

Dear Sisters and Associates/Companions -- Today, on this fourth week (February 5) of our 2024 Global Coordinating Group calendar, we are invited *to listen to the heart of the world* and hold in our prayers the many Sisters and Associates ministering in **Brazil** as well as all the people in that nation.

The Sisters of St. Joseph have a long history in Brazil, beginning in 1858 with the Chambéry Congregation. Today, Sisters from the congregations of Concordia, Chambéry, Cuneo, Rochester, and San Giuseppe minister throughout Brazil in the areas of education, healthcare, community and pastoral support as well as many other ministries. For example, Sisters from the Concordia and Rochester congregations in the United States began their missions in Brazil in 1963 and 1964, respectively, and today continue to support families and communities through education,



healthcare, counselling, community and Pastoral service. The Cuneo Sisters operate three missions in Brazil: a community centre, five centres of Vila de Cava at the service of children and young people, and social and pastoral works in Amazonia. And, the Sisters of the San Giuseppe Congregation carry out their service in marginalized communities, prisons, agrovilas (i.e.: agricultural

settlements), with young people and families. This [Cuneo Congregation article](#) (with photos) describes the 'Go from the Local Church to the Ends of the World' week last November during which the Sisters supported more than 900 boys with their catechists visit families in 47 communities in the Parish of Rio Bonito do Iguaçú (Paraná, Brazil). As noted in the article by Sister Anna Martini, "... We are committed to encouraging all 250 catechists to take up these beautiful initiatives of the universal and local Church with love. We are aware that everything is needed to help many young people become missionary disciples. Authentic Christians passionate about Jesus, his Word and their "dear neighbor".

In addition to these missions, today we also remember and celebrate the mission of the many Sisters of St. Joseph from Peterborough (in Canada Congregation) who also served in Brazil between 1965-1997.



**Country Background:** The Federative Republic of Brazil is world's fifth-largest country by area and the sixth most populous with a rapidly growing population of almost 218million people (2024). It is an ethnically diverse country with nearly one-half of the population with European roots and two-fifths of mixed African/European ancestry or mixed European and Indigenous ancestry.

While Portuguese is Brazil's official language, dozens of Indigenous languages are also spoken. Brazil's economic history has been through various cycles of boom and bust. From the 16th to the mid-20th centuries, the country was heavily dependent on one or two major agricultural products which included Brazilwood and sugar (during colonial times), mining and rubber plantations in the 1800s, and an expansion of manufacturing since the 1930s. Today, the Brazilian economy is the second largest in the Americas (after the USA), with an average GDP growth rate of more than five percent. Despite this, Brazil's current poverty rate stands at over 24percent

and the population continues to be affected by the outcomes of former President Jair Bolsonaro damaging policies with respect to the environment, social programs, healthcare, Indigenous and women's rights. In fact, [Human Rights Watch's 2023 Report](#) on Brazil pointed to 13 concerns included environment and Indigenous rights, corruption, attacks against democracy, and numerous human rights violations. (Sources: Congregational websites, Human Rights Watch, International Centre website, Macrotrends, Worldometer, Wikipedia)



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