

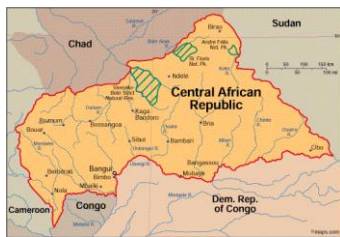
Dear Sisters and Associates/Companions -- Today, on this eighth week (March 4) of our 2024 Global Coordinating Group calendar, we are invited *to listen to the heart of the world* and hold in our prayers the Sisters serving in the **Central African Republic** as well as all of the people in that nation.

The Istituto Suore de San Giuseppe (Sisters of St. Joseph Institute) was formed through the union that took place in 2006 between three congregations that arose in Italy in the first half of the nineteenth century. By 2010, the Sisters were operating three regional missions in the Central African Republic: (i) a school, health care dispensary, home healthcare visits and parish animation in Markounda (a large village with almost desert-like conditions); (ii) projects with street children



in the capital city, Bangui; and (iii) schools, healthcare dispensaries, and pastoral care in Pissa (about 70km west of the capital in a tropical forested area). This work expanded as explained in this interesting (2015) [PBS Newshour article](#) about the Sisters in Bangui who grew a vitamin rich green algae spirulina in order to counter local infant and childhood malnutrition. From the Congregation's website, the image

shows their many ministries while the words in the middle translate to: "In the world as small flames of one Fire: Communion. A rainbow, a sign and reverberation of God. Sign of the Infinite entering time and history. Presence of peace, joy, sweetness, cordial charity."



Country Background: The Central African Republic (CAR) is a French-speaking landlocked country which, while inhabited for millenia, had its current borders established by colonial France in the late 19th century. After gaining independence in 1960, the CAR was ruled by a series of autocratic leaders. Amid a coup d'état in 2003, the Central African Republic Bush War (2004 and 2012), and several peace

treaties, today the Central African Republic is one of the poorest countries in the world facing numerous challenges. With a growing population of 5.8million (2024) – and despite its significant mineral deposits and other resources such as uranium reserves, crude oil, gold, diamonds, cobalt, lumber, and hydropower as well as significant quantities of arable land -- the United Nations' Development Program reported in 2023 that 56percent of the population live "in severe multidimensional poverty". Similarly, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs recently warned that "in 2024, the situation remains concerning, with 2.8 million people – 46 per cent of the population – who are extremely vulnerable to the extent that humanitarian assistance alone is not sufficient for their well-being". This [2024 Human Rights Watch report](#) explains the effects of fighting between the CAR national army and its allies (Russian mercenaries and Rwandan forces) against non-state armed forces like the Coalition Patriots for Change. (Sources: CSJ International Centre website, Human Rights Watch, Istituto Suore de San Giuseppe website, Newshour, United Nations websites, 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.