was read by a married couple as a dialogue between the two Beloveds who search and long for each other and whose love is strong and unquenchable “like a flame of God”. Psalm 42 led us to the running streams where the soul, like the deer, thirsts for God. Then the passage where at the house of the Pharisee, a woman, so filled with love and gratitude, anointed and kissed Jesus’ feet. It was out of this context that Klára pronounced her vows.

Then through bodily movement, Klára went on to express all that was going on in her heart. In her long colourful dress she danced her ‘yes’ to God, supported by four young women in the background. This moving expression danced to the words of “Take Lord and receive...” was her response to the call from God: “May I have the pleasure of this dance?”

The prayer that all sisters be drawn into the unquenchable flame of God’s Love and to have the courage to respond and dance to the rhythm of the Spirit of God was made. The day did not pass for Klára without her thoughts going to Peru where she had spent some time. She invited anyone who wished to offer her a gift to do so in the form of a contribution for people in need there.

Adapted from Sr Veronika Reháková's account

[Sr Klara's experience in Peru](#)

In March 2013, I got an opportunity to spend ten weeks in Peru as part of my novitiate experience.

The first six weeks were spent in Mi Peru, a marginal part of Lima. The community there, three sisters and one candidate, Elizabeth, is in charge of the local school for about 3,000 pupils.

I felt that the spirit of the Institute there too. I helped with English lessons. The school area was for me an oasis of a healthy, green environment and friendly atmosphere, located among the desert hills and the homes of the poorer people. At first touched by the poverty around, I then pondered: Who really is the poor one? The one who doesn’t have enough, or the one who never has enough?

When I moved to the peaceful calm of the Andean Mountains, in Ocongate, a small village at an altitude of 3,600 metres, I found the place where it was not important WHAT you are, what you have, what you look like, what you can do, but WHO you are, what is in your heart.

I could also feel a very strong connection with nature and the rhythm of the day. I had arrived in the autumn, so the mornings and the late afternoons were frozen and silent with temperatures around 2 or 3°C. I had to be wrapped in plenty of layers since there was no central heating there. But as soon as the first rays of the rising sun came over the top of the mountain, it was like the waving of a magic wand, life was bursting all around, birds started to sing, a shining deep blue sky spread over their heads and the people started to feel the flow of a new energy. In the middle of the day, temperatures often rose to around 15°C and the sun was really strong - but only until the moment it hid itself behind the opposite steep hill. Then everything became still and cold again...

I could feel the effect of this rhythm on my body, but even more on my soul. It was a strong invitation to live the present moment, to be aware that I am part of this universe. I spent most of my time there with Carlota, the province leader, who is running a project to support small local farmers. The latter visits them and teaches them how to grow vegetables in greenhouses so they can supplement their basic diet of potatoes with more nourishing food.

Even though the people sometimes didn't have even the simple things they really need, they seem to live their life more meaningfully, unlike the rich and never satisfied Europeans.

The popular Andean melody "El Condor Pasa" has many different texts, but these few lines of one Peruvian version express many of my feelings:

*I found a peace, a friendship
with my brothers and sisters.
The whole world was passing me by
So different!
I didn't meet any borders,
only a human being I saw
who is both my brother and my sister.*

I pray that this experience won't fade in me but will continue to bear fruit and be the beginning of something new...

From Sr Klára Malináková's account

Latest 2017 Update



The Czech Republic became a District within the Institute in January 2017. The needs there include faith formation, personal spiritual accompaniment, retreats, listening to others and the building up of safe, open communities.

Sr Veronika teaches Religious studies in the diocesan grammar school, Biskupské Gymnázium. She also helps prepare University Students for Baptism and Confirmation. Once a month she lectures in Church History as part of a Theology course for catechists and other interested adults. Her other activities include adult ongoing formation, retreats, and accompaniment for individuals, families and groups such as a *Young Mothers Support Group* and support for “*Logos*”, a local group of Gay and Lesbian people.

Sr Veronika is at present studying for a doctorate in Dogmatic Theology, at Charles University in Prague.

Sr Klára has been employed for the past two years as a research worker in the field of “Spirituality and Health” in the Faculty of Theology, in Palacky University in Olomouc. At the same time she studies for her doctoral degree there. She is also a student of the University Medical Centre of the University in Groningen. Her study/work involves research, teaching, supervising Ph. D students, writing articles and often travelling to other universities both inside and outside the Czech Republic. She spends many hours counselling or in spiritual accompaniment of individuals and an adult prayer group in the local parish.

Sr Klára is also attending a qualifying training course in psychotherapy, which is a valuable tool both for spiritual accompaniment and her work at the University.

To answer the great need for faith education in a country marked by over 40 years of Communist Regime, the Sisters decided to focus on the development of spiritual accompaniment. This initiative began as an “intervision group” for religious interested in this mission. It developed into a “Spiritual Accompaniment Course” which is the first of its kind in the country and is now offered under the Theological Faculty of the Palacky University in Olomouc. There are already more than 100 people who have attended this course. They are mostly Religious and Priests who themselves are responsible for Formation. The animating team now includes Klára, Veronika, and two priest-religious.

Sr Georgina’s ministry: Brno is a University City, which attracts many students from around the world, to study full time or on Erasmus exchange. Since the fall of the Communist Regime, in 1989, many international companies have moved in and they need workers from abroad. Sr Georgina’s mission is to help answer the needs of many of these young workers and students who are often alone and isolated because of distance from home and the difficulty of language. Many gather together each week in an international English speaking Catholic Community, which Sr helped found in February 2006. Known as “The Upper Room

Community”, www.brno-esc.eu , it welcomes people of all faiths or none who join them for one or another of the activities..

Sr's work involves supporting sick members in hospital, befriending young women from Africa, South America and Asia who marry into Czech families with little or no preparation or language, teaching English to wives who accompany their husbands on work contracts in Brno, as well as coordinating the many programmes which the Community has put in place... Mass in English each Sunday, children's liturgy, a social group, preparation for marriage and support for young married couples, preparation of adults and children for the Sacraments, on-going religious formation and prayer groups. In recent years the group has been able to welcome people from Syria and Iraq too.

Gathering for Lectio Divina: 5 friends, 5 nationalities (Sr Georgina 2nd from right)



To learn how the Infant Jesus Sisters arrived in Líšen on the outskirts of Brno in 1999, click this link: [Czech Republic community](#)

In their community garden L-R Srs Georgina, Klara and Veronica

