

On this thirty-eighth week (September 26) of our 2022 Global Coordinating Group calendar, we are invited *to listen to the heart of the world* and hold in our prayers the 11 Sisters and 10 Associates serving in **Sri Lanka** as well as the people of that island nation.

The Sisters belong to **the Lyon Congregation** and have been serving in the region for more than a century. As noted on the Congregation's website: building on the missionary work of the original six French Sisters who arrived in Madurai (Tamil Nadu, India) in 1906, the Indian Province expanded its mission into Sri Lanka in 2011. Six years later, the General Chapter of 2017 accepted the request of the Nava Jeevan Region to become a Province which took the name 'Province Saint-Joseph' with 29 communities spread across India and Sri Lanka. Today, the Sisters are present in the communities of Manalkadu, Nochchikulam and Vankalai and are engaged with compassion and creativity in various missions and services including education, preventive and curative health, a pastoral and family apostolate for the formation as well as training and



collaboration with Associates. The photo is from the [Lyon Congregation website](#): during the Pandemic, Sisters from Madurai delivered aid to a Sri Lankan refugee camp where 560 families resided. At the camp, Sisters were recognized by some past and present CSJ students. The government officer then asked the Sisters to also help another camp of 300 refugee families.

Country Background: The Democratic

Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka is an island country, connected to the Indian sub-continent through



the Nala Setu Bridge. The island's documented history spans three millennia - with evidence of pre-historic human settlements dating back at least 125,000 years. Sri Lanka has a rich cultural heritage with the first known Buddhist writing of Sri Lanka, the Pāli Canon, dating back to the Fourth Buddhist council in 29 BC. For centuries (from the time of the ancient Silk Road through to the modern Maritime Silk Road), its geographic location and deep harbours gave Sri Lanka great strategic importance. Following the fall of the Kandyan Kingdom after more than 2,300 years of Sinhalese monarchy on the island, it was ruled as the British colony of Ceylon from 1815 until 1948 (when the country regained independence). In 1972, Sri Lanka became a republic and adopted its current name; however, a 30-year long civil war only ended in

2009. With a population of 25.5million (2022), and despite economic growth over the past years, Sri Lanka today is in crisis with widespread political and social unrest as described in this August 2022 [Human Rights Watch report](#) which noted that: *"Sri Lanka's economic turmoil has become a full-blown political crisis and humanitarian emergency. The government defaulted on its debt in May, for the first time in its history, after years of economic mismanagement that has enriched a*

small number of elites and emptied the public coffers. Since then, protesters have driven President Gotabaya Rajapaksa from power, demanding an end to the corruption and misgovernance that has left millions of people facing acute shortages of food, fuel, and medicine". This recent [Al Jazeera article](#) similarly describes a second International Monetary Fund meeting (this past August) with the Sri Lankan president in order to finalize a "a bailout package, including restructuring debt of about \$29 billion, amid the nation's worst financial crisis in more than 70 years." And, [this article](#) (dated September 25) from the same source, describes the reaction of demonstrators after the government curtailed the right to protest in response to the deepening economic crisis in the country.



United in prayer, the Global Joseph Family, 7850 Sisters, 5700 Associates, 34 Agrégées in 44 countries, listening to the heart of the world