

May Your Kingdom Come!

MISSIONARY SERVANTS OF THE
BLESSED SACRAMENT - ASIA



MISSION NEWS 2024

Rejoice in Hope!

ANCELLE MISSIONARIE DEL SANTISSIMO SACRAMENTO

As we prepare for the upcoming celebration of the Jubilee Year 2025, the Pope launched the Year of Prayer on January 21, 2024. This initiative aims to help Christian communities around the globe rediscover “the great value and absolute need for prayer,” both personal and communal, ultimately preparing us to celebrate the Jubilee Year more meaningfully and fruitfully.

In unity with the Church in this endeavor, we dedicate this year’s issue to reflecting on the significance and value of prayer in our lives as Christians. Through colorful yet deeply moving stories from individuals with diverse backgrounds and experiences, we highlight how prayer facilitates encounters with God.

He is not a distant figure seated high on a throne, merely observing the world; rather, He is deeply involved in and present in the lives of His people. Just as He walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, He continues to accompany us today, albeit in a more discreet yet real manner.

He dwells among us. This assurance found in prayer brings hope, particularly in times of suffering, darkness, and chaos. For some, prayer is not just a thread, but a lifeline, preventing them from veering toward despair and destruction. This hope, found in the act of prayer, is a powerful force that can guide us through even the darkest of times.

He is with us and because of that, we will not be lost unless we let go of His hand. He remains with us, providing powerful support when our strength falters or when trials wear us down. He walks with us, ensuring we can never truly become lost in the dark.

This realization, cultivated by a deepening life of prayer and intimacy with God, continually inspires us to “rejoice in hope, be patient in affliction, and faithful in prayer.”



Catechism on Prayer:

A Guide to Talking with God



WHAT IS PRAYER?

Prayer is simply talking to God. Think of it like a conversation with a friend, but even more powerful! When we pray, we do four key things:

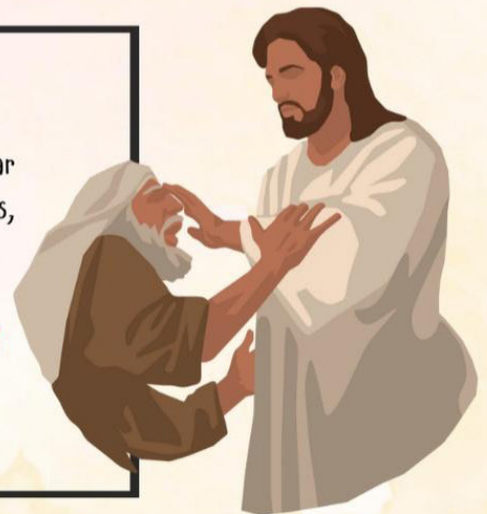
- We praise God for who He is.
- We thank Him for all the good in our lives.
- We ask for forgiveness when we mess up.
- We request help for ourselves and others.

Reflect: What is one thing you want to thank God for today?

DO WE NEED FAITH TO PRAY?

Prayer comes from a place of trust. Imagine you're blind, and you hear Jesus walking by. Like Bartimaeus in the Bible, you call out, "Jesus, help me!" That's faith—trusting that God hears you and cares for you.

Think About It: The next time you're struggling, instead of worrying, try saying, "Jesus, have mercy on me!" How does it feel to hand your problem to Him?



WHEN SHOULD WE PRAY?

There's never a bad time to pray! Some moments are especially good for prayer:

- Sunday and holy days: When we gather with others to worship.
- Morning and night: Start and end your day with God.
- In tough times: Whenever you're afraid, tempted, or hurting.

Try setting aside just 5 minutes when you wake up or before bed to talk to God. How does it change your day?



Catechism on Prayer...

HOW SHOULD WE PRAY?



When we pray, we should:

- Focus on God, not our distractions.
- Recognize how much we need Him.
- Desire the good things we're asking for.
- Trust that God is listening.
- Keep going, even when it's hard.



Do you ever get distracted in prayer? Maybe set a timer for a few minutes and try praying with no interruptions. Notice what happens!

WHAT SHOULD I SAY OR DO AS I PRAY?

Blessing

Speak well of God—thank Him for who He is.

Adoration

Stand in awe before the greatness of God.

Petition

Ask for the things you need (e.g. strength, peace, or forgiveness)

Intercession

Pray for other people in need.

Thanksgiving

Recognize all the blessings in your life.

Praise

Tell God how great He is just because He's God!



Try This: Write down one thing you need from God and one person you want to pray for today. Pray for those things and see how God answers.

WHAT ARE THE BASIC CATHOLIC PRAYERS?

Some prayers are like old friends—they're there whenever we need them:

- The Lord's Prayer (Our Father).
- Hail Mary.
- Apostles' Creed.
- Acts of Faith, Hope, Love, and Contrition.

Quick Challenge:
Next time you're worried or stressed, pause and say the **Our Father**. Let the words calm your heart.



Catechism on Prayer...



HOW OFTEN SHOULD WE PRAY?

Think of prayer like breathing—it's something we need constantly. The Church encourages daily prayer: morning and evening, before meals, and during Mass. But every moment can be a prayer. Whatever you're doing, invite God into it.

Tip: You don't need fancy words. Just talk to God while doing everyday things like driving, washing dishes, or walking. He's always listening!



SHOULD WE PRAY ALOUD OR QUIETLY?

Both! You can pray:

- **Out loud:** Alone or with others (like during Mass or saying grace).
- **Meditatively:** Think deeply about God's Word, like reflecting on the Gospels.
- **Contemplatively:** Simply be in God's presence, letting your heart rest in Him.



Quick Challenge:

Find a quiet place today and just sit with God. No words needed—just be with Him.

How to Do Lectio Divina (Sacred Reading)

This is a great way to pray using the Bible:

- Read a short Bible passage (maybe a Gospel story) slowly.
- Meditate by imagining yourself in the scene—what's happening? How do you feel?
- Pray by talking to God about what struck you in the story.
- Contemplate by resting quietly in God's love.



Try It: Pick a favorite Bible story. Read it, reflect on it, and talk to God about it. See what new insights come to you!

Popular Devotions

In addition to personal prayer, there are devotions like the Santo Niño and the Black Nazarene that express deep faith. These traditions remind us that prayer connects us with God and with one another in powerful ways. Reflection: Is there a devotion that has special meaning to you? Spend a moment praying through that devotion today.

Catechism on Prayer...



BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF PRAYER

Abraham listened to God, trusted His word, and obeyed Him, even when it was hard.

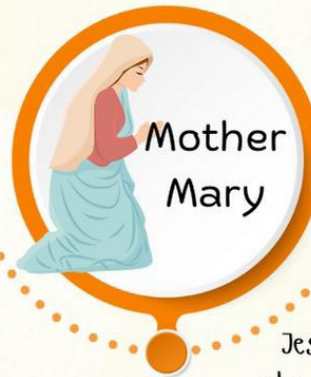


Abraham

Mary showed us how to pray by saying, "Let it be done to me."



Moses



Mother Mary



Jesus

Moses prayed for his people, just like Jesus prays for us.

Jesus prayed constantly, giving us the perfect example of how to stay connected with God.

Challenge: Pick one of these biblical figures and read about their prayer life in the Bible this week. What can you learn from them?

COMMON CHALLENGES IN PRAYER

We all struggle in prayer sometimes:

- **Distraction:** It's easy to lose focus, but try bringing your thoughts back to God.
- **Dryness:** Sometimes prayer feels empty, but don't give up—keep talking to God.
- **Acedia (spiritual laziness):** It's tempting to skip prayer when we don't feel like it. Push through!

Encouragement: If you're struggling, remember that even the saints had tough times in prayer.

Keep going—you're not alone!



WHAT IF MY PRAYERS AREN'T ANSWERED?

It can be frustrating when it feels like God isn't answering our prayers, especially when we're praying for something important. But remember, Jesus taught us to trust God's will above all. Sometimes, the answer is different from what we expect, but God always has a plan.

Question: What's one prayer that you've been waiting for an answer to? Can you trust that God has a bigger plan?



Final Thought: Prayer is a Lifeline to God

Whether you're talking to God for 30 seconds or an hour, prayer is your connection to Him. It's not about saying the "right" words—it's about building a relationship with the One who loves you more than you can imagine. Keep praying, keep trusting, and know that God is always listening!

“Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam” The Life of St. Ignatius of Loyola

Sr. Maria Nguyen Thi Thuan, MSBS

*“Lord, teach me to be generous.
Teach me to serve you as you deserve,
to give and not to count the cost.”*

This profound prayer is the testimony of the transformative power of prayer in the life of a young soldier who was driven by ambition and power. Then, one day, he became a saint and had a great influence not only on the religious order that he and his first companions founded (the Jesuits) but also on all people who are anxious to find God and long to be closely united with Him.

Ignatius, whose real name was Inigo Lopez de Loyola, was born in 1491 at Loyola in Cantabria, Spain. With a stubborn and ambitious nature from a young age, Inigo did not refuse any means in the hope of gaining fame in society and the royal court. Ignatius lived this way for a long time until one day, he found himself in a life-changing event. When he fought for the king of Spain against the French at the battle of Pamplona in 1521, his leg was severely injured by cannonball. Having been bedridden for months, Ignatius was bored. He wanted to read adventure books filled with tales of knights fighting for princesses, traveling to distant lands, and battling strange creatures. However, instead, he was given two entirely different books: one about the life of Jesus and the other a collection of stories about the lives of the saints. Ignatius read these books. While meditating and praying on what he had read, he received the grace of conversion. Impressed by the great sacrifices the saints made, he was overwhelmed by their love for Jesus. Ignatius had the thought: “Perhaps I have been too selfish when I only cared

about building my ego to be famous with the many false names that the world gave me.” This thought pushed another thought: “Is there any other nobler purpose? To serve God like Saints Dominic and Francis, for example?” Ignatius decided to use the gifts of God to serve Him and His people. As he continued to recover, his heart found peace in prayer, assuring him that he was on the right path. In 1522, Ignatius went on a pilgrimage to the Benedictine monastery of Montserrat. There, he confessed his sins, put on a sackcloth, and laid his sword on the altar of Mary, vowing to become a knight of Mary. He then walked to Manresa, where he settled in a cave for about nine months. This period was a turning point in his life. His



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spiritual retreat and contemplation led him to write the Spiritual Exercises, the foundation of Ignatian spirituality. This book is one of the most influential prayer guides ever written. It consists mainly of instructions for meditating or contemplating the life of Christ, as recounted in the Gospels. The Spiritual Exercises are rooted in a profound experience of God's love and mercy, revealed in Christ crucified, inspiring practitioners to understand, love, and follow Christ more closely in their lives.

Ignatius, motivated by a desire to help others find God, began teaching the Spiritual Exercises. He faced trouble with Church authorities and was imprisoned by the Inquisition for teaching important doctrines without formal theological training. To better serve, he returned to school in Barcelona, Alcalá, and Salamanca and finally completed his studies in Paris, where he gathered a group of like-minded friends. On August 15, 1534, in Montmartre, they took vows of poverty and chastity. Initially aiming to go to the Holy Land, they faced obstacles and instead sought guidance from the Pope, who suggested they work in Rome. In 1540, Pope Paul III recognized the Society of Jesus. Ignatius lived in Rome until his death on July 31, 1556, and was canonized in 1622.

Every person is born with a unique history, story, and mission. While each life story is different, they are all shaped by God's providence. The key lies in how each individual chooses to respond to that grace. I believe our deepest desires to be with God naturally lead us to Him. Like St. Ignatius, who was inspired by the actions of other saints in their service to Christ, we, too, can find our way to being soldiers of Christ. He believes that genuine prayer inspires a desire to love and serve God in all areas of life. Indeed, during his moments of solitude in prayer, he discovered his life's purpose – the glory of God. He wholeheartedly dedicated his life to the greater glory of God, generously sharing the blessings he's received with others. His inspiring conversion emphasizes the profound importance of prayer—the incredible transformation it could bring to our lives. His life encouraged me to be closer to Christ and offer all, praying as he did:

“Lord Jesus, take all my freedom, my memory, my understanding, and my will. All that I have and cherish You have given me. I surrender it all to be guided by Your will. Your grace and Your love are wealth enough for me. Give me these, Lord Jesus, and I ask for nothing more.” 🙏

An Excerpt from Pope Francis' Catechesis on Prayer

Prayer is an impulse; it is an invocation that goes beyond ourselves: something that is born in the intimacy of our person and extends, because it senses the nostalgia of an encounter. The prayer of a Christian arises from a revelation: the “You” did not remain shrouded in mystery, but rather entered into a relationship with us. Christianity is the religion that continually celebrates God's “manifestation”, that is, his epiphany. The first feasts of the liturgical year are the celebration of this God who does not remain hidden, but rather offers his friendship to mankind. God reveals his glory in the poverty of Bethlehem, in the contemplation of the Magi, in the baptism in the River Jordan, in the miracle of the wedding at Cana. The Gospel of John concludes the great hymn of the Prologue with a concise affirmation: “No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known” (1:18). It was Jesus who revealed God to us.



A Road to Becoming Christ's Knight

Nov. Leonarda Ita, MSBS

Being a follower of Christ means to abide by Him. This commitment requires much, but the most important first step is to renounce our attachments to our plans and desires in favor of those that belong to God.

St. Francis of Assisi taught me a great deal about this. He was born to a wealthy cloth merchant. His early life was marked by luxury and privilege; he enjoyed the benefits of his family's wealth and wore fashionable clothing. Despite being the sole heir to his father's business, Francis yearned for a life beyond mere wealth. He aspired to nobility, seeking to become a knight, believing that the thrill of battle would secure the glory and prestige he craved. When Assisi declared war on Perugia, Francis seized his first opportunity to prove himself on the battlefield. However, upon returning from war, he was ill and shaken, almost unrecognizable. Something profound had left an impression on his soul beyond the physical toll of war. He never forgot the words he heard in a dream while in Spoleto: "Why do you burden yourself seeking the servant instead of the Master?"

From that moment, his life changed. He learned to see God in everything and felt the desire to understand what God was calling him to do. He grew to love nature and wanted to help the poor. Prayer and quiet time in the Umbrian countryside helped him embrace lepers and outcasts as brothers and sisters—people he had once found disgusting. St. Francis learned that prayer was a vital and holistic act, involving spirit, soul, body, and flesh. It meant turning to God in every situation, seeking constant dialogue and stability in the steadfast and faithful God. Through prayer, we grow in understanding of



God, ourselves, the world, and our personal history. This process helps us discover our true selves and identity.

St. Francis's conversion teaches me important lessons for my journey in following Christ. It reminds me to look for His presence within myself and reflect on my deep yearning for Him. Like Saint Francis, we are called to live with an awareness of the divine in every aspect of our lives. This involves cultivating a deep personal relationship with God. Through prayer, meditation, and the study of scripture, we draw closer to Him, experiencing His love and peace.

As a novice aspiring to give my whole life to Him, I focus on building my relationship with Him through daily prayer and morning meditation. This time allows me to reassess, renew, and ever deepen my relationship with Him through prayer and dialogue with him. 🕊

St. Monica and Persistence in Prayer

Nov. Angeline Moe, MSBS

Saint Monica was the mother of St. Augustine of Hippo. She was born into a Catholic family in the 4th century in Tagaste, which is present-day Algeria in North Africa. Raised by a maidservant, Monica was taught the virtues of obedience and temperance.

Despite her early dedication to the faith, she faced significant challenges in her marriage to Patricius, a pagan Roman civil servant known for his bad temper. Patricius' mother lived with the couple and is said to have had a similarly violent temperament. Monica and Patricius had three children: two sons, Augustine and Navigius, and a daughter, Perpetua. Her marriage and home life were challenging, yet she was a woman of deep faith and prayer. Her husband opposed her Christian beliefs and refused permission to baptize their children. This refusal broke her heart and fueled her unwavering prayers for her family. Through her fervent prayers, both her husband, Patricius, and his mother converted to Christianity. Patricius admired Monica's virtues and was baptized one year before his death.

As a single mother, Monica raised and inspired her children with a strong desire to follow Christ. When St. Augustine, her son, remained worldly and uninterested in Christianity as a young adult, Monica never lost hope, praying for him through tears. Bishop Ambrose became an answer to her prayers. St. Monica passed away in A.D. 387, shortly after her son, St. Augustine, was baptized. She is recognized as the patron saint of mothers and is seen by many as a symbol of hope for those whose family members have strayed from their faith.

Her motherly love and her perseverance in prayer are evident in her last words to St. Augustine, "One thing there was for which I did desire to stay a little



longer in this life, which was that I might see you as a Catholic before I died." Beneath her unwavering commitment to prayer lies an unshakeable faith. Without faith, prayer becomes a desperate struggle to attain our desires.

Her persevering faith reminds me of a story shared by Pope Francis about a father whose nine-year-old daughter was hospitalized. The doctors had informed him that she would not survive the night. In his desperation, he took a bus and traveled 70 kilometers to the Shrine of Our Lady. Upon arrival, he found it closed, but he clung to the gate and spent the entire night praying, crying out, "Lord, save her! Lord, give her life!" He called out to Our Lady and God from the depths of his heart. When he returned to the hospital the next morning, he found

his daughter healed.

Reflecting on these anecdotes, I am inspired by the undeniable power of love and prayer to overcome any obstacle. Her life exemplifies how to embrace

patience, humility, and love, trusting fully in God even in life's challenges. May God continue to bless each Ancella as we serve with love, missionary zeal, and unwavering prayer. 🙏



God Alone Suffices: The Life of St. Teresa of Avila

Sr. Vu Thi Hang, MSBS

The lives of saints create a beautiful tapestry of holiness. But who are the saints?

The saints are the friends of God. They have experienced and been enveloped in God's divine love and choose to reciprocate that love. They have adorned the heavenly kingdom with their virtues and been a witness to a life of intimacy with God. Their secret? A life of profound prayer that deepened their intimacy with God, serving as a pathway connecting

the two realities of heaven and earth. Teresa of Avila testifies to us about this.

Teresa of Avila was born in Avila, Spain on March 28, 1515. Since her youth, she was inspired by stories of martyrs and ways to attain perfection. Despite her father's opposition, she joined the Carmelite Monastery of the Incarnation at Avila on November 2, 1535. The next year, she received the habit and committed herself entirely to prayer and penance. After surviving a coma, Teresa went through a period of spiritual struggle, but she persevered in prayer. She famously remarked, "Prayer is simply being in a state of friendship with God," and added, "It means taking the time to be alone with Him, knowing He loves us." Only a profound encounter could have led her to declare this. During this phase, which lasted 18 years, she underwent a series of temporary mystical experiences.

Teresa was indeed a mystic and a reformer. In 1562, she began the reform of the Carmelite Order. Recognizing that reform began with herself, Teresa vowed to always follow the more perfect course and resolved to keep the rule as perfectly as she could. She struggled with her own mediocrity, illness, opposition, and in her work of reforming the Carmelite convent. In the midst of all this, she clung to God in life and prayer. Teresa's writings, especially "The Way of Perfection" and "The Interior Castle," have left a remarkable significance



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on many generations of believers. No wonder Pope Gregory XV canonized her in 1622 together with Saints Ignatius of Loyola, Francis Xavier, Isidore, and Philip Neri. In 1970, the Church gave her the title Doctor of the Church and more than that, the Doctor of Prayer.

This beautiful, powerful, and inspiring prayer of hers is unforgettable: "Let nothing disturb you. Let nothing frighten you. All things are passing away: God never changes. Patience obtains all things. Whoever has God lacks nothing; God alone suffices."

In this heartfelt prayer, Teresa demonstrated a life of complete contemplation, unwavering trust, patience in endurance, and love for God. Furthermore, she acknowledged a profound wisdom stemming from her own experiences: God alone is sufficient. God sustains her, and nothing can alter this fundamental principle of her life.

We reside in a world characterized by uncertainty and vulnerability, where change occurs at an unprecedented pace. Everything is transient. The world may teach us that material possessions, fame, and prestige are everlasting and essential, but in reality, they are fleeting. Teresa's wisdom bears witness to this truth. Amid our hectic lives, may we hold steadfast to the constancy of God and place our

trust in His love and guidance.

As I continue my journey as a consecrated woman, Teresa of Jesus reminds me that what matters most to me is the Lord and His affairs. My aim is "to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit" (1 Cor 7:34). Saint Teresa shows me that Jesus is her friend and my friend too. This friendship urges me to love him and always keep him near truly.

Teresa invites me to build my interior castle of prayer where I encounter God intimately and draw strength to love and serve Him and others. Knowing that living a life intimate with God and sharing the secret of my life with Him will not always be easy and smooth. On the contrary, believing that there is an excellent helmsman who steers the direction in the course of my life lifts me up. I make my own St. Teresa's prayer: "Lord, grant that I may always allow myself to be guided by You, always follow Your plans, and perfectly accomplish Your Holy Will. Grant that in all things, great and small, today and all the days of my life, I may do whatever You require of me. Help me respond to the slightest prompting of Your Grace so that I may be Your trustworthy instrument for Your honor. May Your Will be done in time and eternity by me, in me, and through me. Amen." 🙏

God is a friend, an ally, a spouse. In prayer one can establish an intimate relationship with him, so much so that in the "Our Father" Jesus taught us to address to him a series of questions. We can ask God everything, everything; explain everything, recount everything. It does not matter if we feel flawed in our relationship with God: we are not good friends, we are not grateful children, we are not faithful spouses. He continues to love us. It is what Jesus shows definitively at the Last Supper when he says: "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood" (Lk 22:20)."

~ Pope Francis

The Miracle of a Broken Heart: Finding Hope in the Presence of God

Nov. Maria Trang Tran Thuy, MSBS

“My heart exults in the Lord,
my horn is exalted in my God.” (1 Sam. 2:1)

In today's world, where anxieties and uncertainties often loom large, the desire for a child remains both deeply personal and universal. Many families seeking the blessing of a child turn to medical advancements, while others, grounded in faith, embark on pilgrimages to sacred sites in search of divine intervention. Their fervent prayers, fueled by unwavering trust, are often rewarded by God, who, abundant in mercy and compassion, extends His grace to those who earnestly seek it.

The story of Hannah, a woman mentioned in the Old Testament, is also one of deep longing. She believed in God's power to transcend nature's limits and grant her the precious gift of motherhood. Hannah prayed sincerely, asking God to see her sorrow—an echoing wellspring of grief—and to bless her with a son. Her prayer was heartfelt, born from her sincere and broken heart, a melody of longing that only God could understand. Her humility and quiet strength allowed her to be completely vulnerable in her plea. Hannah's heartfelt and earnest prayers led to a misunderstanding with the priest Eli, who mistook her praying for drunken ramblings. Realizing his error, Eli felt remorse and offered her a heartfelt blessing: “Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant your petition.” After many years of praying, Hannah finally held her long-awaited child, the most precious treasure of her life. Despite her joy, she remained committed to her vow: “If you give me a son, I will dedicate him to you for life.” Fulfilling this promise, she offered a song of gratitude to God, celebrating His miraculous deeds with heartfelt praise. Hannah's story is a timeless tapestry woven with threads of faith and longing. It serves as a beacon, highlighting

the enduring strength found in faith, devotion, and prayer. This narrative prompts me to reflect on my own spiritual connection to God and raises the question: When faced with adversity, where do I seek solace?

As followers of Christ, we are called to share Christian values and find strength in God's plan, even in the midst of tribulations. Through this journey, I discover a path to unexpected joy and a love that surpasses my understanding. As St. Paul fervently proclaimed, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Let us strive to emulate Hannah's unwavering dedication. By surrendering ourselves entirely to God, serving Him with fervor, and becoming instruments of His praise, we embrace a transformative journey of faith and devotion. 🙏



The Power of Prayer

Bishop Celso Ba Shwe

I believe that everything is in God's hands. He loves us and will never let us suffer beyond our ability to bear. He has a plan for each of us. This is our exodus—a journey to a promised land. While we may not know when or how we will reach our destination, God is with us, journeying alongside us just as He was with His chosen people in the desert. This is a journey of hope.

Every day, I see parallels between what happened in the Exodus and our current situation. We are being driven from our homes, leaving behind what we hold dear, and embarking on journeys through unfamiliar and barren places. We face persecution and threats from our oppressors, experiencing floods that resemble crossing a tumultuous sea. We are setting up temporary shelters and living in camps, dealing with food shortages and a lack of water. We also faced the pandemic. We experience disappointments, temptation, and complaints—all of which reflect the struggles of that historical journey.

I may not be Moses, but like him, I bring everything to God in prayer. In every situation, I notice the miracles—big or small—that remind me of His presence, love, and mercy. God is working miracles through the closeness of the Holy Father and the entire universal Church, the support of friends and benefactors both locally and overseas, and the prayers of countless sisters and brothers around the world.

Every word of God that I read during the Mass and



Liturgical Hours speaks directly to my current situation and calls for a response. Meeting Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is the most important part of my day. Contemplating Jesus' encounter with Mother Mary on His way to the cross provides me with consolation during times of suffering.

When I face devastating situations without answers, I look to the crucified and forsaken Jesus, contemplating His total abandonment. However, I never overlook the importance of the Resurrection. This reflection instills in me hope and courage to continue my journey with my people during dark times, encouraging me to love and forgive even our oppressors. The Risen Lord is our true light. 🕯️

Note: Bishop Celso Ba Shwe is the bishop of the Diocese of Loikaw, Myanmar. His diocese is among those severely affected by the ongoing conflict with the military junta, which began in 2021. In November 2023, he was compelled to leave the cathedral, and many of his parishioners have been forced to abandon their homes, now seeking refuge in hundreds of camps.

A Prayer from the Heart

Fr. Algie Cantila, SVD


God consistently emphasizes the importance of relationships—relationships that resonate deeply within the human heart. God knows us and communicates through our hearts. In other words, God values the intentions of our hearts, as they reflect genuine affection and relational expressions.

So why is this important? The answer is that God desires to be involved in every aspect of our lives; He wants His beloved to connect with Him during both the highs and lows. God not only seeks to provide for our needs but also longs to be by our side, within reach at all times.

This relationship was made evident in what Jesus taught his Apostles. The loving God wants us to ask with total love and humble dependence, a sentiment that resonates deeply with my experience. I'm referring to the catastrophic accident that almost claimed my life and left me in a state of partial paralysis. The living agony, constant pain, discomfort, and suffering have taken a significant toll on my mental well-being. Coping with this challenge is immense; I describe it as a daily battle between light and darkness. Despite all of this, I have never wavered. I have not given up

or let go. Hope is present, my faith remains strong, and my trust in God is intact. You might ask why. The answer lies in the fruit and grace of heartfelt prayer—prayer that not only seeks assistance but also expresses the truth of my situation. When I am happy, sad, or lonely, and overwhelmed, I talk to God immediately. This open attitude has brought me closer to Him and allowed me to feel His presence in my life. He has made me realize that He is true to His word and will never leave or abandon me. This realization is incredibly comforting, assuring me that I am not alone or helpless.

The grace of a genuine relationship, cultivated through heartfelt prayer, has enabled me to love God more deeply, accept my physical condition wholeheartedly, and recognize my worth as His chosen priest. Experiencing the overwhelming love of God fills my heart with joy and gladness. This reality continually inspires me to appreciate the world around me and encourages me to smile sincerely, without reservations. When you ask if I have ample prayer support, the answer is yes. I am blessed with many supporters, from the holy saints to the people God has placed in my life. Their presence and encouragement helped me experience the love of God more fully. They are, for me, a tangible manifestation of God's grace and the fruit of our genuine relationship.

Finally, God asked for my love—a genuine expression of it. He longs to be involved in every aspect of my life, so I willingly gave it to Him. During the darkest hour of my life, I sought His guidance and expressed my struggles, and He helped enlighten me. In the joyful moments, I included Him, and as a result, He filled me with overwhelming love and joy. For me, prayer is about entering into a loving, mutual relationship that embodies faith, loyalty, trust, and love. In doing so, I experience contentment, peace, and heartfelt joy in Christ. 



The Transforming Power of Prayer

Fr. Francis Xavier Tran Van An

I was once a prodigal son, living a sinful life as a drug addict and a prisoner. Many times, I caused my parents great sadness and heartbreak. However, I was incredibly fortunate to have a wonderful mother—one who prays for me! Miraculously, God entered my life during this dark time. He cherished every part of my sinful past, whispered words of hope to me, and ultimately led me to a life of consecration.

I was born into a wealthy family in Cau Ram parish, Vinh Diocese, Vietnam. I grew up surrounded by the loving care of my devoted parents and was cherished by everyone around me. However, at the age of 17, I began to earn significant money from trading and crafting gold and silver with my mother. At that time, my life revolved only around money. Unfortunately, I was drawn into a negative circle of friends, leading me to all-night parties and exposure to opium. When I eventually ran out of money, I resorted to selling everything valuable in our house. Eventually, my actions caught up with me, and I was arrested and sentenced to one year in prison. After my release, I was determined to change my life. However, the grip

of drugs pulled me back into addiction time and again.

Despite everything, the love of my mother, her prayers and tears, and God's plan for me were so great. One day, while secretly smoking opium at home, I was caught by my mother. When I looked up at her, heartbroken and in pain, I felt as if I had been struck by lightning. In that moment, a voice within me urged me to return to my mother and strive to lead a good life in gratitude for her sacrifices. From that day forward, I made a firm commitment to change my life. I ran to Our Lady of La Vang, praying for the strength to overcome my addiction to drugs.

My mother knew many priests and sisters, and it seemed that she believed praying alone was not enough. She would travel everywhere to request Mass from different priests and ask the sisters to join her in praying for my conversion. She held onto the Lord's promise: "Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven" (Matthew 18:19). Later, when I entered religious life, I often visited home. During those visits, there were nights



when I woke up and saw my mother quietly sitting alone in front of the altar, praying throughout the night. It deeply touched me.

It was my mother who advised me to enter the Benedictine Monastery to distance myself from bad influences and to be transformed by God's grace through prayer. Living in a monastic environment rooted in the spirituality of "prayer and work," I was taught by the abbot how to pray, practice self-discipline, and make sacrifices. The quiet monastic life, with its continuous liturgical hours, sanctified my soul and purified my existence. My brothers in the monastery also provided invaluable support. After facing numerous challenges, including asthma and other difficulties, I was blessed to wear the holy habit of a monk instead of the humiliating prison garment of my past. Most importantly, I was ordained a priest, which brought surprise and overwhelming joy to many who cared for me.

After receiving the grace of priesthood in 2008, I felt a deep restlessness in my heart, wanting to "repay" the immense debt of grace and love that God and the Mother Church had generously bestowed upon me. I was eager to share my journey and accompany those who found themselves in similar circumstances. Understanding that God's will is mysterious, I sought to better fit this special mission. With the permission of the superiors of both Congregations, I transferred from the Benedictine Contemplative Congregation to the Congregation of Our Lady of the Poor. On September 15, 2011, the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows,

I established the Huong Thien Retreat House, located next to the Shrine of Our Lady of La Vang. This retreat house was created to shelter and support those who have strayed, just as I once did, allowing them to receive the grace of conversion and return. We achieve this through prayerful retreats, also known as "spiritual therapy."

The Huong Thien Retreat House follows the spirituality of Saint Benedict, fostering a familial environment where individuals of different ages and backgrounds live together harmoniously. Guests work, learn, and support one another while participating in prayer, Eucharistic celebrations, adoration, and daily reflections.

Overcoming addiction is a challenge for humanity. We need God's grace and persistent prayer. I am grateful for 30 years of God's love and faithfulness in my religious life (1994-2024) and for the 13 years since founding Huong Thien Retreat House (2011-2024). This time has allowed me to witness the incredible love of God and the power of prayer. Over the past 13 years, many prodigal children, burdened by sin, have come to Huong Thien. Together, they have prayed, grown in strength, and transformed their lives. Many have overcome sin, become valuable members of society, converted to Catholicism, and even taken vows as religious brothers and monks.

Let us pray for each other, for the world, for the Church, and for the Holy Father, as well as for the hopes and dreams of those who seek God in the Huong Thien Retreat House. 🙏

"Prayer takes place today. Jesus comes to meet us today, the day we are living. And it is prayer that transforms this day into grace, or better, that transforms us: it quells anger, sustains love, multiplies joy, instils the strength to forgive. Sometimes it will seem that it is no longer we who are living, but that grace lives and works in us through prayer."

~ Pope Francis

A Deep Moment with God

Frere Dang Quoc Tien, FSC

After Mass today, I took some time to speak quietly to God in the confessional. It felt like a moment when I could truly reveal my inner self and share the things that troubled my soul. God has guided me in many ways, but the most significant lesson has been the importance of living patiently with my brothers and sisters—whether in our shared mission, in life, or through our relationships. It's essential to connect and collaborate in the mission of education.

Reflecting on my vocation in the presence of God, I remembered my conversation with the MSBS sisters during their visit on June 21, 2024. As a religious, maintaining our prayer schedule is essential; otherwise, our mission lacks meaning. My prayer life fosters patience and harmony with my fellow brothers, even amidst challenges. Prayer provides me with strength, refreshing my soul and bringing peace. In light of the difficulties in finding vocations today, as well as in living my vocation as a priest and religious, I saw the importance of deepening my commitment to prayer.

Religious life is a journey of transformation from "nhân" (person) to "nhẫn" (patience). It has its challenges, but it is also a source of great blessing. Ever since the day I left my family, I have encountered many people whom I consider a blessing. Life is filled with moments of joy and sorrow, and through it all, I have had the support and companionship of my brethren by my side. Sometimes, I attribute these encounters to "fate," but I now realize that this fate is actually God's grace and His presence in my life.

I have experienced countless miracles that I never thought I would receive. My religious life has been a journey of gratitude towards God, as I have been given blessings that I could never have obtained through my own efforts. More importantly, God calls me to live a life of giving—sharing all that I have with faith and fervor as a LaSalle Brother. The LaSallian life allows me to experience a bit of the



Kingdom of Heaven every day. Jesus Himself said, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these" (Matthew 19:15). Each day, I find joy in being with the little ones, sharing their words and laughter. Their innocence and naivety remind me that they do not yet know what it means to live for their own selfish desires. Their playful words and jokes bring a smile to my face, and I often wish I could experience the world with their childlike wonder.

Every day, I come to serve students alongside my brothers and sisters in education. I feel like a student myself, learning from esteemed teachers and gaining valuable insights. I remember leaving my family, thinking I wouldn't need school anymore. However, after 16 years in the Order, I've realized that education has deepened my knowledge and relationship with God, much like a school for the soul. Now, as I live and learn with elementary students, I discover their genuine and pure spirits—qualities I might have lost. Sometimes, I feel ashamed as a La Salle elder

brother and teacher. Yet, God has transformed me through this journey. In the ups and downs of life, I often say to the Lord, "I believe and worship You." This simple prayer comforts me, knowing He always listens and responds with love. As a priest, I also go through difficulties and challenges. They, too, are gifts from God that help us understand His love. Through our trials, we learn empathy and the importance of serving others, especially underprivileged children, as the Kingdom of

Heaven belongs to them.

Looking back to the years I have lived, I can only express my gratitude to God. My religious life is an invitation to serve others with humility and to embody the love of Jesus, who taught us to "Love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12). I strive to remain aware that everything I do is in accordance with God's will. May I learn to serve God with my small heart and great love so that His name may be glorified. Amen. 🙏



An Earnest Plea for Peace

Sr. Emi Soe, MSBS

Ave Maria... Ave Maria! After a short hymn, a simultaneous prayer is offered by a group of children taking refuge somewhere in Shan State. They are indeed prayer warriors in their own way, having learned to incorporate short prayers into their daily lives. Mother Caterina said, "Let us raise our hands to God like Moses on Mt. Sinai, that He may have mercy on us and grant us the grace we need." We raise our hearts in the same manner. It is not enough to simply overthrow evil; more prayer support is needed to sustain those in affliction, in the peripheries, and in exile.

"Just as the rain and snow come down and do not return until they have watered the earth" (Isaiah 55:10). This is the image of what prayer does for all who pray without ceasing, but we must ask in faith. What we seek is so great, and therefore, the cost of attaining it is great as well. God answers our humble and sincere prayers at the moments we need Him most. God makes His own way. God never abandons His children. Difficulties come one after another.

As St. Paul wrote, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the evil spirits in the heavens." (Ephesians 6:12). Every time I pray over this passage, I am reminded of our current



situation. Our country is experiencing this now: its darkest moment in history. Brother is killing brother; we are destroying ourselves. We face abuses of power while the right to live and our freedom are stripped away. Our hope lies in the Lord, who promised the prophet, Elijah, "The jar of flour shall not go empty, nor the jug of oil run dry, until the day when the Lord sends rain upon the earth" (1 King 17:14). After the dark night, a new dawn will rise. This is our firm hope. Let us continue to be people of new hope. May this suffering come to an end in this age. Never again war! May God generously answer our prayers. 🙏

Listening to and Encountering God in Prayer

Sr. Isabella Hla Chaye Moe, MSBS

St. Teresa of Calcutta once said, “Prayer is not asking. Prayer is putting oneself in the hands of God, at His disposition, and listening to His voice in the depths of our hearts.” As I reflect on Mother Teresa’s wise words, vivid images of the faces I’ve encountered come to mind, especially the weary yet hopeful patients during my apostolic work and pastoral care at UST Hospital. Time and again, patients reach out to me with hope-filled eyes, pleading, “Sister, please pray for my speedy recovery and complete healing.” In those heartfelt moments, I reassure them, enveloping them in my prayers, and through our shared faith, we draw strength from one another. In these sacred encounters, we delve into profound contemplation, feeling God’s comforting presence even amidst suffering. Prayer, in these instances, transcends a mere request for healing; it becomes a powerful process that bestows comfort, ignites hope, and deepens our experience of God’s unwavering presence. This reassurance and hope that prayer brings to the patients is a testament to the power of faith and the healing nature of God’s love.



When I find myself beside patients enduring intense pain, some approaching the end of their earthly journey, or family members enveloped in the heavy cloak of grief, a sharp ache pierces my heart. In those quiet moments of reflection, I sometimes find myself whispering to God, “Why, Lord?” Yet, as I immerse myself in prayer, the illuminating words of Pope Francis resonate within me: “Prayer is primarily listening and encountering God. The problems of everyday life do not become obstacles but rather appeals from God Himself to listen to and encounter those who are in front of us. The trials of life become opportunities to grow in faith and charity.” These words helped me view my struggles through the lens of faith. Even though I feel powerless to change their circumstances, I offer my presence, listening with an open heart and praying fervently for them. One patient’s words linger in my mind: “Thank you, sister, for your presence that reminds me of my faith. I have learned

to surrender myself to God through prayer.” This ministry has taught me the value of being a compassionate presence in someone’s life during their darkest moments. Within this ministry, I also have the privilege of conversing with non-Catholics. Each interaction feels like an opportunity to share the vibrancy of our faith, cultivate mutual respect, and reassure them of God’s boundless love for all. Witnessing patients with deep, unwavering faith who yearn to receive God in Holy Communion fills my heart with immense joy and gratitude. Through these heartfelt interactions, I’ve begun to tune my ears more closely to His gentle voice resonating in my daily life. In the intimate space of prayer, I come face to face with the One who understands the depths of our hearts and embraces us in every circumstance we face. In the sacred space of prayer, we experience His profound love, a love we are called to cherish and share with everyone we encounter, serve, and walk alongside in life’s journey. May we continue to listen attentively to God in prayer and walk with Him daily, for He is ever-present in our midst, guiding and nurturing us.✠

The 2025 Jubilee Year: Pilgrims of Hope

Sr. Aye Aye Mu, MSBS

I came across a short clip that showcases the contrasting perspectives on death debated by an atheist and a Christian. The atheist views death as the end of life, while the Christian sees it as a transition and a new beginning with God. Listening to the Christian's perspective on death fills me with pride in my faith and deep gratitude toward our Mother Church for sharing the incredible truths of Christianity. This faith assures us of God's unconditional love for all of humanity, promises salvation and eternal life, and allows us to catch a glimpse of His Kingdom even in our present moment through life in communion with the Church and God, her Founder. It is a faith that instills hope, nurturing in us a hope that will never disappoint.

One of the signs of hope we will experience and witness this year is the Jubilee Celebration in 2025. The term "Jubilee" comes from the Hebrew word "Yobel," meaning ram's horn, which signaled the event. Historically, this celebration has brought joy, especially to the poor, whose debts were forgiven, and to the landless, who regained their lands. It has also provided a time for rest for both people and nature.

The Jubilee year will begin on December 24, 2024, and end on January 6, 2026. This significant event commemorates 2,025 years of Redemption.

This Jubilee offers a chance to celebrate Jesus' message, embodying the words of the Prophet Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me... to bring good news to the poor, proclaim liberty to captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and let the oppressed go free" (Luke 4:18-19). To celebrate the Jubilee is to receive His mercy through plenary indulgences, which can be gained through intense prayer, pilgrimages in Rome and local churches, acts of kindness, and above all, through the celebration of His redemptive love demonstrated in His passion, death, and resurrection. Pope Francis, in his papal bull urges us to encounter

our Lord and embrace the hope He wishes to fulfill through humanity. Jesus reveals His Kingdom and addresses our desires for peace, justice, reconciliation, love, and joy. Our mission is to nurture this hope and be a sign of hope in a world filled with destruction, uncertainty, and challenges from the pandemic, natural disasters, and wars.

Taking action within our own capacities—working for peace and justice, being responsible and trustworthy in our tasks, and being faithful and loving in our roles, whether as family members, priests, religious individuals, or singles—are tangible steps toward making His Kingdom come and serve as signs of hope in our wounded world. We all desire good things for ourselves, our families, and all of humanity. This is our shared hope. By unifying our hearts and standing in solidarity with one another, we can keep this hope alive and ultimately bring about peace and fulfillment. Strengthened by His grace, may we keep the flame of hope alive in Christ and become signs of hope for our brothers and sisters around the world.

"May the power of hope fill our days as we await with confidence the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and glory, now and forever."

- Pope Francis



Mission Across Continents

Sr. Maria Vu Thi Hang, MSBS

October is a month that holds a special significance for many of us—it's not only known as the month of the Rosary but also the month dedicated to missions. This is an incredible opportunity for all of us, as Ancella, to be more creative and committed to our mission as missionary animators and cooperators and ignite a fire of missionary zeal in our community.

This month has encouraged many of us to pause and reflect on our hearts, assessing our dedication and fervor for the mission. It's a calling that urges us to dive deep within ourselves and renew our commitment. I've witnessed the unity in our community as we engage in various actions and initiatives during this special time, each person embarking on a personal journey to rediscover their devotion to the mission that our Charism inspires.

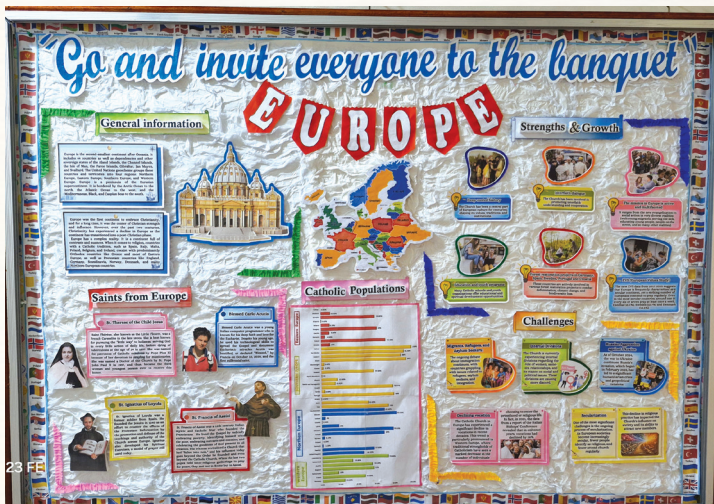
In addition to enriching Eucharistic Adoration centered around the World Mission Sunday message from Pope Francis, we embarked on a creative initiative as a community. We dedicated each week to exploring a different continent, designing a vibrant bulletin filled with insights—information about

each continent, stories of saints and missionaries who hail from those lands, and a reflection on the growth, hopes, and challenges they face today. This bulletin served as a reminder of our ongoing engagement with the world. We also took time during Mass to pray for various realities—supporting the evangelization efforts, missionaries, and the Church on each continent. The sanctuary was adorned with colored candles and distinctive decorations representing each continent, emphasizing the meaning behind our actions. Everyone participated in unique ways: novices focused on Europe and America, junior sisters worked on Oceania and Africa, while postulants took on Asia.

This initiative allowed us to immerse ourselves in the diverse realities of each continent. For example, we learned about Oceania, a vibrant tapestry of ethnic and cultural identities where the Church stands as a beacon of peace, justice, and integrity. Or Asia, the largest continent, rich in faith yet still a minority in terms of the Catholic population—continuing its triple dialogue with the poor, other religions, and cultures, and the Catholic Church in



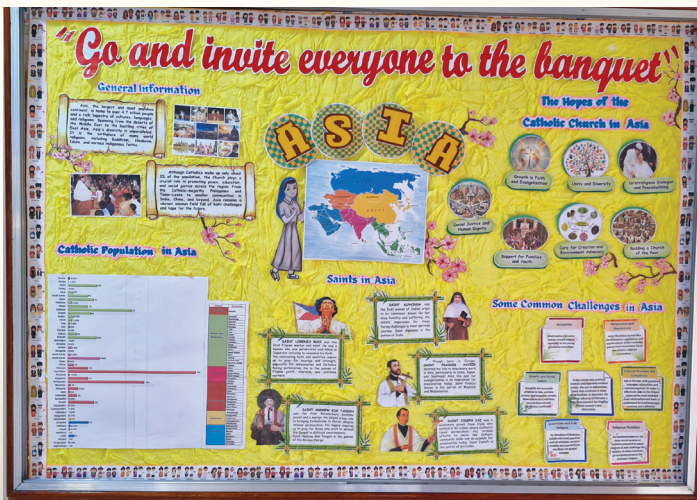
Reflections



Latin America, known for its deep respect for human dignity and family. Africa shines as a beacon of hope, with Christianity flourishing and rapidly growing. Europe, once the cradle of Christianity, is presented with the challenge of re-evangelization. For each of us, this experience transcends being a mere external observance of Mission Month; it serves as a profound expression of love that knows no boundaries—a love eager to reach out to the world and those far



from us, driven by our desire to share our faith. We are called to venture across lands, nations, and continents, believing that our mission is fundamentally rooted in love—drawing others closer to Jesus. We're reminded that this is not just a moment to reignite our passion for the mission but to reaffirm our identity as Ancelle Missionarie. As our superior delegate, Sr. Rosanna, wisely noted, this month is an invitation to examine our own missionary fervor, enthusiasm, and joy beginning within our community. She shared a powerful sentiment: "If we do not live out our missionary vocation with enthusiasm and joy in our own communities, Mission Month risks becoming just another duty on our calendar, rather than a reflection of the deep yearnings of our hearts." May our enthusiasm and love propel us forward as we continue to serve as Missionary Servants of the Blessed Sacrament, grounded in the heart of God, the Church, and the world. Let us embrace this mission together!



Today, in a world torn apart by divisions and conflicts, Christ's Gospel remains the gentle yet firm voice that calls individuals to encounter one another, to recognize that they are brothers and sisters, and to rejoice in harmony amid diversity. "God our Saviour desires everyone to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2:4).

~ Pope Francis

Prayer as Healing

Sr. Maria Lam Bieng Kim Hien, MSBS

Our mission in Gia Lai, Vietnam, is filled with remarkable memories and experiences. It has always been a blend of prayer and action. We constantly remind ourselves to lift up our prayers before taking any other steps, especially when accompanying and praying with others. Throughout the day, we received guidance from the Holy Spirit on how best to respond to the needs around us. Many of these experiences have helped deepen our prayers for healing, with one in particular touching our hearts profoundly.

On Sunday, August 31, 2024, I met a single mother who had a son with a mental disorder. We accompanied her to the mental health facility, which housed 120 individuals, most of whom were from various tribal communities in Gia Lai. The care of these individuals was provided by a non-Catholic couple who were farmers but later dedicated their lives to this noble work.

Her son, Yoan, had a mental breakdown after returning from service in the army many years ago. I conversed with him as a normal person. Noticing the Holy Rosary around his neck, I asked what his religion was. He said he is Buddhist but still remembers how to make the sign of the cross, which gave me hope. I pointed to his mother and asked, "Do you know this woman?" He answered, "Yes, that's Auntie Oat," and she smiled at him. I continued to ask him other questions, until finally, I asked, "Who do you hate the most?" He surprised me by saying, "Jesus." It was hard to hear his words, but I understood that he was struggling. My heart felt heavy, but I chose to be understanding. I pray that God helps him heal and grow stronger.

His mother then shared her story with me. She told me she had been a single mother for 20 years. She has nine children, but only five are alive. Her husband was abusive and often hurt her. He even



caused the deaths of their first three babies due to his neglect. One of their sons committed suicide at just nine years old because of depression after seeing the chaos caused by his father. Her husband also had another family, which led to more debts. When things got worse, she decided to separate from him to protect herself and her children.

During those years of suffering, her only strength and consolation came from God, Oat shared. She recounted how, while her husband was beating her as she held their babies, she prayed to God to keep herself and the children safe. For 20 years, she never experienced a single good day. Before her marriage, she didn't know who God was; she was not a Catholic. It was only after marriage when she met a parish priest who was assigned to her area, that she was introduced to Catholicism. Since that time, she has devotedly followed God. Her love for

God inspires her to wake up joyfully at 2 a.m. just to attend Mass. She expressed: "I am very thankful to God. Without Him, my children and I might have died a long time ago at the hands of my violent husband. However, God has never abandoned me. In my times of suffering, I always cling to Him, calling His name and praying. I find great consolation in Him. He has saved us. I never forget to pray, no matter the situation I encounter. Prayer is my healing."

Her son Yoan, who is mentally ill, is a good, kind, and obedient child, and his condition causes her great pain. She continually prays for him, hoping he will improve. Once a month, she visits him, bringing clothes, snacks, and delicious food. She also pays for his monthly medicine. Even at her age, she works hard to earn money to care for her ill son and her grandchildren. Nevertheless, her strong faith in God and her unceasing prayers have helped her overcome numerous difficulties, challenges, and suffering. She continues to hope in God, and indeed, she recently received good news during her last visit: the couple mentioned that Yoan is getting better. This brings her joy and consolation.

While I was alone in the chapel of Fr. Michael's Dormitory, reflecting on the story of that mother, I found myself pondering the question: "Why did Pope Francis designate this year as a year of Prayer?" Perhaps, in light of the world's ongoing suffering—be it from war, natural calamities, or various injustices—the importance of prayer has become more evident as time passes. Prayer enables us to reach out to our brothers and sisters in distress. This reflection prompted me to realize that Pope Francis is calling us to rekindle our desire

to be in the presence of the Lord, to listen to Him, and to adore Him. We listen to Him by engaging with the realities of life and by hearing the broken stories of His people. He invites us to pray continuously, especially for those on the peripheries, as he has often said: "Go to the peripheries."

Who are those in peripheries in our world today? We might immediately think of the abandoned, the poor, and the unwanted—those rejected by society. While these individuals may still be blessed in that they are aware of themselves and capable of thought and speech, have we ever considered those who do not even know who they are, who cannot think clearly or communicate properly? I believe they are the most broken and impoverished among us. Yoan is one such example.

Many times, I have asked myself, "What makes my prayer effective and truly alive, especially since we, as religious, cannot live without prayer?" Prayer is our source of life, inner strength, and immense consolation. It is about connecting, sharing, and reaching out to the brokenness of our brothers and sisters. Prayer can only be effective and fully alive if I attentively listen to God's calling voice and act upon that call. This way, our souls will overflow with gratitude and joy, nourished by the deep love of God. I am very grateful for this experience. It serves as a reminder and a valuable lesson that prayer is our guiding star. Our mission cannot be completed without prayer. I pray that Jesus will always be known and loved, just as our foundress, Mother Caterina, envisioned. May the brokenness of our world today be healed through the sincere prayers of all. 🙏

"In the face of so many wounds that hurt us and could lead to a hardness of heart, we are called to dive into the sea of prayer, which is the sea of the boundless love of God, in order to experience his tenderness."

~ Pope Francis

Listening as a Way of Healing

Sr. Chloue Ann Encarguez, MSBS

In anticipation of the upcoming Feast of the Parish in Looc, our Patron embarked on a pilgrimage to each chapel. However, accessing some of the chapels, particularly those on the islands, proved difficult due to the typhoons that caused heavy rainfall, strong winds, and turbulent seas. Despite these obstacles, the community eagerly awaited our arrival and graciously welcomed our Patron Saint, San Raphael Archangel. The presence of San Raphael Archangel filled them with joy and hope for their dreams regarding their community, their lives, and the Church.

In the spirit of Synodality, our team engaged in meaningful dialogue, listening to the perspectives and suggestions for our shared spiritual journey. Each chapel holds unique stories of pain, healing, resilience, and love for our faith. During our pilgrimage, we exchanged stories and highlighted key takeaways from the recent Diocesan Pastoral Assembly Meeting. We addressed concerns raised and proposed initiatives based on the community insights, demonstrating to them that their voices are valued by our Vicariate and the Church. We had brief discussions with choir members, altar servers, lay ministers, lectors, and commentators in each chapel to learn from each other's contributions. We visited elderly individuals in various communities to hear their stories and reassure them that the Church remembers them. We also held catechism sessions for those preparing for the Sacraments of Holy Eucharist and Confirmation and engaged in dialogue with those who hold negative sentiments toward the Church. We are thankful that, guided by the Holy Spirit, we approached these conversations with sincerity.

What resonated with me most during this pilgrimage was the encounter between the San Raphael, the Archangel and the faithful. Listening to them whisper their prayers to the Saint unveiled their profound devotion. They embraced a vital aspect of life: to emulate the saint and present their prayers to Almighty God. They understand deep down that someone hears them, and they express both the joys and sorrows of their lives. It is truly beautiful to witness souls, amidst both silence and noise, seeking to spend time in prayer with the saints. The joy reflected on their faces will forever remain in their hearts, even after the pilgrimages conclude, and they will generously share that joy with others, no matter where they go.

We also rejoice in the spirit of communion and the eagerness to engage with the Church, even in those moments. This is significant for us as we share and convey the Church's words, guided by the Holy Spirit. This experience has taught me the importance of listening and nurturing our mission. Indeed, we must stand firm in our faith and express it with enthusiasm, but it must come from a heart that is attuned to the situations and lives of the people. We are grateful to those who dedicate their talents, time, and resources to sustain the Church's presence in the peripheries; they serve as instruments of healing for the community. May God bless their deepest desires and intentions, granting them the strength to pursue their hopes and dreams for the community.



Little Miracles

Sr. Faentina Wea, MSBS

I was filled with excitement when I received my new assignment in Indonesia—a mission that promises many unknown surprises. Along with my co-sister, I was assigned to a small island located north of Flores Island in the Flores Sea, called Palue. At the start of my journey on this island, I felt worried about whether I would be able to adapt to the new situations and the people. The geographical location presented challenges in carrying out our services. We had to travel to various places to lead the liturgy of the Word and deliver Holy Communion to the sick and elderly in their homes, often navigating risky routes. Each safe return home felt like a miracle from God. Throughout this experience, it has been my prayer, along with God's unconditional love and mercy, that has strengthened me to fulfill my mission and share the life of Christ with others.

Viewing life through the lens of faith reveals many beautiful aspects. During my time here, I experienced numerous uplifting moments and heard various stories from the people. Their deep devotion to prayer has profoundly touched me. They genuinely believe in its power. Each morning, they gather at the church to attend Holy Mass—the Eucharist being the first thing they seek before starting their day. One day, an elderly woman who struggled to walk approached me and said, "Sister, do you know why I can still move and walk at my age? It is because of prayer, and I long to receive the Eucharist because it gives me strength." Despite her age and condition, her desire to receive Jesus never wavers. Another inspiring story is that of Liskar Fabianus Kose, a son of a fisherman from the small island of Palue, embodies an inspiring journey of faith and resilience. After losing his parents at a young age, he was raised by his grandparents in difficult economic conditions, forcing him to start working as a fisherman early on. A life-changing incident occurred when, while fishing with his uncle, they used explosives. Liskar suffered face and eye injuries in the explosion, prompting him to leave fishing behind and focus on his education at a Catholic junior high school. In grade 8, he embraced the novena prayer taught by his teacher, praying daily for the strength to be a positive force in his community and nation.

After high school, Liskar joined his uncle on another island to continue his studies. Before entering university, he supported his uncle by managing a store, caring for their dog, and working as a rider for nearly two years. Ultimately, he pursued a medical course at a university in Batam, Indonesia, where he was blessed to be among the first graduating class of doctors. After earning his degree, Liskar interned at the Naval Hospital in Tanjung Pinang. Today, he serves as the head of the Clinic Pratama St. Elizabeth in Nita and as a professor at the Nursing

Academy St. Elizabeth in Lela-Maumere. His commitment to prayer remains unwavering, inspiring his patients to pray before their check-ups. Liskar believes wholeheartedly in the transformative power of prayer, stating, "I believe in the power of prayer, and this prayer has shaped me into who I am today."

The stories of Dr. Liskar and many others in Palue highlight the significance of prayer in their lives. Indeed, prayer serves as a vitamin for the spirit, sustaining them as they navigate the ups and downs of everyday life. I realized that if we truly have a dream, we should surrender it to God, and He will take care of the rest. When we place our confidence in God, anything we ask of Him will be granted to us.



Faith and Miracles

Rozelle Gonzales

Do you believe in miracles? This was a question posed by a priest during his homily, and it's one I often reflect on myself. Life presents us with unexpected events that can leave us confused and searching for answers. Our family experienced this firsthand. Despite the trials we faced, we refused to give up. In moments when hope seemed dim, we embraced the challenges as tests from God and chose to trust in Him. When our prayers were finally answered, we could only express our overwhelming joy and gratitude through tears. Our prayer and faith became our sources of strength and hope as we confronted the challenges laid before us. We believe that miracles happen when we continue to trust and surrender everything to God through prayer and faith.

Over the years since we faced our trials, life has remained a journey filled with difficulties. When our son was just 3 years old, we learned he had Muscular Dystrophy, a condition causing progressive weakness in his muscles. We were told that his life expectancy was only between 14 and 17 years and that there was no cure. The moment the doctor delivered this heartbreaking news, my husband and I felt as though our world had come crashing down. In our darkest hour, we found solace in a church, seeking hope and guidance.

I didn't go there to ask for help but to understand why we were tested with such a challenge, particularly for our son. With so many children in the world, why did he have to endure this disease? Days and months passed, yet we sought second, third, and even fourth opinions, and all aligned with the same diagnosis. It was in that search that we discovered God's presence in our journey. Simply going to church, not to pray, but to cry, became a profound source of strength, gradually lightening our burdens and drawing us closer to God.



We consistently prayed for our son's healing and, as a parent, I held firmly to hope. Despite the absence of a cure, I believe the day will come when he recovers because of my unwavering faith that God will heal him. Throughout this journey, we prioritized our son's education. Every three to six months, we traveled to Manila for regular checkups and provided him with a leg brace to prevent deformity as he grew. Before he completed grade three, my wife and I made the important decision to transfer him to MCS for him to receive the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. That year, we began to notice a remarkable improvement in his condition.

On May 31, 2023, our son experienced a miraculous gift of healing that transformed our lives. We are eternally grateful to Mother Caterina; since moving here, Kurt's condition has significantly improved, and we cherish the gift of healing he received.

Through numerous trials, we must always remember that God is by our side. With unwavering trust, prayer, and belief in our hearts, we can overcome any challenge.

God's Presence Amid Sorrows and Confusion

Sr. Moe Thi Dar, MSBS

My current situation feels like an extraordinary encounter with the Lord. Every day, I entrust my life to Him, offering prayers for our country and our people, and for the conversion of all sinners. With God's grace, the war does not leave me in fear or hopelessness. Instead, I see this situation as a challenge to recognize the signs of the times and to be more proactive in my apostolate. Given the situation in our country, I feel called to bring hope to those who have lost everything, to guide them through their spiritual dryness by being present, listening to their stories, offering words of encouragement, and assuring them that the Lord does not abandon us.

Our community has faced and continues to endure many challenges, suffering, and even death. The same struggles, however, reveal the wonder and mystery of following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. There have been times when I felt confused and unable to understand why we were going through this and when it would end. I question how long we must wait and what the purpose of our waiting is as the situation worsens rather than improves. Through prayers, I have come to understand that this time of waiting prepares us for what is to come. While this period may not always make sense, it often leads to greater things than I could ever imagine. I continue to hold on

to my faith and hope in God, carrying out the mission entrusted to me, knowing that God is setting the stage for something beautiful in His time.

As I carry on my mission amid uncertainty, I continue to deepen my relationship with God, who sustains my strength, courage, and commitment in this challenging reality. Through His word, I always feel His loving presence both within me and in my mission, as well as with our people in their sorrow and fear. Without God's presence and grace, I would not be able to move forward in the face of the dangers we encounter and the suffering of our people who need our support. It is essential to be with them, to listen to their cries and their painful stories. I truly believe that it is God who has given me the courage and strength to visit them and share laughter, even though we are experiencing the same suffering, including the loss of our possessions and loved ones.

I am grateful to our Congregation and the sisters for their support through prayers and words of encouragement. I also thank our superiors, who work tirelessly for us, always seeking updates about our well-being and whereabouts. To all our benefactors who support our suffering brothers and sisters in Myanmar, thank you very much. May God reward your generosity and compassionate hearts. Thank you!



Prayer and Trust in God

Sr. Elizabeth Libel, MSBS

War brings suffering to so many people. The misery, chaos, and uncertainties leave everyone terrified. The fighting continues day and night, with the sounds of gunfire, airstrikes, and artillery rattling the nerves of the population, making it feel as if death was looming over them all. It is agonizing to witness the distress, frustration, and grief of those around us—people crying over the loss of loved ones, properties, dreams, and plans as we all face an unclear future. Many would recount their experiences with tears in their eyes; some spoke with a sense of hopelessness, while others murmured their pain.

My co-sisters and I are not exempt from danger. We were forced to vacate our convent and leave the diocese. At first, we planned to stay at the diocesan pastoral center. However, it was soon evident that doing so entails so much risk. In fact, I and my co-sister narrowly escaped death. While my co-sister and I were returning to our convent to gather our belongings, we were confronted by armed individuals who aimed a gun at us. At that moment, I raised my hand and pleaded with them not to shoot. Thankfully, we were able to return to the pastoral center safely. Another time, they shot our car parked by the gate. Luckily, no one was hit. It

was the feast of “Christ the King,” our cathedral’s feast day. That night, they targeted us. We could see bullets flying past us and explosions of artillery in our vicinity.

We could have died then, but miraculously, no one got hurt. Everyone was praying in silence. Sadly, that situation pushed us to leave our diocese. Recalling that experience, escaping and surviving seemed impossible in that situation. We are firmly convinced that only prayers from around the world for the people of Myanmar could have saved us.

Despite being evacuated to a safe location, we can still hear the sounds of fighting, bombing, and the ongoing threat of artillery and airstrikes. People are burdened with anxiety over danger, food, and shelter, feeling hopeless about the future. We receive heartbreaking news of young lives lost on the battlefield, making peace seem further away. My heart aches for our youth. I see despair in others, especially among hungry children and worried parents. Parents wait for their children to come home, while the elderly long to return to their own homes. The sight of the handicapped, the sick, and abject poverty is overwhelming, leaving me feeling powerless to help.

In that moment of pain and suffering, I found myself searching for a shoulder to cry on, seeking comfort and strength. However, as a religious sister, I have the duty first to provide support to others. As for myself, the only true source of strength I could find was in God. After meeting with refugees, I understood that, as religious figures, we have the power to empower and uplift people simply through our presence. They see light, hope, and strength in us during their darkest moments.

I used to avoid public interactions, preferring my comfort zone. However, I was eventually compelled to engage with others, which helped me discover my sense of purpose in supporting those who suffer. I reached out, listened to their stories, and conducted seminars on overcoming challenges and managing emotional crises. It brought me joy to see them regain confidence and





find positivity despite their hardships. This experience strengthened my commitment to stand with them. Although I have my own wounds, I've become a wounded healer, able to support others on their journeys.

I traveled to many villages, particularly internally displaced persons (IDP) camps, to offer psychosocial support to individuals experiencing emotional distress. Some of these villages were quite remote, with rough roads making access challenging. However, I felt enthusiastic and energized to reach out to them rather than fatigued. Although we couldn't provide much material support, the people felt happy and uplifted because they sensed the love, care, and concern from the church. Many had previously felt like orphans when left alone.

As I moved from village to village, I gathered vegetables along the way. Occasionally, I encountered old friends who generously shared produce with me. Depending on local needs, we also provided items like clothing and water gallons, which we stored in Bado, Loikaw, whenever we could enter discreetly. In return, the villagers often gave me vegetables, which I redistributed to the

refugees. We made sure to share whatever donations we received, particularly with those who were struggling the most. One day, while I was traveling with one of the refugees on a motorbike, we came across a man who was covered in wounds. His body was swelling, and he was struggling to walk. He asked me for a ride. As a sister, I felt it was inappropriate for him to ride behind me, so I offered to flag down a passing car to help him reach his destination. Unfortunately, no cars were passing by. Since he had difficulty walking, I decided to give him a ride home. Later, those who knew me questioned why I had chosen to help that man. I explained his situation, and they laughed, telling me that my kindness sometimes clouds my judgment and that I should just help when I see someone in need. It turned out that he wasn't sick but rather had been beaten by his family due to his frequent drunkenness. From this experience, I learned many lessons. Sometimes, I find God in unexpected moments—sometimes in a humorous way, other times as a source of inspiration and strength. At times, it feels like a wave that drains my energy, but I continue to trust in God and do my best.

EDUCA



Sponsorship Program

We extend our heartfelt thanks on behalf of the children in our Sponsorship Program. Your contributions meet their material needs and bring into their lives the warmth of your affection and support.

Your support is essential, as providing school tuition, uniforms, books, and shoes gives these children wings to rise above their circumstances. The joy they express upon receiving your gifts, often mixed with disbelief, guides them toward aspirations they never thought possible.

The Sponsorship Program is a beautiful puzzle where each piece reflects a bond that goes beyond material aid—acknowledging not just their needs but also their hopes. Your commitment reminds us of the importance of sharing hope and courage with those who struggle.

This Christmas, we are reminded of God's dream for humanity: peace, justice, and fraternity. Your example is a testament to the enduring mystery of God drawing near through those who make life better for others.

Thank you for making all of this goodness possible.

Mobile Remedial School

This year, the Mobile Remedial School Program was launched in Mindoro, benefiting over a thousand elementary school children who need extra lessons. Every weekend, these eager students work to catch up on their studies. The lessons, led by dedicated sisters and teachers, create a positive atmosphere filled with hope.

As a result, the children have shown remarkable progress, gaining important skills and renewed motivation. For many, this program represents not just an educational opportunity, but also a chance for personal growth and affirmation of their potential.



ATION



Angels' Home

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude on behalf of the 48 girls and young women at the Angels' Home centers in Mindoro and Quezon City. These homes provide shelter, guidance, and new opportunities for growth and study. The challenges they faced are met with care and support, allowing them to heal and regain confidence for the future. At Angels' Home, the girls rediscover their worth and learn the value of community and collaboration. Each has a unique story, yet together they are building a hopeful future. These miracles of love are made possible by the generosity of our supporters. Your contributions provide a safe haven and allow them to rediscover the beauty of life and dream again. We extend our deepest gratitude to you for being part of this journey of hope and transformation.



Mother Caterina School



FEEDING PROGRAM



The Feeding Program in the villages of Mindoro continues, and this year, the Mobile Feeding Program also began.

As the food arrives, children greet it with smiles and excitement, knowing that the meal symbolizes care and love, breaking the monotony of their daily lives. They eagerly help unload warm containers, filled with anticipation for the day's food. For teachers, witnessing the children enjoy nutritious meals is a source of relief and happiness, offering hope for their growth and ability to focus on studies.

Lunchtime transforms into a celebration of life and solidarity. The mobile feeding program not only delivers food but also plants smiles and fosters human connection, leaving behind an atmosphere of warmth and optimism.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE



The Talita Kum Clinic offers hope by providing free medical and dental care to those in need, operating four days a week. This initiative relies on the generosity of benefactors who helped equip the clinic. Our compassionate family doctor ensures that all patients receive necessary prescriptions, even if they can't afford medications. This service exemplifies our community's solidarity and strength through generosity. Additionally, Medical Missions have reached four villages, thanks to the dedication of doctors and nurses who share their expertise with those in remote areas.



PROJECTS OF



The island of Mindoro has faced challenging months due to a series of typhoons that caused flooding, destroyed crops, and severely damaged homes. As if that weren't enough, pig farms were hit by African swine fever, resulting in devastating losses for farmers who were left without a means of livelihood. Despite these hardships, the generosity and solidarity of friends and organizations have brought rays of hope. Thanks to your support, we were able to provide concrete aid to farmers and livestock breeders, equipping them with the resources needed to rebuild their work: seeds and fertilizers for new harvests, agricultural tools, animal feed, and livestock to restart their farms.



SOLIDARITY



In addition, we continued to invest in women's empowerment by offering sewing courses to enable many to develop productive activities. Upon completing the course, each participant received a sewing machine and a supply of fabric, allowing them to work from home and contribute to their family's income. This project not only equipped women with practical skills but also boosted their confidence, making them active contributors to their family's future.



These acts of solidarity have transformed difficulties into opportunities, proving that even in the most critical situations, mutual support can rebuild hope and restore broken dreams.



APOSTOLATE



The ongoing war in Myanmar has resulted in significant death, suffering, and displacement. In Kayah State alone, over 150,000 people have fled their villages, seeking refuge in forests and mountains to escape bombings by the Burmese air force. Many live in dire conditions, with limited healthcare and severe food shortages.

For the past years, our sisters have been living among the displaced, providing education, care, and essential supplies. Soldiers have occupied churches and convents in the area, with some facilities, including our own, destroyed in the bombings. Despite constant danger and deprivation, our sisters remain committed to helping their community, particularly the children and youth.



Children who suffer the most attend makeshift schools in the camps, facing risks from airstrikes. In Htyngalya, a shelter for girls and young women has housed thousands over the past three years. In November 2023, the community was forced to relocate, dividing into three groups.



IN MYANMAR



Some sisters remained in Loikaw to support children in camps, while others moved to the Howan forest to provide educational courses. A final group with over 70 girls relocated to Shan State after fleeing a refugee camp due to airstrikes.



The population relies heavily on international donations. While some attempt to cultivate rice and vegetables, the threat of violence looms constantly. Water is scarce, often fetched from distant sources. Typhoon Yagi caused severe flooding in September, destroying several refugee camps and claiming at least 200 lives.





Merry Christmas!



Missionary Servants of the Blessed Sacrament (AMSS)

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