



May Your Kingdom Come!

MISSIONARY SERVANTS OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT IN ASIA

DECEMBER 2013



"Go and make disciples of all nations." Mt. 28:19

Called to New Evangelization

At the closing of the Year of Faith, our journey as a Church continues. With the renewed encounter and conversion to Christ and re-discovery of faith, we, as members of the Church, are called to be new evangelizers, that is to become bearers of the Gospel to places and persons who need to discover or rediscover the love of God.

"Tell your stories, share your dreams, your sorrows, your fears, your tears. Only in the weaving of our stories with the story of Jesus and the wider story of humanity, especially here in Asia will we see again the path that the Lord opens to us to proclaim the Good News with new fervor, with new methods, and with new expressions." Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle exhorted the participants of the recently concluded Philippine Conference on New Evangelization.

In response to the call of new evangelization, we share with you insights and experiences that speak of our encounter with God and the beauty of discovering and re-discovering our faith, and testify to the perennial newness and relevance of the Gospel of Christ in this fast-changing world.

ANCELLE MISSIONARIE DEL SANTISSIMO SACRAMENTO - ASIA

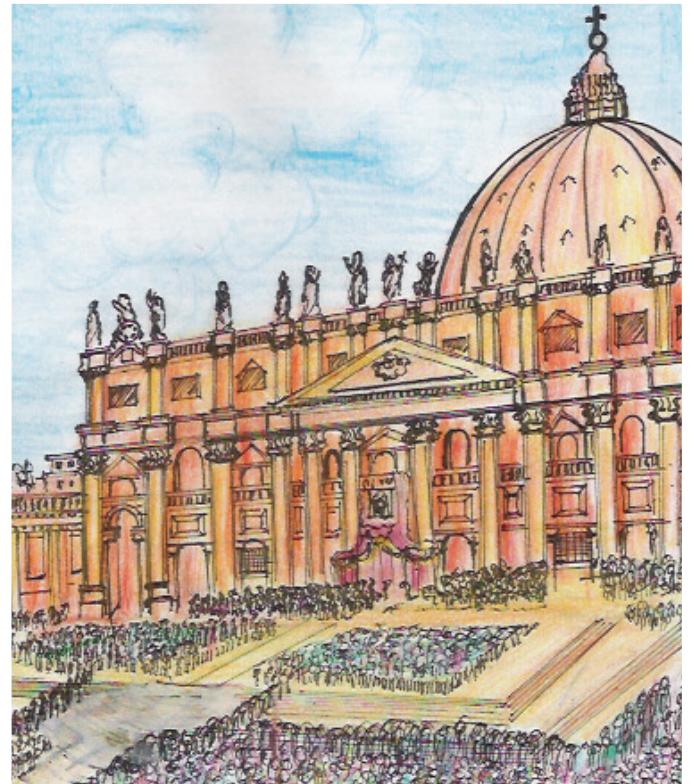
The Church is the fruit of her own evangelizing activity, because she is certain that the entire process is not in her hands but in the hands of God, whose Spirit guides her in the course of history.

Lineamenta for the Synod on the New Evangelization, 3

KNOWING THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

As we look into the history and life of the Church, we see the face of Christ gazing upon the world. In the joy, triumph and struggles of the Church, the face of Christ is revealed in her constant struggle for renewal and reform. His face is revealed in the holiness, faithfulness and courage of those people who became instruments of His grace and mercy. As followers of Christ, the Spouse of the Church, it is our duty to know and love Her. However, we cannot love her without knowing her first. In this time of new evangelization, we are also called to a renewed encounter with Christ in His Church. It is only in this encounter that we will be able to know and appreciate more profoundly Her splendid beauty and value.

So, let us embark on this journey of discovery and renewed appreciation for her life and history...



What is the meaning of the word **CATHOLIC**?

The word catholic literally means “*universal*.” It was originally applied to all Christians because we are all part of the Universal Church in the way that we are all members of the Body of Christ. It was first used to describe the Christian Church in the early second century to emphasize its universal scope. “It is crucially important to remember that when the early Christians used the term “catholic,” they were not referring to any particular church, denomination, rite, or communion. They were simply referring to all true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

WHO founded The Catholic Church?

Jesus, the Incarnate Son of God, founded the Catholic Church. The Church - the new people of God was established in the form of a visible community of salvation which people join through Baptism. *And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it (Mt 16:18-19).* The origin of the Catholic Church can be traced to this point! We believe that Jesus clearly expresses his will here, and that will is to “build my church”, invest it with his own authority, and give Peter a special role as the head of that Church.

What is the reason behind the Catholic Church's origin?

The Mission is the reason behind the Catholic Church's origin. After the Resurrection, Jesus commissioned his Apostles: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," teaching them to "observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Mt 28:18-20). By founding the Church, Jesus Christ intended to teach, sanctify, and govern.

What is the historical date of the Catholic Church's origin?

On Pentecost, we see the external "birth" of the Church through the work of the Holy Spirit. This is the definitive creation of the Church in all its fullness, the historical date of the Catholic Church's origin.

Who were the first to carry out the mission of the Church?

On Pentecost, *Peter and the other Apostles* boldly proclaimed the Gospel of salvation: *Peter... lifted up his voice and addressed them: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts, 2:14, 38).* After Pentecost, they dispersed to different countries to preach the Gospel to other peoples.

This Church still exists! And we still have that very same mission...



On March 13, 2013
the Conclave elected
Jorge Mario Cardinal Bergoglio
of Buenos Aires, Argentina to
succeed Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI.
He took the name Francis, after the
great saint of Assisi.

*Now let's begin this journey,
a journey of brotherhood, love and trust among us.
Let us pray for one another.
Let us pray for the whole world that there be a great brotherhood.
I hope this journey of the Church that we begin today
will be fruitful for the evangelization.*

- Pope Francis

Now let us look into the development of the Catholic Church through centuries of existence, centuries marked by the faithfulness of God who looked upon His Church in the midst of struggles and trials...

FIRST CENTURY (33 - 100 AD): It was a time of initial growth of Christianity, especially among the lower classes due to heroic missionary efforts. The Gospel was proclaimed by word of mouth and preaching. Christianity remained a small offshoot of Judaism, persecuted by the Roman emperors Nero and Domitian, who stirred suspicions about the Christian way of life and persecuted Christians for their refusal to worship the emperor and Roman gods.

SECOND CENTURY (101 - 200 AD): Christianity grew in numbers and influence despite sporadic persecutions. Bishop Ignatius of Antioch and others were the apostolic fathers who taught Christian truth and often witnessed to it with their lives. Later, learned men defended the faith through philosophy and reason. The bishops of the Church confronted distortions of Christian teaching and began to consider which Christian writings were God's word for the whole Church.

THIRD CENTURY (201 - 300 AD): Schools of Christian teaching had arisen in major cities. Christianity was expanding, organizing and developing theologically until the persecution of Decius (250 AD) shook the Church and raised the question of how to deal with those who denied the faith. The Pope ruled out that all who did penance could be re-admitted. The Church was not just for the perfect but for repentant sinners.

FOURTH CENTURY (301 - 400 AD): The fierce persecution of Diocletian in 303-311 AD ended by the first Christian Emperor, Constantine. He legalized Christianity through the Edict of Milan issued in 313 AD. This century also marked the birth of the monastic or ascetic movement and the emergence of great scholar saints such as Ambrose, Jerome and Augustine of Hippo. Christianity became the established religion of the Roman Empire.

FIFTH CENTURY (401 - 500 AD): The Roman Empire was increasingly divided in the fifth century between the Greek speaking East and the Latin speaking West, which was eventually taken over by the barbarian tribes. The popes like Pope Leo I had to protect God's people both spiritually and physically.

SIXTH CENTURY (501 - 600 AD): It marks the end of the age of the Fathers of the Church – the era of the great theologians of the first Christian centuries. East and West were preoccupied with survival in a new political order and with converting the barbarian conquerors of the Roman Empire. The monastic order of St. Benedict, founded in 529 AD became a great source of missionary outreach and of the preservation of Christian culture.

SEVENTH CENTURY (601 - 700 AD): It began with the outstanding missionary work launched by Pope Gregory the Great, which led to the conversion of England, by St. Augustine of Canterbury and Benedictine monks. The forces of Islam began to take over the Eastern Empire.

EIGHTH CENTURY (701 - 800 AD): The Benedictine missionary St. Boniface led the conversion of Germany and helped forge an alliance between the Pope and the king of the Franks, Pepin. This was the birth of Christendom, the close alliance of Church and state in the west that lasted throughout the Middle Ages.

NINTH CENTURY (801 - 900 AD): There was a decline of the Church in the West and increasing Islamic influence had the same effect on the Christian in the East. The pope and the patriarch of Constantinople broke off relationship between Christians of the East and West from 858-887 AD. The fervor of monastic life and the life of the Church in general waned during this period, often called the Dark Ages.

TENTH CENTURY (901 - 1000 AD): The founding of monasteries and new monastic orders began the renewal of the Church in the West and added to the new fire of holiness. Otto I, the Holy Roman Emperor from Germany, began to reform the Catholic Church in the West by appointing worthy popes and bishops.

ELEVENTH CENTURY (1001 - 1100 AD): This century marks the reformation in the Church spearheaded by Pope Gregory VII as well as the beginning of the tragic schism between the Eastern and Western Christian Churches. In this century, the First Crusade was launched in 1095 to free the Holy Land from Muslim Control.

TWELFTH CENTURY (1101 - 1200 AD): The popes continued their active struggle to guide the Church and free it from the control of secular rulers. They continued the crusades in the East, with only mixed results, and crusaded against new heresies in Europe.

THIRTEENTH CENTURY (1201 - 1300 AD): It was the height of Catholic Church in middle ages. The popes exercised full authority in both temporal and spiritual sphere, as they continued to launch crusades abroad and established Inquisition to root out heresy. They also called important reform councils. There was also the rise of Mendicant orders like Franciscan and Dominican, which helped in the renewal of the Catholic Church.

FOURTEENTH AND FIFTEENTH CENTURY (1301 - 1500 AD): These centuries were a period of difficulty for the Church. The popes resided in Avignon, France for seventy years to escape political pressures in Italy, but the prophetic voices of St. Bridget of Sweden and St. Catherine of Siena urged reform and called the popes back to Rome. A worse tragedy followed, however: the great schism of 1378-1417, in which three men claimed to be the legitimate pope. The influence of the Papacy was severely damaged. In spite of this, there were signs of spiritual awakening. Catholic mysticism flourished in Holland, Germany, and England.

SIXTEENTH CENTURY (1501 - 1600 AD): In this century, Protestant Reformation began when Martin Luther, an Augustinian monk and professor of Scripture in Wittenberg, Germany, posted his 95 Theses on Indulgences in 1517. Although Luther had no intention of leaving the Catholic Church, when his cries for reform went unheeded, the German nobility and people responded by forming the Lutheran Church, with the Bible alone as their guide in doctrine and the belief in justification by faith alone. The Catholic Church responded by seeking to reform itself. Catholic humanist scholars appealed for reform even before Luther. Catholic religious orders of men and women emerged and old orders were reformed. The Council of Trent was held and it strengthened the Catholic identity and brought out reform in the Church. Many saints emerged at this time. Out of the problems in the late 15th century, the Catholic Church by the grace of God, returned once again to strength and virtue marked by discipline, devotion and clear doctrine.

SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURY (1601 - 1800 AD): This period is marked by the emergence of science and technology, a new philosophy based primarily on reason, the demise of the idea of the divine right of kings to rule, and the increasing exclusion of religion from the public life of society. French Revolution also took place which went so far as to abolish Christianity altogether and to set up instead a religion of reason.

NINETEENTH CENTURY (1801 - 1900 AD): This century began with a reaction against the excesses of the French Revolution. The Catholic Church generally stood against the innovations. The first Vatican Council was held. Although the political influence of the papacy waned, the pope's spiritual authority was greatly enhanced.

TWENTIETH CENTURY (1901 - 2000 AD): It has been a time of rapid change, especially brought by science and technology. Wars and moral decadence were the issues confronting the Church. Secularism and materialism sap the strength of Christianity in the Western World, while communism suppresses the faith in much of the East. And yet, where sin abounds, God's grace abounds even more. Through its leaders, the Pope, the Church continues the work of renewal. The Second Vatican Council was held to renew the Church and to bring it up-to-date while still maintaining its eternal truth and continuity with the past.

The Significant Persons in the Life and Expansion of the Church

✠ **The Apostles:** They are the twelve: Peter, and his brother Andrew; James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew, the tax collector; James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus; Simon the Cananean, and Judas Iscariot, personally chosen and formed by Christ to continue His mission.

✠ **The Early Church Fathers**

The early Church Fathers fall into three basic categories:

- ✠ **Apostolic Fathers** - contemporaries of the apostles and were probably taught by them, carrying on the tradition and teaching of the apostles themselves. They were very concerned about the proclamation of the gospel and as zealous as the apostles themselves in rooting out and exposing any false doctrine that cropped up in the early Church. Their desire to stay true to the Gospel taught by the Apostles preserved the orthodoxy of the message.
- ✠ **Ante-Nicene Fathers** - those who came after the apostolic fathers and before the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325. They also tried to stay true to the gospel and defended the Christian faith from false doctrine, and this led to the beginnings of the formation of accepted Church doctrine.
- ✠ **Post-Nicene Church Fathers** - those who came after the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325. They carried out the mission of defending the gospel against all kinds of heresies.

The early Church Fathers are an example to us of what it means to follow Christ and defend the truth.

✠ **The Martyrs and Confessors:** An early christian writer said: "The blood of the Martyrs is the seed of the Church." The history of the Church records centuries of sporadic persecutions because of the faith. However, Christianity continued to grow by the

witnesses of faith and courage of the Martyrs and Confessors. The Apostles Peter and Paul, the leaders of the Church in Rome, were martyred in the short and bloody persecution during the time of Nero (64-67 AD).

- ✦ **The Saints** – They are those who practiced heroic virtue and lived in fidelity to God’s grace.” The Saints have always been the source and origin of renewal in the most difficult moments in the History of the Church,” Blessed John Paul II said.
- ✦ **The Missionaries** – are those who courageously brought the light of the Gospel to the foreign lands like St. Paul and St. Francis Xavier.



The History of the Catholic Church is marked by renewal and reform, thanks to the abiding presence of God’s Holy Spirit. In spite of periods of struggle and decline, efforts for reform and renewal have been made. In our time, her history serves both as inspiration and guide as we seek to proclaim the Gospel of Christ and present its perennial newness to the People of God. Her history is the story of our life as a pilgrim people and only in reclaiming our history will we find the light and courage to go forward in our journey beset by the challenges of our own time.

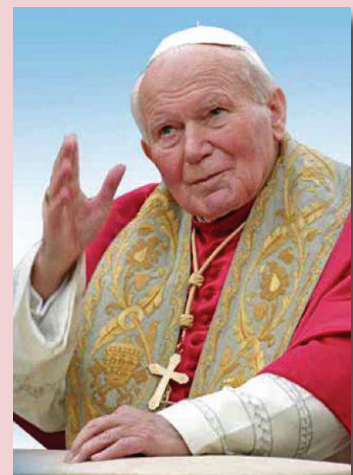
Moreover, although the Church is made up of sinners, its history is full of great saints: heroic men and women who have boldly witnessed to their faith in Jesus Christ. Up to the present time, we are blessed with holy leaders such as Francis, our Pope and all simple and ordinary people who live truly holy lives. Their holiness is a splendid witness to the authenticity of the Gospel that Christ proclaimed and to the graciousness of God who bestows the necessary graces to His people.



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On July 15, 2013, Pope Francis authorized the canonization of **Pope John XXIII** (1958-1963) and **Pope John Paul II** (1978-2005). The solemn celebration of their canonization will be on April 27, 2014.

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THE NEW EVANGELIZATION AND INCULTURATION

How Can I be an Evangelizer?

by Asp. Doan Thi Thien, MSBS



Perpetual Religious Profession in Vietnam

I was born in the land drenched and sanctified by the blood of the martyrs. I am an heir to the faith handed on by the martyrs, who gallantly gave their lives for the Gospel. I grew up in a Catholic family in the Diocese of Vinh in Vietnam and was reared by prayerful and zealous parents. My faith was nurtured in the cradle of my family and community. Since childhood until adolescence, my parents sent me to catechism class every summer vacation. They instilled in me the value of prayer and of the Eucharist as well as the participation in the Church's life. When I was still a child, there was no priest to celebrate Mass even once a month. We had to go

to another parish to attend the Sunday Mass. We lived in many difficulties, yet my parents strove to keep the faith alive in us, and instructed us in the faithful following of Jesus. The situations changed as years passed by. Presently, daily masses are celebrated in our parish. With joy at this precious gift, we participate in the daily mass in the church nearby our house, and in the community prayer every morning and evening, and noontime of the months of May, June October and November. We join adoration on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays for different intentions. Adoration on Wednesdays is offered for the fathers, Thursdays for the youth, and Saturdays for mothers. The church is always full of people, young and old. This makes me feel the thirst of the believers for the full expression of faith. However, the Church in Vietnam faces the challenge posed by the government authority, which does not grant full religious freedom to us. The Church in Vietnam suffers the scourge of persecution. Violence perpetrated against religious leaders and the Vietnam Catholics are not uncommon. But still, the thirst for God and fervor of faith is palpable in the hearts of the believers. Thanks to the abiding presence of God through the Holy Spirit, persecution and tribulations fail to restrain and vanquish our faith in Him, in whom genuine freedom resides. He continues to work in the hearts of men who courageously pass the seed of faith to others.

On the other hand, living in this land where people can freely express and practice their faith, I questioned the apparent indifference of many to the faith - indifference, which is expressed in the values and choices that emerge more strongly than the values and choices rooted in the faith. Materialism, declining moral values, and lack of participation in the life of the Church are but some of the manifestations that faith is taken for granted. Although this problem also exists in our country to a certain extent, there is an undeniable disparity between the fervor of those who live in persecution and those who can freely express their faith.

With my eyes and heart opened to these two different realities, I questioned myself. How can I be an evangelizer to people whose hearts have grown numb to the longing for God, and to the thirst for the truths of faith? How I can be an evangelizer to the people who possess and enjoy the freedom

to live and exercise their faith and yet also bound by the potentially debilitating ephemeral and worldly values? How can I be an evangelizer to the people who are thirsting for full religious freedom? How can I be an evangelizer to these people who constantly live by the threat to their lives and freedom? Indeed, new evangelization is a great challenge. It calls us to go, expose ourselves and listen to the reality where we are called to give the people the chance to hear the Gospel of love, peace and forgiveness. People in many places don't have the opportunity to hear the Gospel while others need to live the Gospel with renewed fervor and commitment.



Families and Relatives of our Vietnamese Aspirants

Mo. Caterina, our foundress said, **“Our only desire is to love Jesus and to let Him be loved by all men.”** Thus, we try to live up to the challenges posed by this evangelical ideal moved by the desire to bring all men to loving relationship and communion with the loving and compassionate God.



MSBS Aspirants

The New Evangelization calls for particular attention to the inculturation of the faith that can transmit the Gospel in its capacity to value what is positive in every culture, at the same time, purifying it from elements that are contrary to the full realization of the person according to the design of God revealed in Christ.

Final Proposition of the Synod on the New Evangelization, 5

NEW EVANGELIZATION AND RECONCILIATION



Flag of Indonesia

Called to be Agents of Peace and Reconciliation

by Sr. Ermelinda Bhiju, MSBS



Flag of East Timor

“God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him. God looked at everything he had made, and he found it very good.” (Genesis 1:27, 31)

When God created us, He created us in his image and likeness. This is the basis of our human dignity, the dignity that deserves respect at all cost. Man has a rightful claim to what enhances and safeguards his dignity and that includes the right to live in peace and enjoy his right and freedom. But peace and freedom sometimes demand a costly payment.

An Indonesian priest shared with us the struggle of people in East Timor. He was assigned in East Timor from 1998 to 2005, the time of tension and war. Preaching about peace, he stated that peace does not mean the absence of war and he related to us the tension between Indonesians and East Timorese as the latter fought for independence. He said that war has ceased but there's a patent need for reconciliation. This awakened my interest on the issues and the story of our country. I got in touch with the struggles, sacrifices, hope and faith of the East Timorese people who fought for their rights even at the cost of their lives. I did not know much about this when I was in Indonesia. I knew that our country had a war against East Timor but I was not aware of the consequences

on the lives of people there and the suffering it inflicted on innocent people. Discovering about the brutal and cruel treatment the East Timorese suffered in the hands of Indonesia's Militia, I felt sadness, guilt and insecurity. I am not against my country. But I felt the suffering of our brothers and sisters. They suffered. They were oppressed and burdened for an ignoble end. Yes, the war and fighting are over. However, the experience of East Timorese speaks of the need for reconciliation - reconciliation among the East Timor people, reconciliation between East Timor and Indonesia and the reconciliation among the political parties. Families and peoples suffer the consequences of war. The tension lingers in the hearts of those who are not yet healed from the scourge of war, violence and hatred. There is no more war but the wound inflicted by that war is not yet completely healed in the hearts and mind of people. Reconciliation needs to come from within. As a predominantly Catholic country, the Church in East Timor has an important role to play in achieving peace and reconciliation. The Catholic faith in Christ, the Prince of Peace and His message of love and forgiveness can lead and encourage the faithful of the Church in East Timor to foster peace and to collaborate in achieving genuine and lasting peace and reconciliation. As brothers and sisters in Christ, let us pray for our country and for East Timor that peace, love and forgiveness may reign in everyone's heart.

Cardinal Antonio “Chito” Tagle said on the last day of the Philippine Conference on New Evangelization, *“Let us purify our memories; the memory of anger, prejudices and hatred. Let us purify our minds and hearts, and love one another.”* To be agents of peace and thus, of new evangelization, each of us is called to reconcile with ourselves and to work towards emotional and spiritual healing. It is only when we have reconciled with ourselves that we can transcend the borders of our own world and genuinely commit to promotion of peace and reconciliation in the society and in the Church.



MSBS Indonesian Sisters with Fr. Niko Ilan, CMF



God-Man on the Cross

by Sr. Melanie Reyes, MSBS

My heart sought for answers,
“Where does my journey lead me?”
My heart yearned for meaning,
“Is my life worth anything?”

On a rough, wooden Cross,
The lifeless God-Man suspends,
Who, for love, surrendered His will,
To the Plan of His heavenly Father.

With eyes fixed on the Cross,
And the Man’s tortured flesh,
My cup of love brimmed over,
With His gaze of love and tenderness.

Touched by His gracious outpouring,
My heart ceased yearning and asking,
‘Coz it has found what life is for
On the God-Man on the Cross.

Education is a constitutive dimension of evangelization. To proclaim the Risen Jesus Christ is to accompany all human beings in their personal story, in their development and in their spiritual vocation.

Final Proposition of the Synod on the New Evangelization, 27

Little Apostles of Mission

by Sr. Melanie Vego, MSBS



Members of HCA offer their little contribution to the mission

For the month of October, our community in Mindoro organized and facilitated activities in celebration of the Mission Month. We had village Rosary with Holy Childhood Association (HCA) members to awaken in them the awareness that October is the month of Holy Rosary and month of the mission. To inculcate in them the spirit of solidarity, we offered prayers for all missionaries and for the earthquake victims in Bohol and Cebu.

In celebration of the World Mission Day, the members of the Holy Childhood Association (HCA), Propagation of the Faith (PFA) and the students of Mother Caterina School participated in the activities prepared for them. These activities aimed to deepen their awareness of

The mission of the church is every Christian's task and responsibility. We have to partake in the mission of evangelization of the church; *"that the precious gift of the Gospel may be offered to all* (World Mission Day 2013 Theme)." Intimate knowledge of and faith in Christ should be established in all people. Forming this missionary awareness and fervor in the Church requires us to turn our eyes to the young ones who build the Church now and in the future. As plants grow from a seed rooted in good soil, so we must cultivate the soil of the children's consciousness that they may bear fine fruits. It is our responsibility as adult Christians to mold them and to engage them in activities that will deepen their knowledge and faith in God and to awaken the missionary spirit in them. For they will become bearers of God's light into their families, friends and probably to the whole world.



their being missionaries and to deepen their involvement in the initiatives of the Mother Church for their missionary formation. Selected members of the HCA and PFA shared about the World Mission Sunday and the Missionary Rosary on-air in the FM station (Spirit FM) owned by the Vicariate of San Jose, Occidental Mindoro. The children participated with their whole heart as they prayed for the needs of the Mother Church especially for the missionary activities of the church and for all the missionaries in different parts of the world. We also presented the life of St. Therese of the Child Jesus and of St. Francis Xavier, the Patrons of Mission that the children may love and be inspired by the examples of these saints.



Members of Propaganda Fide and Holy Childhood share their knowledge of the missions on-air

Our beloved foundress, Mother Caterina Zecchini, believed that all Christians have the responsibility to contribute in every possible ways to the missionary activities of the universal Church. To commemorate her entrance into heaven, the theme chosen for the celebration was ***“Madre Caterina Zecchini: Apostol ng Misyon.”*** The pupils and teachers of our school made a presentation of her life. The story of her life, initiatives, and her passion to bring to all men the love of God through spiritual and material support and to live a life of mission speaks of the urgency of the mission and how one can be part of it.

By these activities, the children are formed in faith and missionary awareness. Indeed, the education of the young is a task of evangelization. It plays a significant role in transforming the lives of these children, letting them know that in spite of their littleness they can be a great influence in our world today. They can be missionaries who bring the Gospel of Christ to all, giving their lives with infinite love, passion and enthusiasm for the mission. But even in the present they can be little apostles of Mission; joyfully rendering the spiritual and material help they can offer and solicit, for the good of souls and the glory of God. By their prayers and active participation in the life of the Church, they can indeed become the little apostles of Mission.



Most Rev. Bishop Antonio Palang, SVD, DD with members of HCA, pupils of MCS and MSBS Sisters in Mindoro

People are able to evangelize only when they have been evangelized and allow themselves to be evangelized, that is, renewed spiritually through a personal encounter and lived communion with Jesus Christ.

Lineamenta for the Synod on the New Evangelization, 22

✠ *The Tender Shepherd* ✠

by Nov. Rimoe Benedetta, MSBS



The author after her Baptism and First Communion Ceremony

I grew up in a pagan society. My family and all my relatives are pagans. As pagans, we do not pray often but we offer animal sacrifices twice a year to appease the spirits. We do not worry for the next life since we do not believe in it. What matters to us is to work for food and material goods, and enjoy life on earth. I was about ten years old when famine struck our village. I was sent to a convent not so far from

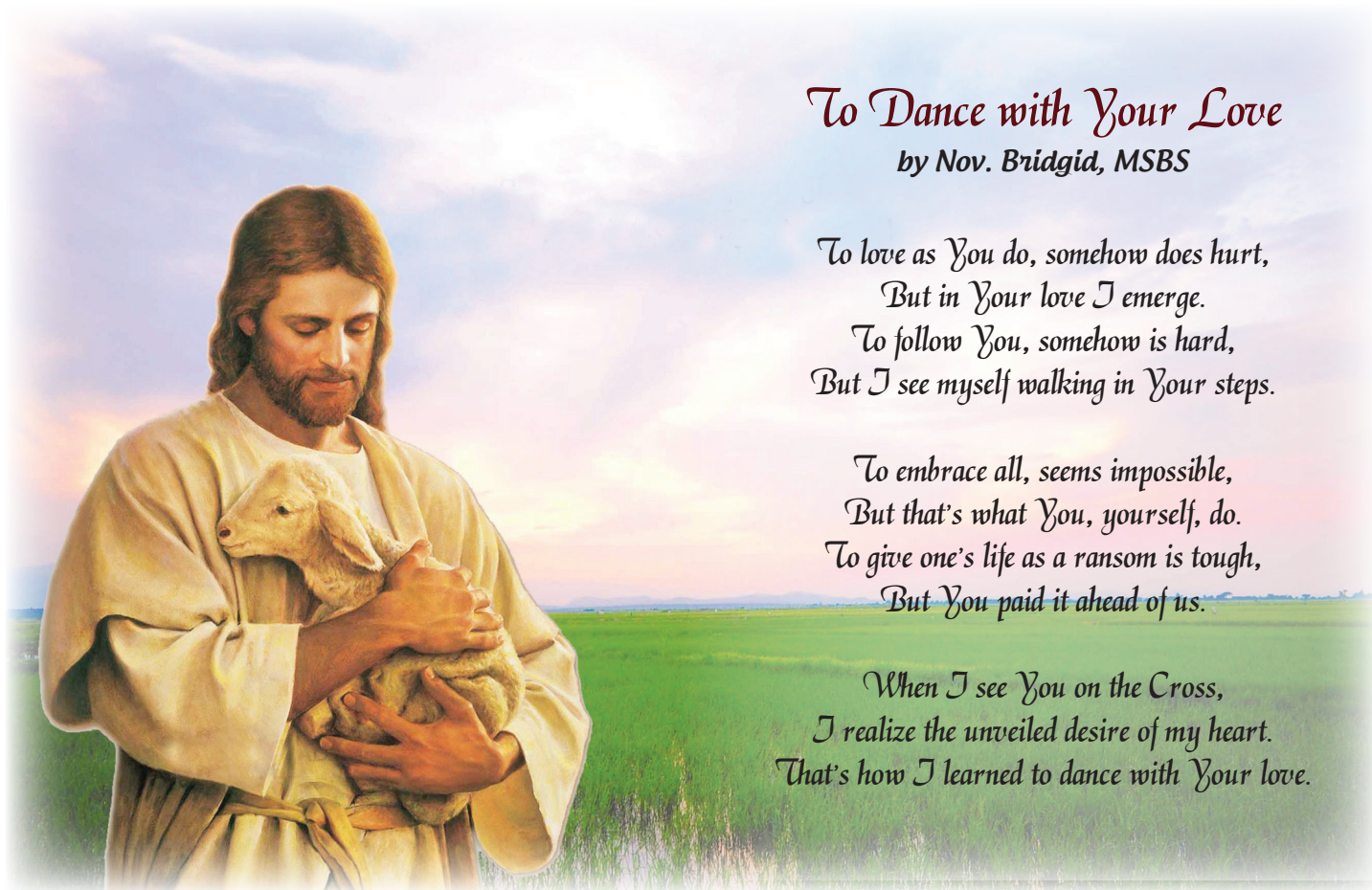
my place. There was a kind and loving Italian priest who allowed us to stay and study there. It was in that convent that I came to know that there is a God who created me and all that exist. I was told that we have a soul and there is life after death. This truth that was presented to me paved the way for more inquiries. Who is God? Who am I? Where will my soul be when I die? A Catholic friend told me, "If you do not become a Christian, you will go to hell when you die." Hearing the description of hell as a place of fire and evil, I was greatly terrified. I couldn't think of what I could do to avoid hell so I tagged along with her. "Tell me about God. Teach me how to pray. Tell me what I must do." These were my constant plea to her. Impelled by curiosity, I attended Holy Mass with them every morning, without comprehension though. I couldn't understand why they ate the Body of God. I was even confounded by the mystery of God dying on the cross. I was also struck by the charitable acts of the Catholics with whom I stayed then. They welcomed the poor in their midst, and did not discriminate against the non-Christians. They lived simply, and in union with their God. Through their witnessing, I learned to relate with God and to entrust myself to His protection and found deep peace and joy in attending Holy Mass and adoration, and praying the rosary. As years passed by, Christian faith took root in me. I used to believe that my parents were my creator, but faith helped me realize that God has fashioned me through them. With my new-found faith, my desire to become a Christian grew stronger each day not anymore because of fear of hell but moved by the desire to be a child of God, my Creator. My heart was filled with the desire to be baptized and so to belong to the Church. So, whenever I had a chance to visit home, I asked my parents' permission to be baptized. Since they did not know anything about Christian Faith, they couldn't understand me, and refused to give their consent. They ignored my appeal but I did not give up. Due to my persistence, my father finally gave his permission. However, I still had to secure the approval of the head of our village. After long years, I was given permission to profess my faith on one true God. On a cold day of December, the day our Lord Jesus Christ was born, I, together



with twenty-eight others, were born in the Church of God.

When I look back at this part of my life's story, the tenderness and love of the Shepherd glows brightly. In His mysterious and rather original ways, He seeks for those out of His loving fold and brings them back to the safety of His guidance and compassion. I, who once lived in the "darkness" of paganism, was led into His truth and marvelous light. I did not know Him, but even then, He searched for me and willed that I may join the fold that takes repose in the safety of His love and presence. Now, as a novice, the journey of

formation helped me find in these experiences, a God who is a tender and compassionate Shepherd.



To Dance with Your Love

by Nov. Bridgid, MSBS

*To love as You do, somehow does hurt,
But in Your love I emerge.*

*To follow You, somehow is hard,
But I see myself walking in Your steps.*

*To embrace all, seems impossible,
But that's what You, yourself, do.
To give one's life as a ransom is tough,
But You paid it ahead of us.*

*When I see You on the Cross,
I realize the unveiled desire of my heart.
That's how I learned to dance with Your love.*

The Cross and The Crown

by Nov. Christina, MSBS

What is my portrait of Jesus? This is the question I pondered on in one of our modular classes in the Novitiate. In my stillness, the first time I attended Mass replayed in my memory. I was 5 years old then. As I stood on the main door of the Church, I saw an image of Jesus on the cross in the middle of the Sanctuary. Frightened, I asked the Sister who accompanied me, who that man was. Why does He have blood on His head? The Sister's answer was, "He is Jesus. He is God and He loves all of us especially children like you. He suffered for our sins." As an innocent child, I didn't know God. The only thing I knew was that Jesus loves us and He despises sin but seeing His cross, I learned to call Him "Jesus," and His image on the cross remained in my heart.

The Crucified God is my first portrait of Jesus. As I matured, my portrait of Jesus changed because of my life's experiences. But the image of the Crucified Christ left a much more profound impression on my captivated heart more than any other images. The Crucifix reminds me of the extent and depth of Jesus' love for me, and of my call to love others in return. Jesus, the suffering and glorified One will never change because I believe that suffering and rejoicing is constitutive of man's life story. I, myself, endure pain, suffering, brokenness but my Christian faith helps me find beauty in this suffering. In the Gospel of Mark 15:39, the centurion, who stood at the foot of the cross when Jesus breathed his last, said *"Truly this man was the Son of God."* On the Cross, Jesus' Divine Sonship was affirmed. Jesus was recognized as the Son of God not in His many miracles but on the cross. Indeed, without agony there will be no glory. The cross and the crown are one and inseparable.



In our world today, I see the Crucified God in our poor brothers and sisters who are crucified on the cross of hunger, poverty, social injustices and other afflictions. They bear the cross of our indifference, of our failure to see Jesus in their faces. For indeed, if we can only see God in everyone, there will not be much poverty but an overflow of love and compassion. Jesus said, "If you do good to the least, you do it for me." He portrays Himself in the brokenness and woundedness of man and in each one of us. So, I questioned myself. How can I help people see God in every person? It is through my living witness of life, love for others and recognizing His face in them. To see God in persons is not easy especially when that person doesn't suit my liking but this is the commitment of all Christians. *"Love your neighbor."* How can I show my love for my neighbor? It is through forgiveness, the pinnacle and the core of love.

The realizations and experiences of a loving and self-emptying God through the formation I receive help me to reclaim the portrait of Jesus and to radiate His face to others through prayers, works and sacrifices for the evangelizing mission of the Church. I am grateful to my community, formators and superiors who guide and accompany us in discovering and experiencing God and to the persons who taught us that the deeper the sorrow cuts into our lives, the deeper the joy we can experience. Lastly, I thank Jesus for teaching and showing us that the cross is part of our lives but behind that cross, a crown awaits us.

*Jesus, every time we lift our gaze on Your Cross,
grant us the grace to love others as You love us until death on the Cross.*



✠ Faith Blooming in the Wilderness ✠

by Nov. Pasqualina, MSBS

My faith bloomed in the wilderness. I was born in a pagan family but through God's grace, I came to know and love Jesus. When I was a child, I lived with my aunt and uncle who were Catholics. They encouraged me to attend catechism classes and Holy Mass twice on Sundays. Through them, the Christian faith was planted in my heart, and by their example, they instilled in me the value of prayer. In that place, I observed how the students in the convent would wake up early morning to pray and would end their day with prayer. Their constant seeking for communion with God touched me and awakened my desire for prayer. An event in my life as a child strengthened my faith and desire for prayer. I had been suffering from bronchitis. So, believing in a God witnessed to by the persons around me, I turned to Him for healing and he heard my petition. Without taking any medication, I completely recovered.

However, my faith was also put to a test. I encountered difficulties, temptations, trials and opposition because of my faith, faith expressed in my desire to pray and nurture my relationship with Jesus. When I was old enough to work in the farm, prayer and my daily participation in the Mass got me in trouble with my family. Everyday I was late for the work and scurried home early to attend the evening prayer. This infuriated my father. He questioned the purpose of my praying in the morning and in the evening. No word came out of my mouth. I listened to his words patiently. I continued going for prayer but not without fear. I secretly left the house. Whenever I found him at home after I attended the Mass, he greeted me with the question on the meaning of what I do or if prayer can fill my stomach. He repeatedly asked me these questions but I didn't care. He eventually got tired of questioning my faith and desire and kept quiet while silently eyeing all my actions. He urged my mother to stop me from going to Mass, and to instruct me to proceed to the farm early since I was not a Christian yet. His words hit me with pain. I was not a Christian by name and baptism, but in spirit I belonged to the Catholic Church. I desired to possess Jesus sacramentally in my soul. So for the first time, I begged for their consent but while my mother approved of it, my father didn't. They ignored my request because I was still young and he believed that I did not know much about Christian life. Every year I pleaded with him but he was unyielding. The years lived in firm faith and hope rewarded me with the permission of my parents. Two days before my baptism, a big problem came up. A young lady, who was baptized in her adolescence, became a Buddhist convert and got



The author with her relatives in Myanmar

married to a Buddhist. This made the priests and catechumens worried because this might also happen to me. They summoned and tested me again. They expressed their plan to discontinue my baptism, and advised me to think carefully. Their words made me feel like I was going to lose Jesus whom I longed to possess in my heart since I was young. So I replied, “Now is the day the Lord calls me to belong to the Christian community and He wishes to dwell in my heart.” In God’s name, I promised that I will never give up my Christian faith. The priest saw my deep faith and strong desire to become a Christian and so allowed me to receive the sacrament of Baptism and Eucharist.



The author with her formator and co-novices

In the middle of the wilderness, the seed of faith grew and bloomed almost miraculously. Recalling my story of conversion, I realized how God tested my faith and desire. But as He tested me, He was there all along with me.

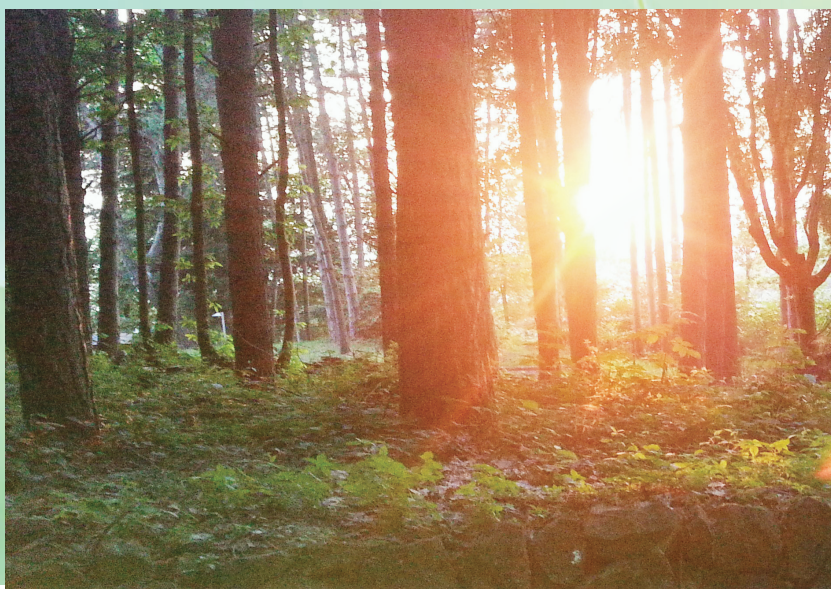
The faith and conviction that He is present with me has become my strength and inspiration.



God’s Loving Protection through Mother Mary

by Sr. Susan Oroza, MSBS

Last June, I had the opportunity of visiting my home in a small village in the mountain of Mindoro. I brought with me rosaries and other religious articles. Many of the mothers in our village wanted to receive these gifts for their children but I couldn’t provide for all of them. One mother came late and told me “I also want a rosary.” I just smiled at her because I kept some rosaries which are already reserved for others. I didn’t have one for her. But I asked her,



“Why do you need a rosary?” And she told me, “Sister, if I wear rosary or if I have rosary in my pocket, I feel safe because I know I have a companion even if I’m alone.” Her response brought joy to me and I granted her request. While putting the rosary around her neck, she said, “May the Lord be my guide in my journey.”

My fellow Mangyan, who did not know much about faith, taught me something: that is, to trust in God’s protection through Mother Mary.

✠ *Encounter with a Buddhist Monk* ✠

by Sr. Goretti Jury and Sr. Jacinta May Sweet, MSBS

Our Christian faith teaches us that God reveals Himself in many ways. He reveals Himself even in other religious traditions and this is what we are called to discover as we keep our hearts open for an encounter and dialogue with the people of different religions. As Pope Francis said, “Every Christian is called to go out to encounter others, to dialogue with those who do not think the way we do, with those who have another faith, or who don’t have faith.”



MSBS Sisters with Buddhist Monks in Myanmar

Coming back from a home vacation in Myanmar, we travelled with a young Buddhist monk who brought with him nothing except for the clothes on his body. While having lunch, he came to us begging for food. We were caught by surprise for he chose to come to our table though there were Buddhist travellers. We were also happy because a Buddhist monk like him didn’t hesitate to approach us, religious sisters. We offered him food and we sat together. Then with a very gentle, soft and calm tone he asked us to join him in praying as we hold and lift up together the plate of food that we offered

and said the prayer after him. He prayed for us who offered him food, for the creation, and all the departed ones that they may have good life as they are reincarnated. We appreciated their beautiful and universal meal prayer, and the lifting up of the plate, which shows the gratitude for the blessings they have received. After his long prayer, we made the sign of the Cross and prayed our prayer before meals. We introduced ourselves to him as Roman Catholic nuns and asked him some questions. Whenever he responded, he would stop eating, gently put down the spoon and fork then spoke with a soft tone without looking at us. For Buddhists, their attention must be fixed on the bowl while eating, their gaze must always be low when sitting and going to inhabited areas and they must speak in a soft voice. He used two languages; one was Pali, which is sacred for Buddhists and the other was Burmese. We’ve heard this Pali only in their prayer, Burmese people couldn’t understand this except those who lived in monasteries. Monks usually go barefoot, begging for food everyday and they eat only what they receive and do a lot of sacrifices and meditations. They beg with the intention of offering merit for humankind and so help them attain good life.

Our encounter with this monk proved that indeed, there is beauty in each religion. Though we have differences, we are united in the sense that we both aspire for the good of all. By bringing nothing with him, he exemplified faith and trust in the Providence of God. Recalling our encounter with him, we realized that it was a moment of faith-sharing. It was a moment of grace for us because through this encounter, we encountered God and experienced His goodness, goodness that He planted even in other religions.

This encounter also challenged us to listen to, and speak the language of God: the language of love, faithfulness and respect in accord with our identity as Christians, religious and missionaries, to trust in God, to be zealous in sharing our faith, and appreciate other faiths.



MSBS Sisters with Buddhist Monk in Myanmar

“Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers,
and if he does listen to teacher, it is because they are witnesses.”

Evangelii Nuntiandi, 41

LIVING WITNESSES OF FIDELITY

by Nov. Mary Soe, MSBS

In the journey of faith, we come across people who have been and are living witnesses of fidelity to Christ and His Church. In my journey of formation, I’ve seen living witnesses of fidelity in the persons of the three aged priests who continue serve God in the ways they can and to the extent of the best of their ability. Fr. Peter Kramer, O Carm., Fr. Lorenzo Carraro, MCCJ and Fr. Nick Echeverria, OSA are the three missionary priests who have contributed to my spiritual growth.

Fr. Peter is a Dutch Carmelite priest who regularly celebrated the Eucharist in our community for some years before he went back to the Netherlands, his homeland. I was impressed by his passion and energy in serving the Church. He has served the Philippine Church for more than forty years. He was filled with life as he proclaimed the Word of God to us every Eucharistic celebration. He is ninety-one years old but despite his old age, he remained active and enthusiastic in sharing Christ to us through the Word of God and the Holy Eucharist. His simplicity, eagerness and faithfulness made us feel the presence of Christ in him. By his faithfulness to his priestly and missionary vocation, he inspired us to nurture our faith and vocation and to be zealous missionaries of the Church.



Fr. Peter Kramer

Fr. Lorenzo Carraro is an Italian Comboni priest who comes to teach us the Psalms and the history of the Church. He is an exuberant missionary who has been to many places and was assigned in Africa for a long time and is a teacher par excellence. He shared with us the stories of his life and the richness of his experiences in the mission field along with the wisdom and insights he had gained from them.



Fr. Lorenzo Carraro

He passionately imparts to us the wisdom he has gained all through the course of his missionary journey. He has endured a severe illness but it did not deter his enthusiasm for mission. What he passes on to us are the joy and sense of wonder at the miracles of life, of our faith, of the Church and of mission. Through his magnificent writing, I sense the dynamic seed of faith and love that he sows in the hearts of people.

Fr. Nick Echeverria is a Filipino Augustinian priest who administers the Sacrament of Penance to our Filipina sisters. I've met him several times and I was impressed by his humility, simplicity and piety. He is suffering from an illness but I saw a kind of serenity and joy. Despite the pain and discomforts that he is experiencing, his radiant smile speaks of the serenity within his heart. With his musical compositions, he conveys God's message to the hearts of all who hear his songs.



Fr. Nick Echeverria

Recalling the services they have rendered to the people and to the Church and their faithfulness to their vocation leads me to praise and thank God. The courageous fidelity of so many priests and missionaries who amidst difficulties and trials remain faithful to their vocation as “Friends of Christ” is a testimony of God's enduring and abounding grace in the Church. Encountering them is a great blessing because they inspire me to be a sharer, to be another Christ and a gift for others in my daily life. By their faithfulness and joy in serving Him, they have become living witnesses of faith in God, who is ever present in us and with us. Their joyful and passionate testimony to the love of God is an effective proclamation of the authenticity and relevance of the Gospel of Christ.

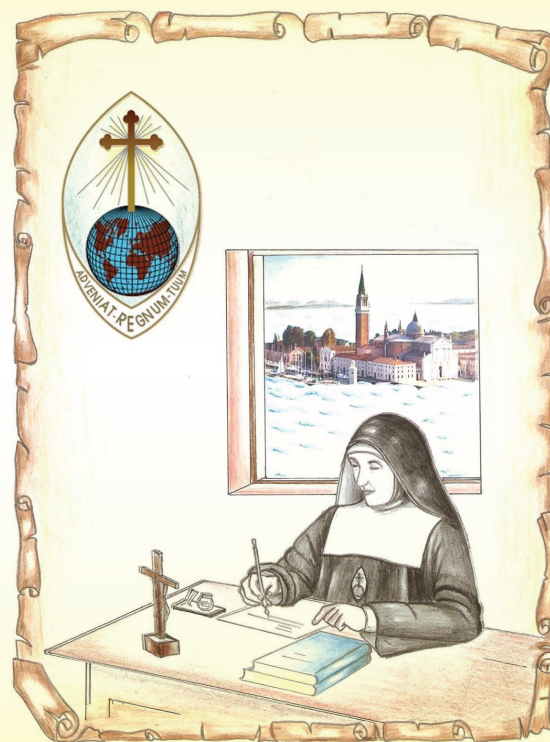


“Behold, I Make All Things New!” (Revelation 21:5)

by Sr. Ermelinda Bhiju, MSBS

Writing and re-reading the Cronaca or chronicles of the important events in the life of our Congregation, this Scriptural passage came to my mind. Indeed, our history as a Congregation speaks of a God who is making all things new. Recalling and re-reading the accounts of events and experiences that make up our history helped me realize how God makes all things new and thus, renews the face of the earth. His transforming presence radiates in the significant events and celebration of the Congregation.

In the light of faith, let us read the history of our Church in this present time, the history of our faith, and the history of God in our personal life. **“Behold, I make all things new.”** May we see Him who manifests Himself in our history, where a loving and merciful God journeys with us.



FAMILY FOR THE MISSION

Our Life's Metamorphosis

by Maria Marjorie V. Sales



Members of the Family For the Mission

Our family life is far from being perfect. Conflicts arise due to our individual differences. In addition to this, I was not involved in other spiritual activities. My day was spent on work and household chores. I spent my energy on these and forgot to nurture my spiritual life. I even did not attend Mass on Sundays.

But since my kids study in a Catholic school, they were exposed to the different activities that aim to enhance their spiritual life. We, parents, also participated and became involved in their activities. With this, the Association of the “**Family for the Mission**” was introduced to us.

This association was initiated by Sr. Luciana Lucatello. Its aim is to promote and animate missionary vocation in the family. Inspired by Mo. Caterina, the foundress of MSBS who had also encouraged people to support the mission of the Church through prayer and material aid, Sr. Luciana gathered families who were willing to offer an hour of prayer every month for the mission.

Upon knowing its noble intention, we signed up in the association. This led to a great transformation in our family life. The MSBS sisters gave us formative seminar on parenting, which really helped me to know more about myself and to understand my growing kids. My husband and I noticed that we seldom had conflicts since then. It is because of our greater awareness of each other's strengths and weaknesses. This also transformed us into more active and committed participants and collaborators in the Church's mission and activities. My husband, kids and I are members of a choir group in Magbay. My husband also plans to be a lay minister. We join the living rosary, attend regularly the Mass, and join other activities with the aim of helping other people. As members of the Family for the Mission, we receive a monthly guide for prayer. In this Year of Faith, the guide led us into knowing and rediscovering the beauty of faith. The Scriptural reading and the points for reflection contained in it contributed to our growth as a family. It helped us appreciate family as a gift and a responsibility. Illumined by the light of the Word of God and by our faith, we are guided in confronting our problems and difficulties. Our relationship as a family was strengthened and along with it, we



Members of Family for the Mission

grow in our relationship with God. Offering our prayers for the Church and the Mission, our eyes were opened to the realities of others, to their needs and struggles.

As members of the Family for the Mission, each member of our family seeks to participate and contribute to the Mission of the Church: Mission that has the love of Christ as the foundation.



Family Life for the Church and Her Mission

by Jay Bernie Sales



Our family went through trials and difficulties, which seemed like horrible worms threatening to sever the bond of love that unites us.

We aspired to stand on our own but we didn't have enough financial resources. We lived in the house of our parents. Our situation became rather stifling. We felt like caterpillars trapped in the cocoon.

We were in this situation when the Family for the Mission came into our life. This association gradually introduced us to the beauty of a life spent for the service to the Church and the mission. Concomitant with the discovery of our "inner selves"; a discovery made in the light of faith, we saw the true color and meaning of life. At present, our family serves as choir in the church in Magbay. As for myself, I am just waiting for the scheduled seminar for lay ministers.

By God's grace, the trials we've gone through formed us into His resilient and fascinating creatures.

❧ MISSIONARY SERVANTS OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT IN ASIA ❧

The Missionary Servants of the Blessed Sacrament is an international Congregation founded in Venice, Italy on May 31, 1923 by Mo. Caterina Zecchini, and is present in Italy, Colombia and Philippines. Our community in Philippines started in 1992, ushered in by two MSBS Italian missionaries, Sr. Rosa Viscovich and Sr. Rosanna Favero. Its twenty years of existence here brought forth a rich apostolate in the field of mission animation and cooperation and in human promotion. It was also blessed by vocations from Philippines, Myanmar, Indonesia and Vietnam and so has become a place of formation, and of dialogue of faith and culture whereby each one is strengthened to be a mission animator and cooperator and where each one becomes one in desire to make the Kingdom of God present everywhere.

✠ “Go and Make Disciples of All Nations.” ✠

(Matthew 28:19)

by Post. Amelita Cadiao, MSBS



Participants of WYD Rio2Cubao

Drums beating wildly, musical tempo of samba soars in the air. To this upbeat tune, we, young people moved with fantastic energy and enthusiasm and with that, the celebration of WYDRio2Cubao, the local celebration of World Youth Day in the Diocese of Cubao kicked off.

“Go and make disciples of all nations.” This was the theme of the celebration. These words are addressed to us, too. I dare say, we, the young people of this world are the beacon of hope for the Church because our vivacity and creativity have so much to contribute to our growth as a Church, as people who

have received and believe in the Gospel. Some experiences during the celebration gave me a glimpse of that hope.

Wearing our youthful and vibrant joy, we went on a pilgrim walk to the venue, proclaiming and carrying the faith with us in every step of that “pilgrimage.” The torch of passion and life within us was expressed in our firm step, loud prayers and occasional cheers. It glowed all over our joyful faces. The sight of other young people eager to have spiritual conversation and counseling with nuns and seminarians and to avail of the Sacrament of Confession, made my heart leap for great joy. It manifested a deep longing for someone who will listen, a deep longing for reconciliation with God, for words of wisdom that will lead one to the profound meaning of life and to the answer to their deepest longings. More so, the lively and touching portrayal of the Station of the Cross gave me hope that the young people who witnessed this would be able to feel and experience the depth of God’s love for each of His children. I hoped that this would be an experience of the deep mystery of God who suffered, died and conquered death for us because only in this encounter will we be able to realize our real dignity and the real meaning of our lives: dignity and meaning which do not reside on the material possessions or temporal values offered by this world.

The Passion and Death of Christ seems a tragic event but His resurrection transformed this tragedy of sin to victory of unconditional and self-emptying love. The life and love of Jesus Christ is our hope even today. The world’s consumeristic and hedonistic culture seeps into the consciousness of the most vulnerable, the youth. But in the seemingly dismal view of the world, we, together with the Church continue to dream and hope in Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life.



The mandate to go and make disciples of nations comes from Jesus. He, the author and content of the Gospel, will not abandon His messengers. **“Do not be afraid and walk together as a Church,”** said Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI. Many of us do not appreciate our worth and capacity to be evangelizers, but the glaring truth is that we can do something for the glorification of God. Much energy, much creativity, all these ought to flow freely to the love and service of God and others and not to useless and dehumanizing enterprise. Pope Francis challenges us too **“to make a mess, take a stand and take part in the transformation of the society.”** From being voiceless and **“invisible”** members of the Church, there is hope that we may all become active collaborators and participants in the life of the Church.

With this hope, let us move forward in Jesus’ command, **“Go and make disciples of all nations.”** May this glimpse of hope be a gaze to a brighter renewal of faith among the youth and renewal in the society and in the Church.

In the New Evangelization, the youth are not only the future but also the present (and gift) in the Church. They are not only the recipients but also agents of evangelization, especially with their peers.

Final Proposition of the Synod on the New Evangelization, 51



“To Pass on the Flame of Love”

by Sr. Naw May Phaw, MSBS

Once, while having the Living Rosary in our parish on the vigil of the feast of the Virgin Mary’s birth, I was struck by the gesture of passing on the lighted candle after each Hail Mary. I realized that like her, who passed on the flame of love and faith in her heart to others, we too must let Jesus dwell in our hearts and so pass the burning fire of His love to others.

Upon knowing that the Son of God dwells in her womb, Mother Mary shared the Good News to her cousin Elizabeth and sang her song of praise proclaiming the Good News that she has received. As I myself received the Good News, her song of praise challenges me to keep alive my love for Jesus and share it in the ways I can. It inspired in me the hope that every one will also praise and sing the greatness and glory of our Lord.

☪ You are My Witnesses! ☪

by Sr. Emi Soe, MSBS



"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

These are the sending words of Jesus to His disciples. It is a mission that goes with the assurance of the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. This is the same mission and assurance that I hold on to as I live my consecration to Him. *"You will be my witnesses,"* He said. My mission as religious is to make the presence of Christ felt, touched and seen in the world by faithfully living out the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience in the spirit of our charism.

Religious life is not a renunciation of the world but a call to deeper immersion into the world as radical disciples of Jesus. As Christians we are all called to live these values in our everyday life but as a consecrated, I am called to a radical commitment to these values.



The journey of formation led me to a renewed view of the vows. As I journeyed, I realized that the vow of poverty is not so much about sacrificing or depriving myself of wealth and property. As MSBS, it is not just living a simple life. It is a spiritual attitude of total dependence on God. To be poor means to live soberly in a society that cries out for social justice and peace, and for those who labor in mission field.

"The consecrated woman is a mother not a spinster," Pope Francis said. This made me appreciate chastity even more not as a renunciation of motherhood but as a greater availability to love God in people with the warmth and intensity of a mother's love. This call to spiritual motherhood invites me to cross boundaries of race, culture and belief to reach out to others. More so, it is an invitation to nurture friendship and communion with the people I encounter in my daily life.

Obedience, on the other hand, is not a submission of my freedom but a submission of



Renewal of Vows

myself in freedom. It is to listen attentively, to open my ears, and to heed the voice of the Beloved in the core of my heart and in other persons. Obedience also teaches me patience and creativity in proclaiming the Gospel to other people, and instills the spirit of service in me.

My discovery and appreciation of the consecrated life and evangelical counsels are not enough. Everyday, I have to rediscover, live and love it, convinced that through this I express my love for Him and take part in the work of proclaiming His Gospel to people. As I strive to be faithful to Christ through these vows, meaningfully and prophetically living it in my present context and situation, I respond to the task that Christ has entrusted to all His disciples, to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth. I respond to this challenge and call assured that the Holy Spirit will guide and strengthen me.



GO AND TELL THE WORLD THIS GOOD NEWS

by Nov. Elizabeth Moe Wai Phu, MSBS

"You are my beloved, go; tell the world this Good News."

These words echoed in my mind and heart at the closing of the Philippine Conference on New Evangelization (PCNE). This conference was convened by Manila Archbishop Luis Antonio G. Cardinal Tagle on October 16-18, 2013. The experiences I had during the conference were marvelous. I felt God's grace all through the activities, celebrations and experiences and it made me feel that I, myself, was re-evangelized.

The conference was an encounter with God, an encounter with the God who tells his people, "You are my beloved." Each experience led me to rediscover and experience anew the love and presence of God in our midst as a people and as a Church. On the first day, I was led to encounter Him through dances. Indeed, our senses are the channels by which we experience God and the Divine life. Blessed with the presence of the persons with disabilities, I appreciated this all the more as I watched them participate actively in the conference. During the liturgical celebrations, the deaf and mute praised God through gestures. They are deprived of the sense of hearing but their heart and other senses perceived and experienced His love and so despite their disabilities, they praised and glorified Him through their actions. The life and



Cardinal Tagle delivers the homily in the opening celebration of PCNE

passion expressed in their gestures challenged me to praise God with my whole heart, body and soul. Ms. Charito Manglapus, born with cerebral palsy, experienced and acknowledged God's blessings in the midst of pain through the love of her foster family. Instead of wallowing in self pity, through His grace, she resolved to do something good for the people around her. *"My condition is not a liability; it is a challenge. We, persons with disabilities, can do something if we are only given the chance,"* the remarkable words she uttered with conviction. Through her, I experienced anew, life as a gift. God created us unique and unrepeatable, with different gifts and talents, a participation in His goodness.

The humility and amiability that Cardinal Tagle exudes, and his talks have helped me experience the presence of God through the Spirit that moves and inspires our leaders to be faithful and humble shepherds of the flock. His witnessing is a proclamation of the abiding presence of God in the Church.

"You are my beloved, go; tell the world this Good News." On the second day of the conference, I encountered God who invites me to radiate the light of Christian faith to the world. With dialogue and discernment, I am called to allow myself to be converted and so contribute to the transformation of the Church and society. I experience this invitation not only as a personal one but a call to the whole community, the Church. We are asked to tell the world the Good News not only as individuals but as a Church. We are called to be together. Priests, religious, laity, young and old, disabled or not, we are impelled by our encounter with the loving God to proclaim the Gospel to the world. The encounter with Him cannot but move us to share His love and let others experience His love, too. Humanity's deepest yearning is to be loved, and to belong. PCNE was an encounter with Him and this encounter calls us to listen, trust, and be stewards to one another especially to the young and the poor.

In the last day of the conference, Cardinal Tagle carried the lighted candle symbolizing the light of Christ. This was accompanied by the song which says, "Jesus, Your light is shining within us, let not my doubts nor my darkness speak to me; let my heart always welcome Your love." The light of Christ, which we experienced and encountered shines within me. I am loved by God and in that assurance and conviction, I am sent to be an evangelizer, a proclaimer of His love for all.



MSBS Sisters and Novices during PCNE

A HEART AFIRE WITH LOVE

by Sr. Melanie Reyes, MSBS

"We ask Jesus to give us the darkness and to the pagans, the light of the Truth and of the Gospel, to give us desolation and dryness, to them the purifying waves of His blood and the divine fire of His love." (Mo. Caterina Z.)

The profundity and heroism contained in these words bear testimony to the depth and intensity of the love that inflamed in the heart of Mo. Caterina. She was deeply convinced of the love of God for her and for all humanity. Raising her eyes on the Cross and adoring Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, she had a profound experience of a God who emptied Himself by dying on the Cross and by hiding beneath the Bread and Wine, in order to be a constant source of life and light to all. Her conviction and passionate love for God moved her to offer herself as a victim of God's merciful love. It impelled her to offer her whole life so that others may come to know and experience His love. As her daughter, this is what she passed on to me. Once, I felt a tinge of emptiness in praying and at that moment, her words resounded in my heart. "We ask Jesus to give us desolation and dryness, to them the purifying waves of His blood and the Divine fire of His love." With her, I uttered these words to Jesus. Her words at that moment sounded more real and meaningful to me. It was a glance at the heroic love she had for Jesus, love that is willing to suffer even darkness and desolation. At the sight of her blazing heart, she has taught me the simple way of contributing to the work of evangelization, the work of extending Jesus' divine fire of love to His people.



This same fire of love enabled her to see in humble works, little sacrifices and fervent prayers, the means of partaking in the Universal Mission of the Church. "Let us offer our works, prayers and sacrifices for the glory of God and salvation of souls," Mo. Caterina exhorted her daughters. As her daughters, we strive to treasure and live the richness of charism that God has entrusted to her loving and generous heart.

This year, we celebrated the 90th foundation anniversary of our Congregation. "How much grace and how many good inspirations," exclaimed Mo. Caterina on our twentieth foundation anniversary. Her words resound even to this time for indeed, how much grace we have received all these years! By God's grace, the heart of Mo. Caterina



Zecchini, our foundress was set afire with love for the Eucharistic God. By God's grace, she had the courage to respond to His resounding call, "The harvest is plenty but the laborers are few." Mo. Ilia, our Superior General said, "Even today, we want to continue to live in the footsteps of Mo. Caterina, in the light of the guidelines of the Church, which by being missionary in nature, does not fail to keep awake with Her teaching, the missionary spirit among the people of God." To live in the footsteps of our Foundress, set afire by the depths of God's love on the Cross and in the Eucharist, docile to the Spirit, the primary agent of mission and passionate in extending the compassion of Jesus to those who do not know and experience Him yet are ways by which we can truly express our gratitude and joy for His wonderful graces and blessings.

THE WITNESSING OF MOTHER MARY OF MANG DEN

by Post. Maria Lam Bieng Kim Hien, MSBS



At the foot of the Cross, Mother Mary stood with the beloved disciple; perhaps, quietly enduring the great pain of a mother whose innocent Son was condemned like a most notorious criminal. She accompanied the sorrowful journey of Her Son to the Cross on Calvary. Her sharing of the redemptive suffering of her Son did not end there. Since the time of the early Church up to the present, she has been a constant source of strength and hope to the Church, the Bride of her most beloved Son.

In my last visit to Vietnam, my homeland, I had the privilege of discovering how Mother Mary shares the suffering of the people. My uncle, who is a priest, accompanied us to the mountain of Mang den in Pleiku Kontum, where the image of Mary of Mang den is enshrined. There, I heard the fascinating and stirring tale of how the image was discovered.

A man, who was working on the reconstruction of the road in that place, dreamt that he will stop at a certain place. The next morning, the truck he was driving suddenly stopped. So he went down to check and there he found a statue of a woman without hands. He did not know who it was because he was a pagan. Nevertheless, he kept the statue in a safe place and went on with his job. That night, the woman talked to him in his dream. She thanked him for lifting her up from the soil, and told him, "I have been here for a long time but no one knows me yet. May I ask you the favor to inform somebody who might know me? Let me stand here so that they will come to me, and I will answer them." The next morning, the man went asking people in the area about the statue. The few Christians there recognized the statue as that of Mother Mary even though it was covered with soil, was very old, and had no hands. They prepared a place for her statue. The news spread like wildfire and those who heard it, believers and non-believers, came and prayed for blessings, and the man who found her became a Christian.

My uncle also shared with us how the people tried to reconnect the hands of the statue but they did not succeed. Perhaps, this is her way of saying that she shares the suffering of the people. She is with those who are suffering and persecuted. This helps me realize how Mary shares with our brokenness. Her heart was pierced with the lance of sorrow at the death of Her Son on the Cross. And her heart is pierced again and again as she shares our suffering as a people and as a Church.

Mother Mary of Mang den assures us of her constant presence with us. By her severed arms, she reminds us that she shares our suffering, our sorrow, our brokenness. By her sharing in the suffering of her Son and of the people, Mary, the Star of New Evangelization bids us to be a sharer in the suffering of our brethren and of the Church. This too is a way of new evangelization because in compassion and solidarity, we become an extension of the love of God to people and bearers of the good news of the Kingdom of God.



“WHAT WE NEED ESPECIALLY IN THESE TIMES ARE CREDIBLE WITNESSES WHO WITH THEIR LIFE AND ALSO WITH THE WORD RENDER THE GOSPEL VISIBLE, REAWAKEN ATTRACTION FOR JESUS CHRIST, FOR GOD’S BEAUTY.” (POPE FRANCIS)



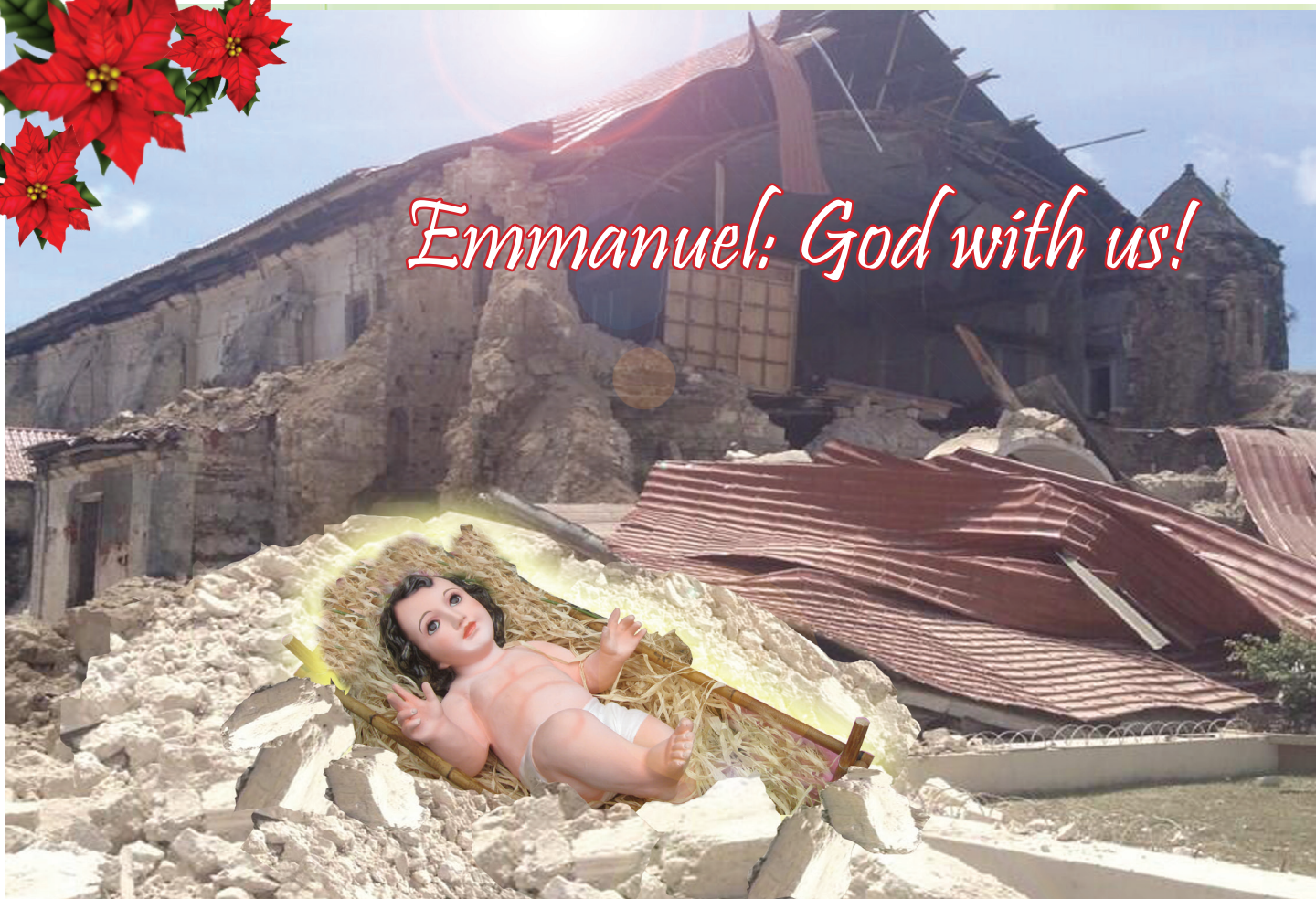
We, Missionary Servants of the Blessed Sacrament invite you to join us in the journey of religious consecration and to bear testimony to the Gospel through the life of consecration and commitment to the Mission of the Church.



*To the families, we invite you to become agents of transmission of faith, of new evangelization by joining our **Family for the Mission Association**, dedicating an hour of prayer once a month for the mission.*



*To those who feel called to be lay missionaries, we invite you to cooperate in the work of Mission Animation and Cooperation by joining our **MSBS Lay Association**.*



Emmanuel: God with us!

The Son of God "went out" of His divine condition and came to encounter us (Pope Francis).
He is the Emmanuel- the God who is present among us. By His Incarnation, he assures us of his abiding presence with us and in us. Even in the moments when hope and light seem to have deserted us, and even in the midst of devastation and ruin, our faith in Jesus Christ, the Emmanuel casts a warm and bright ray of hope in our lives.
He is with us, he shared our humanity. He shares our joys and sufferings.

Merry Christmas!



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