

*"Let the holiness of God shine forth" (cf. Mt 5, 16)*

item 500

## 1st UAC National Congress – UKRAINE

From 28 to 30 April, in Zhytomyr, Ukraine the 1st National Congress of the Union of Catholic Apostolate took place. The words: **"Unity is the road to reconciliation and consolidation"** were selected as its theme.



This unique event was attended by 150 participants together with other guests from within

Ukraine and representatives from Poland, Slovakia and Italy. Among those invited was the head of the General Coordination Council of the UAC in Rome, Donatella Acerbi, as well as superiors of the Pallottine sisters together with our fathers from Poland and representatives of various other congregations of religious and consecrated persons.

The three-day program set out to discuss the subject of "unity." Sr Jolanta Wagner sac, the head of

the local NCC, argued that this topic assumes special importance in view of the fact that the society in which we currently live has become very divided; there is discord and lack of unity which, in God's plan, should be the key to human development.



"The charism of the spiritual sons and daughters of St Vincent Pallotti is mutual cooperation and unity in our efforts on the way to the Lord", she said.



During the time the Ukrainian UAC community was enriched by the introduction of four new members. After the gospel at Holy Mass on Sunday they made their solemn consecration to the Union.



Across three days all the participants shared in daily Mass and prayers. They listened to conferences and were treated to a performance from the Zhytomer theatre players: "When the Spirit of Love Revives Us".



Another pleasant surprise came in the form of a dinner accompanied by a special presentation of Ukrainian culture and customs.





With much effort by the spiritual sons and daughters of St Vincent Pallotti the Ukraine UAC community commenced its activities in 1992, and now today it consists of 97 members.

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## a faithful Khristsevika

*‘Yahweh gave. Yahweh has taken away. Blessed be his name.’*

**Shanti Joseph Vattakunnel** came as a gift to Mr VM Joseph and Mrs Mary of Pala in Kerala on 26 June 1944 - the 8<sup>th</sup> in a family of 9 children.

Shanti joined the Khristsevikas in 1966. She made her first commitment in 1971 and her final commitment in 1977. She trained in social work at Nava Nirmana, Stella Maris, in Madras which equipped her well to give of herself fully as a social worker.

She became the President of the Khristsevikas from 1984 to 1987.

Shanti had a charism to reach out to the under-privileged and a special love for the down-trodden and oppressed. As a consecrated person, with a vocation as a social worker, she ministered in the slums of Mumbai and in the dioceses of Raipur, Daltongang and Guntur. She spent the greater part of her life as a Khristsevika at Tenali in Andhra Pradesh, working there for about 35 years. Personal prayer and the word of God provided a source of strength and inspiration for her life of secular consecration in the world, a world in which she laboured with dedication and love.



Initially she supported several projects of the Redemptorist Fathers and later formed a trust – *Nitya Jana Seva Samajam* – in Tenali, of which she remained President. Shanti had all the qualities of an organizer. Under her able leadership and guidance, the Samajam has provided wonderful service to the lower strata of society, particularly to the children of the downtrodden and to women.

She always gave first priority to education and hence set up *balwadis*, primary schools and several coaching centres where the children of the socially and economically deprived classes could avail of help and go on to excel in studies. She organized *Gurukulam Vidyalam* with the help of inter and degree students. In addition to their study assistance the students were introduced to learning skills like gardening, cookery, accountancy, photography and health care.

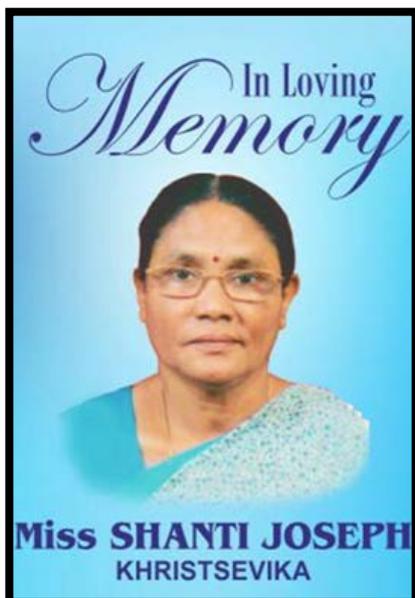
Shanti motivated communities on the fringes to participate in self-reliance programmes and worked for the empowerment of women, organizing *mahila mandals* for them [groups fostering the mainstreaming of women]. She motivated them to fight for their rights and organized educated youth to volunteer their services to assist in uplifting them and to provide adult literacy classes. She worked among railway porters, organizing them to fight for their rights. Shanti was concerned about the health of the poor and hence laboured to ensure them medical assistance.



I am proud to say that Shanti’s hard work and dedicated services were recognised and acknowledged when, in July last year, the International Institute of Education and Management awarded Shanti Joseph the ‘**Jewel of India Award**’ [Bharat Ratna] for her outstanding achievements in the field of Education. The Department of Posts - India released a postage stamp in her name! This was an honour she definitely deserved.

Shanti was a loving, hard working and generous person, organised and systematic. After hearing the news of her death, the present Rector General of the Pallottines described her as ‘**an apostle of charity.**’

Shanti had health problems and these increased when she suffered repeated strokes due to high blood pressure and diabetes. She was hospitalized but subsequently brought to our centre here at Kalyani Nagar last January. All through this period she fought the good fight, trusting the Lord always.



Her earthly journey came to an end in 30 Apr when she peacefully breathed her last. Today, we believe, she can sing the shepherd Psalm along with the psalmist:

“The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I shall want. Fresh and green are the pastures where he gives me repose.....”

As we participate together in this eucharistic celebration, I humbly request each one of you to join together in thanking the Lord for the gift that Shanti was to her family, to us the Khristsevikas, to the church and to society.

Yes, **Yahweh gave. Yahweh has taken away. Blessed be his name.**

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**MB 14.05.17**