



May Your Kingdom Come!

MISSIONARY SERVANTS OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT IN ASIA

DECEMBER 2014

Called to Mercy and Compassion

Dear brothers and sisters, because we are all members of God's family, we are called to live lives shaped by mercy. The Lord Jesus, our Savior, is the supreme example of this; though innocent, he took our sins upon himself on the cross. To be reconciled is the very essence of our shared identity as followers of Jesus Christ.

I am grateful for this meeting. And please pray for me, so that the eyes of my heart will always clearly see the path of merciful love, and that God will grant me the courage to persevere on this path for the good of all children and young people. Jesus comes forth from an unjust trial, from a cruel interrogation and he looks in the eyes of Peter, and Peter weeps. We ask that he look at us and that we allow ourselves to be looked upon and to weep and that he give us the grace to be ashamed, so that, like Peter, forty days later, we can reply: "You know that I love you"; and hear him say: "go back and feed my sheep" – and I would add – "let no wolf enter the sheepfold." - *Homily of Pope Francis, Monday, 7 July 2014*



Since the beginning of his pontificate, Pope Francis has been echoing the call to be merciful and compassionate like Jesus Christ, our Lord and he, himself, lives out mercy and compassion. His stance is always that of a compassionate and merciful shepherd who welcomes every sheep into his fold and passionately seeks out the lost ones. Contemplating the world today would give us a sight of tremendous suffering: wars, injustice and violence perpetrated against the innocent and the helpless, tragedies, natural calamities, extreme poverty, environmental degradation, the lost of the sense of faith and meaning of life especially among the young, and so much more. Contemplating these realities, we can sense the world's dire need for mercy and compassion, and if we look deep into our hearts,

we'll discover and recognize that we, too, have the same need. Despite all the miseries and suffering that abound in this world, God continues to share an ocean of His mercy and compassion in various ways and forms to His beloved people. The stories and insights we share with you in this issue aim to affirm the truth that God reaches out to us in mercy and compassion in the different circumstances and realities of life.

ANCELLE MISSIONARIE DEL SANTISSIMO SACRAMENTO - ASIA

✧ *Knowing the Apostles* ✧

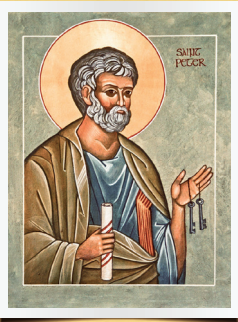
The life of our Mother Church began and flourished with the selfless, courageous and faithful cooperation of the twelve men whom Jesus had personally chosen, taught and formed in the course of his life on earth. After His Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension, He entrusted to them the proclamation and propagation of His Kingdom here on earth. Upon receiving the Holy Spirit, these men, except for Judas Iscariot, proclaimed the Good News to the peoples at the cost of their lives. To them, who have greatly toiled and suffered for the Church, the Bride of our Lord, we owe our most profound gratitude. To recall their lives and the works and sacrifices they have done is a way of honoring and thanking them.

✧ *The Twelve Apostles* ✧

What is an apostle? The word “Apostle” comes from the Greek word “apostolos”, meaning “to send away.” It literally means “one who is sent.” Hence, an apostle is the one who is sent by Jesus to proclaim His Gospel and to continue His work here on earth.

Who are the Twelve Apostles? The Twelve Apostles are Simon Peter, Andrew, James the Great, John the Beloved, Philip, Nathanael, Matthew, Thomas, James the Less, Jude Thaddeus, Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus and was replaced by Matthias after the Resurrection.

The twelve apostles of Jesus are among the most famous men in history. Their images have been painted, graven and sculpted on cathedrals and churches around the world and each one of them has been the subject of books, poems and sermons. These twelve poor, uneducated and otherwise obscure men who lived in a tiny, occupied country 2,000 years ago are still relevant today, not just because of their triumphs but because they represent the various ways humankind responds to God. The 12 original apostles were appointed by Jesus Christ to spread the Gospel. With the exception of Judas Iscariot, each of the apostles traveled to foreign countries throughout Asia, Africa and Europe, building churches and converting many to Christianity.

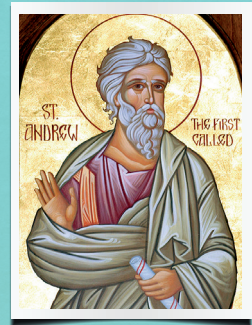


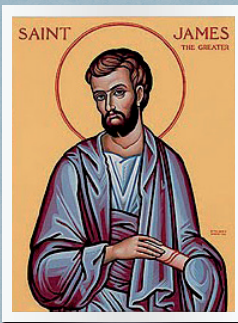
SIMON PETER

Originally called Simon, Jesus renamed this apostle Cephas, a Syriac word for “rock”, and “Peter” in Greek. He was a fisherman from Galilee. He was one of the three companions of Jesus when He was transfigured on a mountain. He had an impulsive personality and a sincere love for the Lord. He promised to die for Jesus but when Jesus was caught and brought into trial, he denied Him three times but Jesus forgave him for his denial. Having received His mercy, he went on to fearlessly proclaim the Gospel especially in Rome. On the day of Pentecost, he preached to the crowd in Jerusalem. He was later put in prison for preaching about Jesus but while in jail, he converted several of his jailers to Christianity. He was crucified downwards on Vatican Hill during the persecution of Emperor Nero in 64 AD. He is the Catholic Church’s first Pope. He is venerated with St. Paul on June 29.

ANDREW

Andrew’s name is a Greek word that means “strong man.” He is the brother of Simon Peter. He was born in Bethsaida and lived in Capernaum. He, his brother and their father were fishermen in Galilee. He was called by Jesus while they were on their fishing boat in the shore of Galilee. He was a disciple of John the Baptist. Like all the other apostles, he too abandoned Jesus because of fear but after the Resurrection, he was emboldened to preach the Gospel in many lands (Syria, Ephesus and Greece). He went to Byzantium, the present day Istanbul, and traveled to Thrace and Macedonia, down through the Corinthian Gulf to Patros, Greece where he was left hanging on an X-shaped cross for three days while preaching to the people until he died. He is the Patron Saint of Russia, Greece and Scotland. His feast day is on November 30.





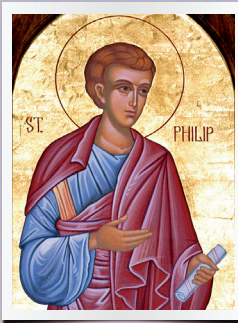
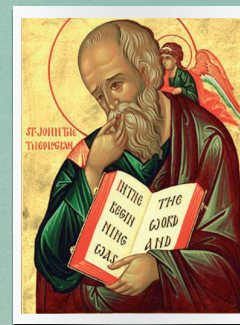
JAMES, THE GREAT

He was called the great to distinguish him from James the less or the young. His name is the Greek translation of the Hebrew name "Jacob". He was a fisherman, son of Zebedee and Salome. He and his brother John had an impetuous temper that Jesus named them "Boanerges," that is, the "sons of thunder."

He, with Peter and John, had the privilege to witness the glorious event of the Transfiguration of Jesus as well as His greatest solitude in the Garden of Gethsemane. Overcome by fear, he abandoned Jesus in the night of His trial but having witnessed His Resurrection and experiencing His mercy, he preached until his death. He was the first Apostle to die as martyr in 44 AD during the persecution of King Herod Agrippa I. Tradition tells us that he preached the Gospel in Spain in the year 40 AD. His feast day is on July 25.

JOHN, THE BELOVED

John means "God is gracious" in Hebrew. He is the brother of St. James, the Great and he was also a fisherman. He was called by Jesus while mending their nets in the shore of Galilee. Among all the apostles, he was the one who remained at the foot of the Cross of Jesus. There, he received the sublime mission of caring for the Mother of the Lord. In year 49 AD, he settled in Ephesus. He became the pastor of the Church in Ephesus and in other Churches in the area. However, by order of Domitian, the then Roman Emperor, he was exiled in the island of Patmos, where Jesus handed to him the book of Revelation. He returned to Ephesus after exile, and died there around 100 AD, making him the last of the apostles to die and he is also the only one to die of natural causes. We celebrate his feast day on December 27. The 4th Gospel and the three Epistles, which contain the sublime definition of the divinity "God is love", are attributed to him.



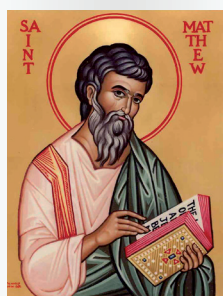
PHILIP

His name literally means "Friend of Horses." He was from Bethsaida and a disciple of John the Baptist. After his calling, he announced to Nathanael who is known as Bartholomew that he had found the Messiah. After Christ's resurrection, Philip preached the Gospel for 20 years in Scythia (now South Russia), and later traveled to Hierapolis. Along with the apostle Bartholomew, he healed the Roman proconsul's wife, converting her to Christianity. As a result, the proconsul ordered that Philip and Bartholomew be put to death. Philip was around 87 years of age when he was martyred on the cross in Hierapolis, where his tomb remains to this day. The feast day of St. Philip and St. James the Less is on May 3.

NATHANIEL / BARTHOLOMEW

His first name was Nathanael, which means "God has given" but was nicknamed Bartholomew meaning "Son of Talmay." He was from Cana in Galilee. Philip told him that he has found the Messiah: Jesus of Nazareth. So, he came to see Jesus, who upon seeing him, said "Here is a true Israelite, there is no duplicity in him." He became one of the twelve who accompanied Jesus in His ministry but abandoned him when He was captured. After Jesus' Resurrection and commissioning, he preached the Gospel to Israel and to other countries. Together with Bartholomew, he went to Asia Minor and Hierapolis, near Laodicea (now Turkey). Because of his preaching, he also died as a martyr, proving himself a true friend and follower of his Lord. Tradition says that he was condemned to be flayed alive at Albanopolis in Armenia. His skin was cut into strips and removed, leaving the saint agonizing with his flesh open, bleeding for a long time before being beheaded. He is believed to have been martyred in Albanopolis (now Derbend) in 68 AD. His feast day is on August 24.



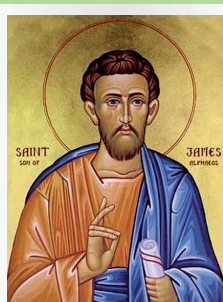
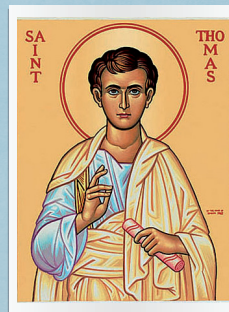


MATTHEW / LEVI

He was from Galilee and was named Levi. Before being called by Jesus to become an apostle, Matthew, the most highly educated of the twelve, worked as a tax collector. One day, while he was sitting at the custom's post in Galilee, Jesus called him and immediately, he got up and followed Him. After his conversion, Jesus called him Matthew which means the "Gift of God." He went along with Jesus and with the other apostles. Like the eleven, he was sent by Jesus on a mission. After the Resurrection, the erstwhile fearful apostle, preached the Gospel to other lands until his martyrdom. The gospel of Matthew in the New Testament is attributed to him. His feast is celebrated on September 21.

THOMAS / DIDYMUS

He is also known as Didymus, a Greek word meaning "the twin." He had an ardent love for our Lord, and professed his willingness to die for Him. When Jesus decided to go to Bethany to raise Lazarus from the dead, Thomas enthusiastically exclaimed: "Let us also go to die with him." During the Last Supper, after Jesus said that he was going to prepare a place for them in Heaven, Thomas asked: "Master, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" and Jesus answered with the memorable words: "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." This apostle is also known as the "doubting Thomas." With the other apostles, he accomplished the mission that Jesus entrusted to them. He is known for establishing the first Christian church in Babylon, and many churches elsewhere. He also ministered in Persia, India and possibly China, converting many to Christianity. He also died a martyr's death and his feast is celebrated on July 3.

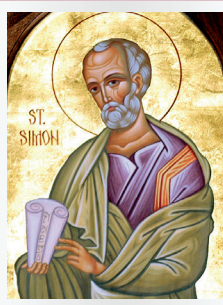
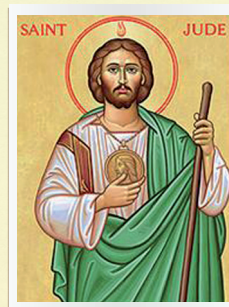


JAMES, THE LESS

James is also a native of Capernaum, the place where Jesus went after he was rejected in his hometown. He had a great prestige in the early Church, and was appointed as the Bishop of Jerusalem. He wrote the so-called "Letter of St. James," where he admonished to make no distinctions between rich and poor. He also clarified that "faith without work is dead. A person is justified by works and not by faith alone. For just as a body without a spirit is dead, so also, faith without work is dead" (cf. James 3:14-17). James was called "the Just" on account of his holiness; his knees were hard like those of a camel, for he was continually at prayer. James was martyred in Jerusalem, where he was stoned for preaching the Gospel. His feast day is on May 3.

JUDE THADDEUS

He was called "Thaddeus," to distinguish him from Judas Iscariot. The nickname "Thaddeus" came from the Aramaic word "tadda," meaning "magnanimous." He was one of the first Apostles to preach the Gospel outside Jerusalem. He preached in Armenia, Syria, Mesopotamia and North Persia with Simon the Zealot. He is the author of the Letter of Jude, whose purpose was to warn against false preachers who lived in sin and divided the Church. He is traditionally depicted carrying the image of Jesus, with which he cured and converted King Abgar of Edessa. He is also shown with flame on his head, signifying the Holy Spirit, and holding a book, representing the letter he wrote. According to tradition, after preaching the Gospel in many countries, he died as a martyr in Persia together with Simon the Zealot in about 65 AD. Both are venerated on October 28. Jude Thaddeus is well-known as the Patron of Desperate Cases.

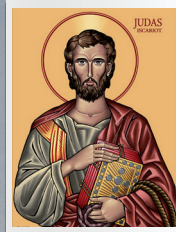


SIMON, THE ZEALOT

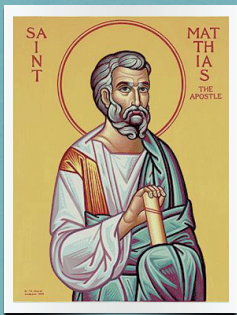
He is a close relative of Jesus. He is also called the "Cananean" or "the Zealot" to distinguish him from Simon Peter. He was previously affiliated with the Zealot Party, which was a fanatic religious and political group determined to resist the Roman occupation in Judea and to defend the Jewish Religion. They refused to pay taxes and called for rebellion. Although Simon was a fearless revolutionist, he gradually converted his flaming nature until he became an apostle of peace. After leaving Jerusalem, Simon traveled in Egypt, through North Africa to Carthage, and then north to Spain and Britain. Jude and Simon are venerated on October 28.

JUDAS ISCARIOT

Judas is best known for his betrayal, which was predicted by Jesus during the Last Supper. While he regretted this act, he didn't ask for Jesus' forgiveness, but instead went to the priests for help. When they failed him, he committed suicide by hanging himself on a tree. The apostle Matthias was appointed to replace him after his death.



MATTHIAS



He was born in Bethlehem of Judah. He was a disciple of Jesus from the day of His baptism until His ascension into heaven. He was probably one of the 72 disciples sent by the Lord to evangelize, two by two, during His ministry. Before Pentecost, while the Eleven and other disciples were assembled in prayer, Peter announced the necessity of electing an apostle to replace Judas Iscariot, to become a witness to Jesus' resurrection. Two candidates were presented: Joseph, who was called Barnabas (also known Justus), and Matthias, and the latter was chosen by lot. After receiving the Holy Spirit, he announced the Gospel first to his own people, the Jews. He preached the Gospel from Judea to the Caspian Sea. He was stoned by the Jews in Galilee who wished not to hear his sermons. After enduring persecution and ill-treatment from the savage people he evangelized, he suffered martyrdom at Calchis and was finally beheaded by the Roman soldiers about the year 63. His body was kept for a long time in Jerusalem before it was transferred to Rome by St. Helen. His feast day is on May 14.

The twelve apostles are persons of diverse backgrounds and temperament. They shared the same nationality and culture, but in many ways they were totally different. They are persons who have committed some mistakes, who have had their share of failure but strengthened by the love of Jesus and the guidance of His Spirit, they became courageous and faithful men who have brought the great gift of faith to many peoples and nations. They are fervent evangelizers who have poured their blood for Jesus. 🕊️

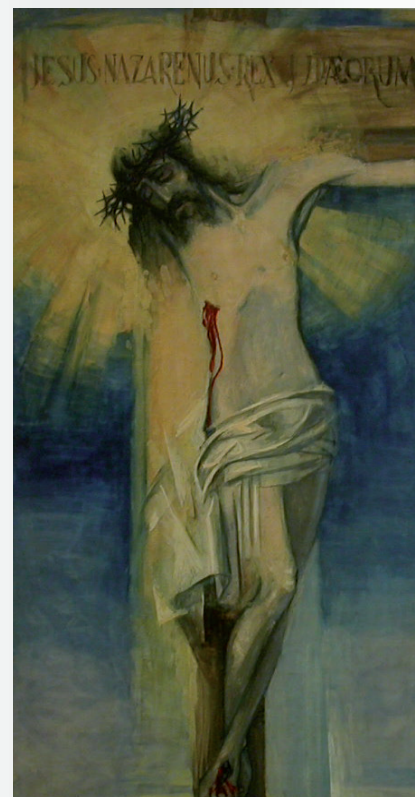
Jesus Christ

the reason of our hope

'Be always ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope (1 Peter 3:15). We, as Catholics, hope in the Lord Jesus Christ, both human and divine. We hope in Him, who came to save not the chosen few but all. As Christians, it is our task to proclaim and defend our faith. In view of this, we present here some explanations in answer to the questions posed by some sects, particularly the Iglesia ni Cristo, on the authenticity of our faith and on the person and dignity of our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Man.'

1. There is only one God. He did not and will not, become man or anything but a spirit. Jesus Christ is not God who became flesh. He is a man, not God. Is this true?

We, Catholics, believe in One God in Three Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The central mystery of our faith and life is the mystery of the Most Blessed Trinity. We are baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Compendium of the CCC, no. 44). God has left some traces of his Trinitarian being in creation and in the Old



Testament but His inmost being as the Holy Trinity is a mystery which is inaccessible to reason alone. This mystery was revealed by Jesus Christ and it is the source of all the other mysteries.

❧ SCRIPTURAL TEXT ❧

- **(Mt. 28:18-19)** Before the Ascension, Jesus commanded the apostles: "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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."
- **(Jn.16:13-15)** "At the last supper, Jesus said: "But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth... He will glorify me, because he will take from what is mine and declare it to you. Everything that the Father has is mine; for this reason I told you that he will take from what is mine and declare it to you."
- **(Jn.15:26)** When the Advocate comes whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth that proceeds from the Father, he will testify to me.

2. Christ is never the true God. He is a true man. Is this true?

Jesus Christ is the true God and a true Man. The human limitations that He has experienced do not disprove his divinity. They prove that Jesus Christ is true man. His Person is divine, but this one Person retains His divine nature even after He took on a human nature. From the beginning of her history, the Church has always defended the mystery of Jesus Christ's being "true God and true man"; the Church never wavered from asserting Jesus' true and complete human nature (with a human body and a human soul) as much as it has defended His being a divine Person ("consubstantial with the Father" as we say in the Creed).



❧ SCRIPTURAL TEXT ❧

- **(Jn. 8:58)** Jesus said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham came to be, I AM."
- **(Jn. 1:14)** And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth. (The Word referred in this text is Jesus Christ.)

3. Did the Church apostatize as what the Iglesia ni Cristo adherents claim?

The Church has been faithful at all times to the Revelation given by the Lord Jesus Christ. Threatened by all sorts of erroneous teachings and open persecutions, the Church did not compromise the Truth received. A reading of the early history of the Church (for example, Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius of Caesarea, 4th C.) or the accounts of the martyrdom of the Christians of the first three centuries would offer enough evidence of this historical fact. Moreover, if the Church did commit apostasy in the first centuries, then why does the Iglesia ni Cristo use the Holy Bible that was ratified by the same Church in the 4th century?

4. Did the Catholic Church deny the Lord Jesus Christ's Headship by putting Peter and the Popes in His stead? Did it deny the Lord's position as the stone foundation, again by putting Peter in His stead? Did it reject His name, Christ, by sporting such an unscriptural name as Roman Catholic Church?

The Iglesia ni Cristo's claim that the Catholic Church apostatized because it changed its original name ("Church of Christ") ignores that part of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (AD 381): "I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church." It is obvious in this sentence that the word "catholic" is an adjective (from the Greek *katholikos*: universal), expressing an essential characteristic of the Church founded by Jesus Christ. The use of the name did not begin in the 4th century. St. Ignatius of Antioch, who died at the end of the 1st century, said, "Where there is Christ Jesus, there is the Catholic Church."

5. Was Felix Manalo the messenger of God who was instrumental in the re-establishment of the Church of Christ after it has apostatized? Was he the fulfillment of prophecy contained in Isaiah 46:11: "I call from the east a bird of prey, from a distant land, one to carry out my plan. Yes, I have spoken, I will accomplish it; I have planned it, and I will do it."

The bird of prey mentioned in this prophecy is King Cyrus. King Cyrus is from Persia, which is in the east of Jerusalem or Israel.

6. (PASUGO, NOVEMBER 1967 ISSUE, PAGE 33) "It is clearly testified that THE PHILIPPINES IS THE FAR EAST." Is this true?

The Far East referred to in this issue is not really found in the Bible. The word in the Hebrew Scripture is Mizrach, from the root word "Zarach", which means 'to arise' and 'to appear'.



7. Is Felix Manalo the last messenger of God?

Hebrews 1:1-2 "In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets; in these last days, he spoke to us through a son, whom he made heir of all things and through whom he created the universe." This passage tells us that God has spoken through the prophets before but in these last days, He has spoken through Jesus Christ, the last Word of God. Jesus is the last messenger of God and not Felix Manalo.

8. If Jesus is the Second Person of the Trinity who took on our human nature ("and the Word was made flesh"), is he equal to God the Father?

Yes, Jesus Christ is true God and true man: He is not merely a holy man who was "divinized" by God. He is co-eternal with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. From the early beginnings of the Church the name "Lord" (Kyrios in Greek) has been used as an expression of faith in Jesus Christ's divinity. Even the name "Son of man" which Jesus used to refer to Himself is a veiled reference to His divinity, since that title is from the vision of Daniel about the universal and eternal kingship of the Messiah (Dn 7:13-14).

❧ SCRIPTURAL TEXT ❧

- (Jn.17:5) Now glorify me, Father, with you, with the glory that I had with you before the world began.
- (Jn.14:9) Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, "Show us the Father?"
- (Jn. 8:58) Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham came to be, I AM.
- (Jn.10:30) "The Father and I are one." For saying this, Jesus was stoned by the Jews, who told him: "We are not stoning you for a good work but for blasphemy. You, a man, are making yourself God" (Jn 10:33). Jesus, instead of trying to pacify them by telling them that they had misunderstood what he had said, he stressed even more his claim: "believe the works, so that you may realize (and understand) that the Father is in me and I am in the Father" (Jn. 10:38).

9. Is membership in Iglesia ni Cristo the only way to Salvation?

St. Augustine said, "God who created you without you, will not save you without you." Man, without the grace of God, cannot comply with the supernatural precepts of God, merit eternal life or be justified. Man, without grace and without cooperation with grace, cannot attain supernatural life.

10. The soul dies with the body. Is this true?

If the soul dies with the body, then, why do we need to be concerned about salvation? Catholic philosophy and theology teach that the rational soul of man is immortal. The rational soul does not die with the body. When the body dies, the soul leaves the body and faces the just judgment of God. Each soul has to render an account of its acts, and shall receive reward or punishment accordingly. 🙏

✧ Synod on the Family ✧

The Synod of Bishops convened for the Third Extraordinary Assembly

In this year when the Catholic Church celebrates the Year of the Family, the Synod of Bishops convened on October 5-19 with the theme "Pastoral Challenges to the family in the context of evangelization."

In this Synod, there was no definitive conclusions on issues discussed but it will set the agenda for the XIV General Assembly, to be held in October next year, with the theme, "Jesus Christ reveals the mystery and vocation of the family."

The Synod's conclusion coincided with the celebration of World Mission Day and the Beatification of Paul VI, the Pope who established the Synod. At the conclusion of the Extraordinary Assembly, Pope Francis thanked the Synod Fathers and all those who collaborated in this significant event in the life of the Church.

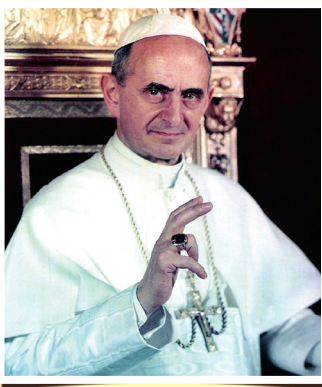
"I can happily say that – with a spirit of collegiality and of synodality – we have truly lived the experience of "Synod," a path of solidarity, a "journey together," said Pope Francis. He also cited the moments of consolation, desolation, tensions and temptations they have experienced during the Synod, temptations that should not frighten or discourage us.



Session of the extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the family at the Vatican

In his homily at the concluding Mass of the Synod, he said: "God is not afraid of new things! That is why He is continually surprising us, opening our hearts and guiding us in unexpected ways. He renews us: He constantly makes us "new." A Christian who lives the Gospel is "God's newness" in the Church and in the world. How much God loves this "newness!"

In this Synod, the Church has once more proved herself attentive to the signs of the times. She has proved herself to be a listening Church as she opens her heart and ears to the world, to its needs and longings. 🇵🇦



Beatification of Pope Paul VI

Pope Paul VI was beatified by Pope Francis in the concluding Mass of the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops on October 19, 2014, after a miracle attributed to his intercession was approved. A mother, who was previously advised to have his baby aborted because of health concerns, gave birth to a healthy newborn after praying to a photo of Pope Paul VI.

Pope Paul VI was born in the province of Brescia, Italy on the 26th of September 1897 and was named Giovanni Battista Montini. He was elected to the pontificate in 1963, succeeding Pope John XXIII. He brought the Second Vatican Council to its conclusion and authored the "Humanae Vitae," the document which reiterated the Church's ban on artificial contraception. He established the Synod to continue the spirit of collegiality and communion that was present at the Council and began the

papal visits. He was the first Pope to visit the Philippines in 1970. He served as Pope from 1963-1978.

In his homily that day, Pope Francis read a portion of Blessed Pope Paul VI's personal journal. In it was written: "Perhaps the Lord has called me and preserved me for this service not because I am particularly fit for it, or so that I can govern and rescue the Church from her present difficulties, but so that I can suffer something for the Church, and in that way it will be clear that he, and no other, is her guide and saviour" (P. Macchi, Paolo VI nella sua parola, Brescia, 2001, pp. 120-121).

"In this humility, the grandeur of Blessed Paul VI shines forth: before the advent of a secularized and hostile society, he could hold fast, with farsightedness and wisdom – and at times alone – to the helm of the barque of Peter, while never losing his joy and his trust in the Lord," Pope Francis said.

An estimated 70,000 people attended the celebration at Vatican City and Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI was also in attendance. 🇵🇦

✧ Papal Visit: A Call to be a People of Mercy and Compassion ✧

By: *Asp. Maureen Martinez, MSBS*



We, Filipino people, keep the steadfast spirit in spite of the many problems that beset us. Natural calamities are trials we have to cope with every year. Last year, the horrendous view of destruction and death wrought by the Super typhoon Yolanda appalled the world. A lot of people and nations extended a helping hand and yet it is undeniable that rehabilitation and recovery is still out of hand. The victims' struggle to rebuild their lives continues and so is their suffering.

The Holy Father, enthused by the suffering of the people, decided to visit the downtrodden, to bring the 'joy of the gospel,' to breathe life into drooping spirit. The Catholic Filipino people, battered by different kinds of calamities, rejoiced at the news of the papal visit. The Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) then issued a pastoral letter, exhorting the People of God to prepare for the Apostolic Visit on January 15-19 next year.

For this occasion, the theme "Mercy and Compassion" has been chosen. He, the shepherd of the Church will come to comfort his suffering flock. He will spend time with the victims of typhoon Yolanda to comfort the suffering people still struggling to rise from the tragedy. His visit will surely bring the suffering members of his flock the hope to rise again and the light that will direct them toward the dawn of a new day filled with hope and joy. In his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis proclaims that "the Church must be a place of mercy freely given, where everyone can feel welcomed, loved, forgiven and encouraged to live the good life of the Gospel" (*Evangelii Gaudium* 114). His visit is a witness to the truth he proclaims. The Church is indeed a place of mercy because its Founder is a God of Mercy. It is a place of mercy because its shepherd is a man of mercy and compassion. Like his Master, the Pope has seen the suffering of the people, and had compassion on them.

The papal visit is a special moment worth celebrating because the presence of the Holy Father is a blessing. Apart from this, the visit also becomes a means of uniting the Filipino faithful as a flock that fervently waits to meet the good shepherd. The Local Church in the Philippines unites in praying for the grace to meet Pope Francis as people capable of mercy and compassion. In the Pastoral letter for the Papal Visit, Archbishop Socrates Villegas exhorted the faithful to prepare spiritually for the coming of Pope Francis by becoming "a people rich in mercy." He encouraged the Filipino faithful to do an act of mercy everyday and to gain the mercy of God by frequent reception of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist.

The Pope's visit reminds us not only of the wounds inflicted by the tragic event but also of the great mercy and compassion this nation has witnessed and experienced in those trying times. Yes, the horrible image of the corpses and of wailing survivors who had to grapple with the immense loss of lives, property and livelihood continue to haunt us especially when heavy rain pours in and wind howls but the same tragedy has imprinted in our hearts the innumerable stories of mercy and compassion expressed by both children and adults, poor and rich. The same tragedy calls to mind not only the image of tremendous suffering but also the truckloads of relief goods, the hundreds of volunteers and the many ways that people have shown the depths of compassion. My heart was touched by the stories of little beggars, keeping a part of the day's 'earning' for the victims, of the poor children in the villages of Mindoro who found the way to help, giving any little thing they could offer for the relief of the victims and of many other written and unwritten stories of mercy, compassion and solidarity.

In all this, I realized that we are a people capable of mercy and compassion and so may we always be that, not just in extraordinary circumstances but everyday. In preparation for his visit, we are encouraged by the Local Church to make acts of mercy such as reaching out to a lonely stranger, forgiving, giving food to a hungry beggar or making the habit of saying thank you or kind words of appreciation and frequenting the Sacrament of Reconciliation. These are simple yet valid and potent ways of showing mercy, of testifying to the love and mercy of our Lord. As Christians, we are called to extend to others the love of God and as Pope Francis said, "Our lives must bear witness to his love for all our brothers and sisters." ✠



The author practicing with her co-aspirants the action song for the papal visit

~ Via Pacis... ~

By: Sr. Rosanna Favero, MSBS



In the afternoon of July 14, 1994, I and Sr. Clemence, who was then an aspirant, were waiting at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) for the arrival from Rome of Sr. Giusy Sozza and the couple Paolo and Eliana Maino. Sr. Giusy is my batch mate and friend in the Congregation while the couple are the founders of Via Pacis, an association with the specific aim of promoting peace, justice and solidarity through a personal commitment of conversion and evangelical witnessing.



Paolo Maino, founder of Via Pacis, talking with one of the villagers in Mindoro during his first visit there

As we wait, we couldn't but recall the adventures of the previous days; the typhoon that caused the delay of our travel from San Jose, Occidental Mindoro to Manila, forcing us to wait the whole day in the port in San Jose; the frightening waves that shook the ship the whole night and the long wait at the Immigration Office to plead for the immediate release of the exit clearance of Sr. Rosa, my first companion in the mission to the Philippines. Sr. Rosa was bound to fly to Rome the same day that we were expecting the arrival of our visitors.

While I was trying to figure out the faces of our visitors among the thousands of people coming and going, I suddenly felt worried about the new experience that await us, the bad weather and the mission activities we had just begun. The Maino couple was coming with Sr. Giusy but I knew very little about them and have never met them before. They have been friends of our Congregation, and without knowing it, they had subsidized our first project, which was the purchase of sewing machines for our mission. As I was trying to grasp the motivation of their visit to Mindoro, I wrapped up all the thoughts and worries in my mind asking God to guide and take care of me. Little

did I know how much blessings this encounter would later bring.

Finally, the plane arrived and I caught sight of the familiar face of my co-sister. The joy of seeing Sr. Giusy wiped away the shadow of melancholy that I felt for the absence of Sr. Rosa my only companion in the community of Mindoro, and to my pleasant surprise, Paolo and Eliana Maino acted not as strangers but as friends even in that first meeting. I had the impression that they were seeking to open doors to enter more into realities which they already had a view.

On our way home, the sceneries of life that welcomed the newcomers from the airport cannot but move many questions, judgment and dismay. Eliana and Paolo were noticing everything with respect, compassion and also a bit of healthy humor, as if imprinting in their hearts every little piece of the grand mosaic that God had fit together ahead of their coming, without our knowledge and yet through our lives. It was not only the desire "to see" that accompanied them in our two days of wandering through the streets of Divisoria, Tondo, Quiapo or the extravagantly huge malls in Manila. They were also moved by the desire to know and reverently enter in the sacredness of people's lives and during their stay in Mindoro I had more occasions to witness the longing and restlessness of their hearts while seeking answer on how to be a brother of Jesus in the new world they had just seen and encountered. The time

spent in visiting villages and small communities was not enough to lead them to the long-sought answer; very often I could see them in the chapel in silent prayer and attentive listening to the Voice of Him who had entered in the ordinariness of their life so that others may be touched by His peace and holiness. How do we reconcile poverty and adversity with a simple and yet vibrant faith? How can we share blessings and Christian love so that everybody can have the chance to experience the plenitude



Eliana Maino, co-founder of Via Pacis, in one of the villages in Mindoro



of life and be empowered to be a witness and messenger of peace?

On the day before we left San Jose, Paolo shared some of his realizations and dreams. "We can suggest some families in Italy to support one of the children of your village here. They can help them to study and so to grow into a person, who can contribute for a better society, country and world in the future," he said. His idea was something new for me, but I felt the goodness of it and saw the prospective project as a bridge between people and culture, a bridge through which fraternity, solidarity and love can strengthen relationships and aid the discovery of the meaning of life, and above all, it is a concrete help for the families in our neighborhood.

On July 26 that year, when Paolo and Eliana left Mindoro, bringing with them the unforgettable experiences and precious gifts of sharing life and dreams, they left us also with the new hope for 20 children of Mabini village. Starting from that moment, the children were being assured that somebody journeys with them in life, a ray of hope and strength in their present and future life.


The composition of the grand mosaic had found hands too glad and willing to toil, gather and refine the tiny pieces called scholarships, medicines and medical aid, assistance for orphans and the abandoned, families in difficulty, feeding programs, construction of houses, water connections and deep well, building of structures for a better service and reaching out to those in need, as well as the aid during calamities and disastrous typhoons that visit our land almost every year.



The founder Paolo Maino with his co-founders, Fr. Domenico Pincelli and Eliana Maino

The love and commitment to work for a world of justice and peace made precious each different piece and color. How many activities, interventions, accomplishments were carried out during these 20 years? Only God really knows!

However, it was only during the following years that I had the chance to know better the wonderful plan God began with Paolo and Eliana, a plan called VIA PACIS. He blessed them as husband and wife and crowned their union not with many children but with many seeds to be planted around the world, seeds that are bound to grow and bear fruits of fraternity, joy, solidarity, peace, harmony and holiness. As with all of God's plans, it was not easy for the couple to gradually move into the new mission of their life, into a project which places in the same scale the awareness of our own miseries and the consciousness of Jesus' healing presence and power. In their need for a spiritual guide, Fr. Domenico Pincelli was sent to them. He was a diocesan priest who shared the journey and labor of the beginning. He shared the gift of spiritual fatherhood; he never failed to witness to everyone the loving gaze of God, the healing power of forgiveness and the joy of finding God's peace in the daily events of life.

Through their love, passion and commitment, the seed of Via Pacis has grown into a beautiful, strong tree as represented by the symbol of the Association: a big, green magnolia tree. This tree symbolizes their special mission: to be ambassadors of the mercy and compassion of God. During these 20 years, we have received countless spiritual and material gifts. We cannot deny that the spirit of Via Pacis have touched and shaped our life and the life of the people whom we serve. It is now the time to pass on what we have received, to discover the beauty of becoming sharer and promoter of God's peace, mercy and compassion in our daily relationships and different commitments in life. Via Pacis means "the way to peace", so then, let us be a new generation who believe that peace is possible and it happens only when it begins within us. 



Paolo Maino and Sr. Rosanna Favero, MSBS

Projects of Via Pacis

...different pieces and colors made precious by the love and commitment to work for a world of justice and peace



✧ Missionary Life ✧

An evangelizing community knows that the Lord has taken the initiative, he has loved us first (cf. 1 Jn 4:19), and therefore we can move forward, boldly take the initiative, go out to others, seek those who have fallen away, stand at the crossroads and welcome the outcast. Such a community has an endless desire to show mercy, the fruit of its own experience of the power of the Father's infinite mercy. (EG 24)

The work of evangelization continues through the toil and sacrifices of many missionaries, who, touched by their own experiences of God, have offered or continue to offer themselves at the service of His people, communicating to His flock the message of hope and expressing love and solidarity amidst pain, struggle and suffering. These missionaries, by their presence, zeal and passion, bear witness to the God of Mercy and Compassion.

VIETNAM

Fr. Dominic Ngo Quang Tuyen : A Gift from God

By: Nov. Maria Lam Bieng Kim Hien, MSBS

God showers His people with his gifts day after day. Sometimes, his gifts come as things, or ordinary experiences, sometimes through ordinary people with extraordinary passion.

Fr. Dominic Ngo Quang Tuyen is one of these gifts that has strengthened my resolve to follow the Lord and continue His mission; the mission of sharing the Father's love and mercy. He is a diocesan priest who currently serves as the Executive Secretary of the Committee of Evangelization of Catholic Bishop's Conference of Vietnam. We met him when he came to the Philippines on January 29-30 last year to attend the Assembly of PMS National Directors.

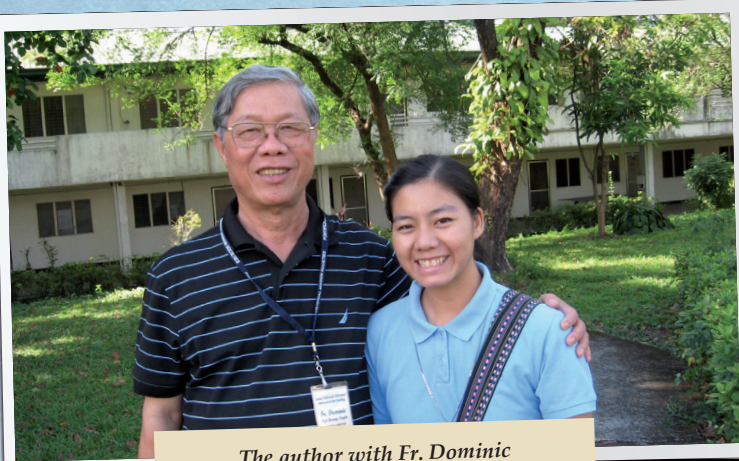
Fr. Dominic shared a lot of his experiences and joy. He shared to us an episode of his life in connection with his priesthood. When his

mother was pregnant with him, she and her husband saw a priest passed by the fields where they were harvesting the rice. Seeing the priest with the Viaticum, they both knelt in worship of the Blessed Sacrament and prayed that the child in the womb will one day become like that priest who takes Viaticum to the sick. His parents offered him to God at a very young age. As he grew up, his parents planted and nurtured the seed of faith in him. He was taught how to pray, sent to catechism classes and told of so many interesting stories in the Bible. They also instilled in him the spirit of service by allowing him to become an altar boy at the age of eight. His mother would often remind him to be always good and strong because he was offered to God. "Be good because you have been offered to God," were the words his mother often told him especially when he was naughty. At the age of 11, his journey to consecration began when he entered the seminary. After 14 years, he was ordained a priest.

After his ordination, he asked his superiors to send him to the areas in the outskirts of the city of Saigon, where there was war. Serving in that war-ridden territory, he had to face a lot of socio-economic and political difficulties. Despite the difficulties, his love for God and his willingness to offer his life for Him made him stay. His ministry in that area was halted in 1982, when he was sent to the re-education camp, which is a euphemism for prison.



Fr. Dominic (first from right) with his parents and brother



The author with Fr. Dominic

There, he was subjected to various trials and suffering. In this time of suffering, the love and concern for the welfare of his parishioners was not drowned in the extreme condition or affliction he was enduring. He was worried about them and in this, his mother offered words of encouragement. She told him that he should consider the camp as his new mission, as his new parish and that he must try to proclaim Jesus by all means: by service and sharing. By the help of his mother, he continued his priestly ministry in the prison. He endured each day of more than 12 years in prison, strengthened and nourished by his faith and hope in the Lord. The Word of God, especially some Gospel passages that are etched in his heart provided him the much needed solace and vigor. This enabled him to fulfill his ministry in prison, to extend to his fellow prisoners and even to those who

have done him wrong, the love and mercy of God. His love for God and zeal to communicate His love to others has borne fruit; he baptized more than 10 people who previously treated him as their enemy.

After the long and difficult years in prison, the communists finally set him free. He is now the parish priest in Giao Xu Phu Xuan, Thi Tran Nha Be, Ho Chi Minh City, the parish where he served in his first few years as a priest, and he continues to live a life of joy and simplicity, offering his whole person to God and entrusting his life to Him.

His joy and missionary fervor were palpable. We felt and sensed it in his short stay with us. The night before he left for Vietnam, we had a simple celebration. While we gathered after supper, he went around animating us with songs and inspiring stories that left a deep impression in us. He seemed to have so much joy and we couldn't sense any resentment in him. Perhaps it is the joy of experiencing the Compassionate God who accompanied his journey even in prison and the God who has given him the pleasure and privilege of being able to suffer and testify to His love. His stories and zest for life remained despite the torment and danger he had faced. His life and example is a witness to an authentic Christian life and to the God of love and compassion. I feel that meeting him, listening to his story is a gift from God. So, I thank Him for this gift, through which I have experienced His love and compassion. 🙏

MYANMAR

Fr. John Gam Seng, SDB: A Heart for People, A Heart for Mission

By: Sr. Pansy, MSBS

The passion and enthusiasm for mission is like a burning lamp whose heat and light radiates and energizes those who witness it. This is what I felt when I had the chance to listen to the sharing of a Myanmar missionary. This missionary is Fr. John Gam Seng, a Salesian priest from the diocese of Lashio, Myanmar. I met him in 2007 when he was studying in the Institute of Consecrated Life in Asia (ICLA) - Philippines. He used to come to our community to administer the Sacrament of Reconciliation and it is then that I got a sense of his priestly and missionary passion. After his studies, he was called back to Myanmar to be the rector and formator of Salesian Pre-Novitiate House in Thiphaw. From one mission to another, he carried within him the same enthusiasm, serving and forming the seminarians.

Even when he was in Myanmar, he kept communicating with us, sharing his mission experiences. He shared with us, in particular, his experience during and in the aftermath of the cyclone that ravaged Myanmar in 2008. The sight of the corpses and of so much destruction did not take away his hope but moved him to do something. He and his formands helped the victims, cleaning up the villages that were covered with corpses, soil and debris. His sharing made me feel how much the passion for mission and for people burns in his heart.

After his mission in the field of formation, he was assigned to a new mission: in

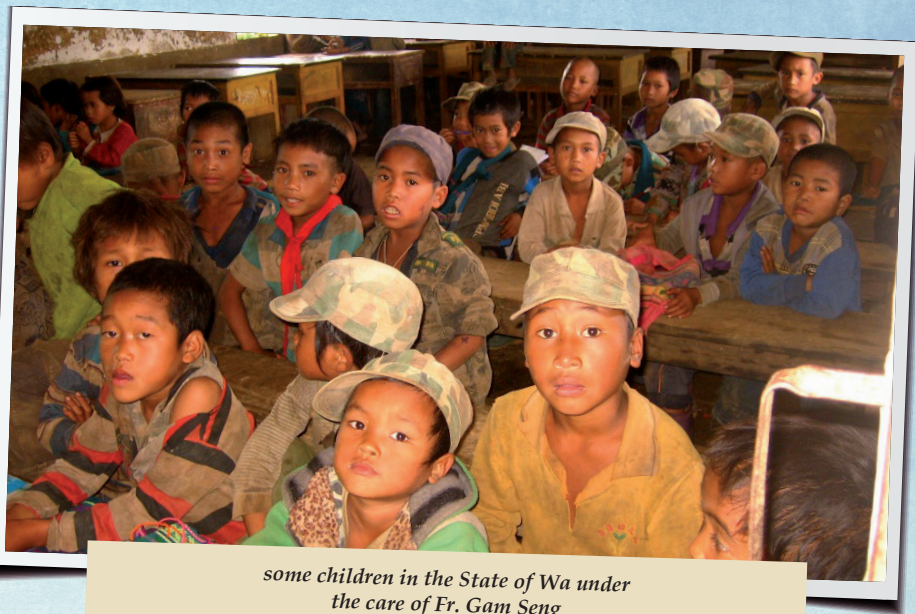


Fr. Gam Seng, Sr. Pansy and Sr. Emi Soe

the State of Wa, an undefined area enclosed within the eastern Shan State, and known for cannibalism. The name 'Wa' is taken from the name of the ethnic group that belongs to the State. The State is a place where educated people make up just about one percent of its 700,000 population. These 'wild' people are left with no medical care and for some families, not even one out of ten children survive because of poverty. Some mothers had to go to taungyah (field) a week after giving birth so the children get sick and suffer malnutrition. There is only one family whose members are all Catholics and two families whose members are a mix of Catholic, Baptist and Nat believers. Many missionaries have previously worked in this remote area.

A man of courage and availability for the mission, Fr. John said yes to a new mission.

"I deeply appreciate missionary work and Wa State, as one of the underdeveloped places and a home to some communists and believers in Nats (spirits) and cosmic powers, needs the proclamation of the Good News and the people there needs some development," he said. It is not easy to be with people who were isolated and not given attention for so long but they also deserve love and care. As Pope Francis says in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* "God's heart has a special place for the poor, so much so that he himself "became poor" (EG 197)." In the first few months, he had to adjust with their programme, learn their language, culture, food, lifestyle and philosophy but despite this, he embraced the people with the same passion and love with which he embraced the formands who were entrusted in his care. Being a missionary in the area, he kept reminding himself to be one with the poor, not to give instruction but to listen to their needs. In spite of the difficulties, Fr. Gam Seng continues to do his mission, sustained by the desire to bring the people into communion with God through evangelization, education and holistic human development and to "find Christ in them" (EG 198). Entering this new territory, he struggled with the language since people who live just three kilometres away from where he stays, use different language; they speak Chinese. Although the government favors their work of developing health care and education in the area, he still had to struggle in finding a source of income in order to sustain the missionary work there. Moved by his dream to see the propagation of the Good News in these people, he strove to build a good relationship with the authority and the people, and he won them over. His great passion keeps him going, dreaming for those people he served. "I believe that one day they will be educated and embrace the Good News and good people in the region," he shared. Not only does he work



some children in the State of Wa under the care of Fr. Gam Seng

for their spiritual welfare, he also reaches out to them, addressing their needs with the help of the lay missionaries and nuns.

While listening to him, in his sharing about the people of Wa, I saw the spark of love and enthusiasm in his eyes. Many are concerned with personal affairs but missionaries like him remind us that many await an experience of care and love, not so much material help but the presence of someone who will be with them, reaching out with mercy and love like Jesus. These missionaries need our material and spiritual support as they accomplish the mission that God has given them. We, as Christians, are called to take part in the mission of the Church and this; we can do by offering even a simple and short prayer for the missionaries like Fr. John Gam Seng. 🙏



Fr. Gam Seng with some people in the State of Wa

Sr. Giovannina Zanotto: A Light in the Darkness of Myanmar's History

By: Sr. Pansy, MSBS

Every period of history has its lights and shadows. Its shadows teach us lessons in life; its scars remind us of its horrors while its lights remind us that God never fails to make something good out of everything, even horrendous things.

The history of Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, is no different; it is full of stories of violence, greed and suffering as well as with stories of heroism and faithfulness. The life of Sr. Giovannina Zanotto and the many missionaries sent to Myanmar are lights that manifest the presence of God with those who suffer. Sr. Giovannina is an Italian missionary of the Sisters of Maria Bambina who was sent to Myanmar. Her life is an inspiration to be relished by men and women of today who have consecrated themselves in priestly and religious life and by all Christians who are called to be missionaries by virtue of their baptism. The book entitled "Piccola Fra I Piccoli" (The Little one among the Little) movingly retells the missionary experiences of Sr. Giovannina Zanotto, her enthusiasm and struggles until her expulsion from Burma.

Her story is intertwined and inseparable from the shadows in the history of Myanmar - the reversals of political alliances and others such as invasions, dictatorships and infighting. In her missionary work, she had faced the pain and terror of violence, wars, dangers, disease, the sword, etc. No amount of threat was able to make her falter in her commitment to do the mission of God wherever she was sent. She served and took care of the poor, the lepers, those afflicted with malaria and other diseases, and the orphans. She lived in poverty of means since the people she served were poor. Her life was in constant threat from the bandits and from contagious diseases but she did not beg off her mission. She was with a heart which is frightened yet her trust in God's providential love had surpassed all and so, she remained with the people especially with the girls and children who were under their care. With a maternal heart filled with compassion, she shared their burden.

The country's condition was unstable especially when it was nearing the end of the fight for independence and even after gaining independence from British colonial rule. The account of this part of our history, as written in the Official Catholic Directory of Myanmar 2011, tells of the expulsion from Myanmar of 232 foreign Catholic priests and religious. Only those who had come to Burma before the country's independence from England (January 4, 1948) were allowed to stay on condition that they will not be in-charge of any education or health institution. Those who left the country for any reason were not permitted to return. In the year 1966, Sr. Giovannina was one of the missionaries expelled from the country. She left the mission in Myanmar not because of any difficulty but because the government decreed that they leave the country.

I have never known her personally nor met her before. However, knowing about her missionary experiences in Myanmar through the sharing of Sr. Rosanna and reflecting on the growth of the Local Church in Myanmar, I realized that that life

and suffering of the many missionaries like her and of people who shed their blood did not go in vain but have reaped bountiful fruits in the hearts of those who have known them. The Local Church in Myanmar celebrated the 500 years of Christianity last November.

"Save a soul and die" is the motto that guided and motivated Sr. Giovannina and the many missionaries in their mission. Though Sr. Giovannina did not feel that she has completed her mission because she survived and did not die there, her life speaks of her self-giving for the mission. I am sure she is happier now than ever since she had joined her Lord and found the fullness of joy.

Her life is not just about the hardship and struggles she endured but also about the charity in her heart that sustained her life as religious and missionary. For



Sr. Giovannina with children in Loikaw, Myanmar



Sr. Giovannina and Fr. Antonio, her brother

me, she is a light that illumines our path to being and becoming followers of Christ. The world today needs people like her whose heart is imbued with faith, hope and charity. Many people live in a world of violence, war, injustices, calamities, poverty, hunger, suffering of different faces in different parts of the world. Some of us live in those situations and some of us just hear the stories, nevertheless, with hearts filled with charity, we can do our part in the mission of God in his Church. May we renew once again our love and zeal for the mission of God through the Church and renew and enliven our faith. Let us be beacons of hope to people, capable of empathy and ultimately of self-giving. 🙏

INDONESIA

Fr. Kristianus Sada, SVD: Missionary of Courage and Joy

By: Sr. Veronica Imelda Uko, MSBS

There is joy in embracing the mission of God. Pope Francis said in *Evangelii Gaudium* that “those who enjoy life most are those who leave security on the shore and become excited by the mission of communicating life to others” (EG 10). Fr. Kristianus Sada, an Indonesian SVD missionary communicates this joy of leaving security on the shore and embracing the mission entrusted to him.

Fr. Kristianus, known as Fr. Kristi, was ordained in 2007 and just a year after that, he received his new mission. He was to be sent to the Philippines particularly in Bangued, which is near the place where his confrere, Fr. Fransiskus Madhu was shot dead before celebrating the Mass on Palm Sunday of 2007. In spite of that, this young missionary accepted his new mission equipped with his joy, courage, love for the mission and willingness to cooperate in the plan of God. He did not hesitate to accept his mission to proclaim His Good News to places where its proclamation is needed.

In 2008, upon his arrival in the Philippines, I and my co-sisters had the chance to meet him before he left for Bangued. In that meeting, I couldn't see in the face of Fr. Kristi the expression of fear or doubt, what I saw was his willingness and readiness to go to his mission. Thinking of his new mission, I asked him, “Father, are you not afraid? And he said: “Why do I have to be afraid? As a missionary, I have to be courageous and to accept the life I have chosen.” His answer made me realize and understand how much he loves his missionary vocation. When he was already in Bangued, he kept communicating with us and in his sharing; I sensed his joy for his new mission. It was also a joy for us to listen to his sharing. Once I asked him: Father, did you celebrate the Mass in that place already? And he said “Yes,” but the problem was that he had to write his homily in English and his brother priest had to translate for him in Ilocano. It must have been difficult for him but I couldn't sense frustration in him. He was enthusiastic in knowing and adapting to the people and their culture.

He was also always ready to accept the challenges thrown in his way. Few years after his stint as assistant parish priest, he was appointed parish priest of that place. As a parish



The author (second from left) with Fr. Kristi and the MSBS Indonesian aspirants and sisters

priest, he needs to lead the people. Young as he was, this again required him to go out of his comfort zone and take responsibility as the pastor of the flock entrusted to his care.

In many instances of his life, he has shown his courage in leaving his security on the shore, plunging into the sea of mission where people awaits the message of hope and love; the life-giving message of the Gospel. He has left the security of his family and homeland in order to embrace people of different culture, strengthened by the love of God and the support and love of his confreres, his family and friends. In a sense, he has also left even the security of his own life because the news that a confrere was killed could also make one feel the threat to one's own life. In the midst of it all, his countenance speaks of the joy that is in his heart and his sharing with us would always resound with that missionary joy. As a missionary, I can learn something and take inspiration from his life, that is, to be always willing and zealous in communicating the joy of the Gospel, of echoing its life-giving message to the people, and I thank God for all these missionaries, who by their lives, strive to communicate message of joy and hope and to bring the people to an experience of a loving God who dwells with his people, surmounting the difficulties, even their own limitations and weaknesses. 🙏

Sr. Valeria Tosato, MSBS: Old yet Young at Heart for the Mission

By: Sr. Ma. Goretti Jury, MSBS



Sr. Valeria

Serve the Lord with joyful heart; this is the call of God to His people. Many men and women respond to this call by joyfully doing His mission here on earth. As I journey through this life, serving the Lord and His people, I have encountered people who inspire me to continue my search for the true meaning of life, people who strengthen my desire to do the will of God.

Sr. Valeria, who is so dear to my heart, is one of these people. She is my spiritual mother who accompanies me with her prayer and sacrifices since my aspirancy and until now that I am already a junior. She was born on April 15, 1925 in Italy. She joined the Congregation of the Missionary Servants of the Blessed Sacrament on May 31, 1943. In her heart, she heard the Blessed Virgin Mary telling her, "You are to be consecrated to the Lord."

"Looking at the Missionary Servants, I have always felt in my heart the desire to be one of them. I just turned 17 years old when I finally decided to join them and was accepted as a postulant. It is a beautiful date for me because it was also the celebration of the Congregation's 20 years of existence," she said when asked about her reason for joining the Missionary Servants. The Blessed Virgin Mary was her inspiration in consecrating her life to the Lord. Recounting the birth of her awareness of her vocation, she said, "I could hear

Mary's words, 'Enter...enter...' and I felt great joy." Sr. Valeria personally met and lived with the Mother Foundress, who, in the early years of her religious life, repeatedly reminded her and all the sisters to be holy.

She is now 89 years old but at her age, she is still able to contribute something to the mission by sewing, repairing clothes and doing the laundry work in the community where she stays and dedicating time to pray for the missionaries all over the world. She is currently assigned in Collegio San Pietro, a place where almost 200 priests from different countries come to study in Rome. Prayer and incessant asking of the Lord for perseverance keeps her strong and joyous. With her serenity and holiness, she is an inspiration to the priests she serves and to the people she meets. She is truly a humble and joyful servant of God.

I met Sr. Valeria personally in 2010 when I went to Italy with my co-sisters on the occasion of the General Assembly of the Congregation. The joy, love, serenity and holiness I saw in her face and in her service strengthened my desire and gave me the courage to be a missionary like her and to live my life for others. In the duration of my stay there, she would always smile at me and tell me in her soft voice, "I always remember you and pray for you," every time I met her. I believe what she said and really felt the blessings of her prayer as I take every step in my formation journey. She also expressed her wish that I may experience in my religious life the joy and happiness of serving the missionaries, to live religious life with happiness, contentment and cheerfulness. This is her joy and this is what she wanted to pass on to me. We have not exchanged many words because of the language barrier but her example and prayer speak loud enough for me to feel and hear her missionary joy. She is old but young at heart in loving and embracing God's mission and His missionaries.

Her life is a call to be always young at heart for God's kingdom. As St. Therese said, "God does not count how much we can do for Him but how much love we put in doing His will and mission." As human beings, we are tempted to count the work we have done and fail to ask ourselves, is it done out of love? Our God is a God who gives His blessing and graces joyfully and abundantly. So, He too needs joyful givers and servers in His vineyard for "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few" (Lk 10:2).



The author (third from left in the first row) with Sr. Valeria and the MSBS sisters and formandeas who attended the General Assembly in Italy

Yolanda Moment: An Experience of God's Providence

By: Rev. Fr. Irwin P. Gavilo

"What am I going to do?" It was the question that haunted me, question I asked to myself and my God after seeing the huge devastation wrought by Yolanda....

November 8, 2013 is a day that made a lasting imprint on my life as a person and as a priest. It was about 3:00 in the morning when Super Typhoon Yolanda made her presence felt. The winds grew stronger by the hour and the scared people in the neighborhood started flocking in the convent. I found myself at the terrace of the second floor, monitoring the weather and the influx of people. It was almost 7:00 in the morning, I have just finished sending the text message, "Ayaw kamo kahadlok, salig lang sa Dios." (Do not be afraid, have faith in God.)," to all my contacts in the phonebook especially to the leaders of the different chapels and sitios when the signal was lost, the electricity was out and Yolanda went wild with fury and terror. Debris was flying everywhere. It was a sight of chaos and destruction.

People were crying in fear. Some of them thought that this was already the end of the world. Families were holding to each other tightly and with tears streaming down their faces, they started saying a prayer for deliverance from the rampaging storm. We heard loud noises as the roofing of the convent was blown away and the scary sound of the shattering glass windows and doors ensued along with the rumbling noise of furniture, cabinets and other objects tossed against the wall of the upper part of the rectory by the super strong and destructive wind. It mercilessly smashed everything in its path. At the height of the storm, we started rescuing people, young and old, in the vicinity. Fearlessly, the men tried to rescue parishioners trapped in their homes. It was difficult to transport people to the convent because of the strong winds, flying debris and low visibility.

After the long and agonizing hours, at last it was over. Finding the evacuated people safe and secured in the rectory, I immediately looked for the tabernacle under the rubbles of concrete and steel of our totally destroyed chapel. I was so happy to find it slightly scratched beneath the ruins and that, I consider a miracle. In the evening, it was so dark because there was no electricity. Outside the convent, there were bonfires out of burnt tires that served as light in the darkness. The fire lighted our darkened world and for me it was more than that. It was a message of hope reminding people never to allow the darkness of defeat and desperation overcome them. The ground floor of the convent became the sanctuary and temporary shelter of the homeless while my tent has become my home for more than a month.

Early morning the following day, I visited the people in the barangays and the sight of defeat and total destruction welcomed me. Along the way, my heart was crushed at the sight of the misery of the flock entrusted to me. I wanted to lament, but I can't because people needed someone to look up to during these trying times, a shepherd who can guide them to verdant pastures and cool water to soothe their hungry and thirsty spirit. Actually I was at a lost on what to do. All I can do was to be present with my people, to let them feel that they are not alone in their suffering; to give them the best comfort I can possibly give and to encourage them to never give up and continue to hope. "Be thankful to the Lord that we are still alive" were the words that I spoke like mantra to them so that it can sink deeply into their consciousness and console them in their desolation.

Early morning of Sunday, we drove to Tolosa to check on my parents. It took us 10 hours (normally a 1 1/2 hour drive) to get there.



The chapel destroyed by Super typhoon Yolanda



Fr. Irwin Gavilo



Fr. Irwin celebrating Mass with the parishioners

There were debris and dead bodies everywhere. My heart was pounding so hard as we near Tolosa, my hometown. I was comforted seeing my parents and grandmother still alive. The fact that our house was badly damaged and none of our appliances even our car was saved did not matter to me anymore. What was important is that they survived the storm surge although my mother almost drowned.

Then, we went back to Tugbong with great difficulty. The next day, we had the first Mass after the typhoon. The convent ground floor became a multi-purpose center; a house of worship during mass, a place of refuge for the homeless at night and a storage area for the people who lost their homes. In my homilies, I encouraged people never to lose hope, to trust in God's mercy and providence

I urged them to storm heaven with prayers because we cannot survive this devastation on our own. God has given us another chance because something great is in store for us and that He has a special mission for us. God will never leave us empty; something was taken away from us but He will replace it with something better or even best. We just have to hold on and keep the faith.

The eyes of the people pierced my conscience. Yes, they may be comforted by the Gospel and the sacraments but they needed more. Right there and then, I decided to go to Cebu to find help. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, people whom I did not know personally started communicating to me and expressing their great interest in helping St. John the Baptizer Mission Station.

It was almost Christmas; we needed a temporary shelter to celebrate the Misa de Gallo. With the cooperation and full support of the community, we were able to clean the chapel. Working with the parishioners was a wonderful experience for me. Though they are victims themselves, homeless and roofless, still they came whenever the mission station called them to work. During Sunday celebrations, people would just stand and endure the heat of the sun. It was so touching

to see the fiery faith of the people. We may be homeless, roofless, but not hopeless because we know that God in His great mercy will never abandon us.

We had our advent and Christmas liturgies celebrated in an "Old Testament Church," that is, a church made of bamboo poles and tarpaulin (tent church). The house of worship was always filled with people during liturgical activities. They come to the Lord on bended knees, thanking Him for their second life and humbly asking help to rise from this desperate situation. We celebrated the midnight mass with simplicity and great depth. Crisis was never an obstacle to having a solemn and wonderful celebration on our Lord's birthday.

Tapping the talents and expertise of the gifted people in the community, we were able to come up with a project proposal dubbed as: "Help Make a Home for Jesus." Again the response of the people was amazing. Those who cannot give materially did their share in the "Pintakasi" or volunteer work.

As a community, we were not alone in our journey to recovery; a Good Samaritan community in the other part of the world is accompanying us and helping us back on our feet. The project "Home for Jesus" is on-going with God's grace. I always reminded the faithful in our mission station never to get tired and be lax in this sacred endeavor. Help from outside may come but still this is our project and we need to own it. This will become the legacy of our faith. As a pastor, I always make myself available during pintakasi to make them feel that I am one with them. I could not have survived this ordeal without the providence of God. All the things I've done and accomplished were all attributed to the love and mercy of God. I may be an unworthy pastor but He never abandoned me especially in these trying times. He gave me the courage, the strength, the inspiration and the will to care for the flock He entrusted to me. Thank you Lord. 🙏

Experiences

God's love knows no bounds; He enters our lives and meets us where we are. In this section, we share with you stories of personal encounter with Him, experiences that nurture life and give meaning to life, to both the joy and pain that it brings, experiences that move hearts to do something so as to respond to Jesus' call in one's context and reality.

HOLY CHILDHOOD ASSOCIATION

Sowing the Seed of Faith and Mission

By: Sr. Grace Pagwagan, MSBS



HCA members in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro

"Let the children come to me" (Mt. 19:14). More than 2,000 years ago, Jesus of Nazareth, the greatest Man who lived on earth, said these words. For me, His words did not just reveal his compassion for the little ones but also reveal the great potential hidden in their tiny and fragile bodies.

They are not insignificant. Pope Francis said that the young people are the present and the future of the Church and I think the same can be said of the children. Certain of this truth and convinced that every Christian, even and especially little children, has a place in the Church, I, with the help of my co-sisters, committed myself to the task of teaching and guiding the children in Mindoro who are members of the Holy Childhood Association and Propagation of Faith. We teach them catechesis on Sundays and encourage them to share their talents at the service of the Church as members of choir, as lectors, commentators and altar servers as well as in cleaning and decorating the church.

On World Mission Day and on the Feast of Sto. Niño, their Patron, we invite other children to participate in our celebration. We also have Eucharistic adoration for all missionaries, for the mission of the Church and for the intentions of the Holy Father.

We facilitate and organize other activities such as the praying of the Holy Rosary in our convent or in villages on the Feast of the Birth of the Virgin Mary, offering prayer and material contribution for the mission. Our efforts are rewarded with the joy of witnessing the fruits of these activities in their lives. We are happy to see them participate actively in the activities of the Church and gain confidence in themselves, confidence that comes from knowing that they can do something for the mission even if they are still young.

In my years of religious consecration, this is a great source of joy and strength. My love and gratitude for God who first loved me and for the mission entrusted to me enables me to carry out this work. My love for Mo. Caterina, the Foundress of our Congregation who believed in the capacity of the children to participate in the mission also keeps me going. With Mo. Caterina and all those who work for and among the children, I embrace these little children entrusted in my care and as I embrace them, I keep in mind that I also embrace the little ones, whom my Lord and Spouse welcomes and loves. 🙏



The author with some pupils of MCS

I am Angelica Balabis. With the help of the MSBS Sisters, I became a member of HCA when I was still in elementary. As a member of HCA, I was formed to participate in the Church particularly in the work of mission. The catechesis, which I attend every Sunday in the compound of the MSBS Sisters, is a key to my understanding of the Word of God and it also taught me the value of missionary life. I learned that a child like me can already give great contribution to the mission. I am still young, but I am already a missionary by praying together with the other members of the Association and by giving little material help, giving coins in the HCA coin bank for the mission. The money we save are then sent to the office of the Pontifical Mission Societies as a help to the children in different parts of the world. One of my unforgettable experiences as HCA member is when I and my other companions from Occidental Mindoro were given the chance to attend the Grand Mission Festival in Marikina City on April 2012. It was a very enjoyable experience. We were given the chance to meet and be with other children missionaries from different places in the Philippines.

The mission of the Holy Childhood Association is a fulfillment in my life as a child and I am really thankful to the HCA and to the MSBS Sisters who continue to form many children in the life of faith and mission and promote their human growth. May the motto of HCA “children helping children” be implanted in the minds and hearts of all children and youth.



I am Anna Mae Macabata Torres, eleven years old. I live in Labangan Poblacion, San Jose Occidental Mindoro. I am a grade five pupil in Occidental Mindoro State College and presently a member of the Holy Childhood Association. I was still in my pre-school when I started attending catechism classes. This inspired me to actively participate in the work of mission. We, members of the Association, are already missionaries. We are young yet we are already aware of what is happening in the world. We have learned how to pray and help others. Every Sunday, we have bible study. I find joy listening to the Word of God and being able to proclaim it.

Since I became a member of the HCA, my life has changed. I became more helpful and friendlier. I also felt peace in my mind and heart, and my faith in God was strengthened. I pray every day: in the morning, before meals, before going to bed and anytime I want. Everything is peaceful when my mind is occupied with the Lord.

Now I am still active and I will continue to be a missionary even until I finish my studies.



A Discovery of My Being Missionary

By: Asp. Chloue Ann Encarguez, MSBS

Having a mother with a deep love for our Mother Church is one of the great gifts I have received from God. She nurtures our family in prayer and participation in the Church's life. She instilled in my heart the importance of participating in the Holy Mass, praying the Holy Rosary and reading the Holy Scripture. My everyday life will not be complete without these. They became part of my routine.

As I went on with this way of life, I realized that praying, reading the Scriptures and attending the Holy Mass is not enough. I would like to serve God and others. I have found a way to fulfill this desire in my heart one day when the Missionary Servants of the Blessed Sacrament (MSBS) sisters came to introduce to us the association of the children who help the mission, the association of aspiring little apostles of Christ: the Holy Childhood Association (HCA). I was then cooking our food for lunch because my mother had to wash our clothes and take care of my two-month old sister and my father and elder brother were in the farm. Since I was one of the children blessed to be an MSBS scholar since elementary, I was informed by the leader of the scholars in our village that the MSBS sisters were coming to our place.


That day, I forgot about it and it was good that my mother reminded me and did the cooking for me. I arrived almost late in the house of our leader. When the leader saw me, she handed me two things that I now hold and keep as a treasure: the two certifications that I am a little apostle of Christ in His mission, a member of the HCA. One of this is

a paper folded into two; the image of Baby Jesus holding a holy Rosary printed in the front page and on the next page, my name and the date it was given. The other one is a golden medallion with the image of the Child Jesus, his right hand making a sign of peace and his left hand holding a globe with a Cross. At the back of it, the words “Pontificia Opera Dell’Infanzia Missionaria” “Anch’io Appartengo All’ Opera” are inscribed.

That was the beginning of my awareness of the mission works. As a member of the association, I was inspired to participate actively in the life of the Church. I prayed the holy Rosary everyday together with the other members of Holy Childhood in our village. On Sundays, I used to attend the Holy Mass in the morning and the bible study in the afternoon. I was also helping in cleaning the church every Saturday afternoon.

The reading of the books and stories of missionaries and saints given by the MSBS sisters also strengthened my desire and conviction that I can be a missionary, that I can serve God and others. I thought that I cannot do anything for the mission and I just have to wait while I am young but through HCA, I discovered the many ways I can help the mission especially by offering little sacrifices and prayers with love. My desire to be a missionary began to take root and started to grow.

In our Bible study, there was one passage that I couldn’t forget. It was the passage where Jesus appeared to His apostles in the shore of the Sea of Tiberias after His resurrection. He asked his Apostles to throw their nets to the right side. The Apostles obeyed Him and they caught many fish. Our teacher then taught us a song related to that Gospel passage and told us that the Apostles became fishers of men not literally. Reflecting in that Gospel, I realized that we are all invited to become fishers of men in His Church not only by going to far places but also by supporting with prayers, works and sacrifices the fishers of men in the mission field.

I am now an MSBS aspirant striving to be a missionary by supporting with my prayers, works and sacrifices the mission and the missionaries, those who are called to be fishers of men in the vast sea of the world. When I look back at this part of my life while writing this, I asked myself: “Why do I need to ask Him of the reason why He called me?” Since I was young, he has already planted the seed of faith in my heart and he allowed that seed to grow and bloom in me. He takes care of me despite the many times I forget Him especially in time of trials and now I keep on going, nurtured by the same desire that gradually matures as I undergo formation. 



*The author with
Sr. Rosanna Favero*



The author with her co-aspirants

Mother Caterina Day: A Celebration Filled with Fun and Learning

By: Sr. Denden Cariazo, MSBS

With two days of fun, formative and spiritually-enriching activities, the children and faculty of Mother Caterina School commemorated the death of our Foundress, Mother Caterina Zecchini.

An assortment of games, talks and activities was prepared for this celebration. Convinced that the love and passion for the mission of Mother Caterina is a gift worth sharing to the children, we gave a talk about her life and charisma. After introducing our Foundress to them, we encouraged them to write a letter to her. Their letters that contained their childlike sentiments amused and brought much joy to us. To add missionary flavor to the celebration, the children were divided into five groups and each group was named after a continent. They were requested to wear shirt that represents their group. As a response to the call echoed in the 73rd CEAP convention to make students aware of the need to help save the Mother Earth and to do something about it, we also prepared a talk about global warming and its effect. This topic is related to the mission in the sense that we, as Christians are called to be good stewards of the earth, the home that God has created for us. We were given the mission to protect, cultivate and make the creation fruitful. This talk concluded with some suggestions on how they can help save Mother Earth. The Caterinians took some commitments such as to segregate



the trash inside the room, to pick up the trash around the school and to maintain the good condition of the school furniture, their tables and chairs because by doing so we can save a number of trees. In keeping with this theme, they have also recycled empty plastic bottles, scraps of cloth and old ribbons into pen organizers. With this activity, we hope to make the children aware of their responsibility to take care of and save the Mother Earth. We also had group and individual poster-making with the theme of "Helping Save the Mother Earth from global

warming." The children worked together with the teacher-in-charge in composing a poster in a creative fashion and after that the representatives from each group presented and explained their work. The celebration entailed a lot of work and preparation and yet, all these were rewarded with the participation of the pupils and with the collaboration of the faculty, school aids, interns and parents.

Some parents were also present and joined us in praying on the day of the Feast. They brought for their child empty bottles which were sold and the proceeds given to the HCA solidarity fund. By enlisting the help and involvement of the teachers, we hope to



The author with the MCS pupils



MCS pupils during one of the activities



The members of the "American Group" presenting their poster

give them the formation that they also need as Christians. Personally, the celebration brought so much joy to me. I felt that the Spirit of God was with us in every activity we have done with the children. As I contemplate the children's reaction and participation, I found in my heart the hope of seeing them continue to grow in loving the mission of the Church. I also felt their need for someone who will show them how. I believe that Mo. Caterina is happy to see these children echo her prayer of "Most Sweet Jesus" and understand the mission work and the simple ways that they can help the mission as Caterinians. It is also our joy to take this day as an opportunity to express our gratitude and admiration for their simple and little contribution that are precious in the eyes of God. I deem it important to let them feel the loving assurance that they have done something worthy of praise in the eyes of God and of the persons guiding them. I believe

that a healthy dose of appreciation will help them to be more open and capable of giving their energies for God's mission. Facilitating and organizing these activities is like cultivating and making the soil fertile for a beautiful garden. Through these activities, I hope that these children will bear bountiful fruits that will show forth beauty and joy.

I am also grateful to God for all the parents who supported us in our activities. Their cooperation was a great help in making the celebration possible. I also thank God for all my co-workers in MCS because with them, I continually experience the meaning of my being a daughter of Mother Caterina, as we move with the same joy in animating the children in the spirit and charism of MSBS. I ask God to continue bless and nurture the eucharistic-missionary spirit in our hearts. 🙏



MCS faculty and pupils at the gym of MCS

FAMILY FOR THE MISSION

The Family for the Mission is an association initiated by Sr. Luciana Lucatello, MSBS. It has the aim of promoting and animating missionary vocation in the families. The members commit themselves to offer an hour of prayer for the mission and participate in some mission activities. They also commit to do some works or activities in favor of the mission like feeding and outreach programs.



Family for the Mission: Participation in the Mission of the Church

By: Blandina Delos Santos

I and my husband were blessed with three children; all of them are already college graduates. We have instilled in them the habit and value of praying since they were children. We attend Mass on Sundays as a family but even if we have active spiritual life, we remain to be an imperfect family who has our share of misunderstanding; perhaps, it is because our children's visions and perceptions in life change as they grow up. Any misunderstanding however, is resolved through dialogue.

Our family had also been through trials in life. One of these was when our youngest daughter was diagnosed with a hole in her heart. We were advised to have our baby undergo surgery after two years but we did not lose hope. We prayed and attended Mass, and with the help of God, the wound healed by itself after two years so the doctor assured us that our baby does not need surgery anymore. Now, our youngest has already finished her studies and is currently working.

We also had another child, who was just a baby when she came into our life. She was an orphan and her siblings couldn't support her anymore. We took her in our care and the Lord did not abandon us and has given us what we need. Now she is also studying in Mother Caterina School and actively participates in the catechism classes on Sundays, taught and formed spiritually by the MSBS sisters.


Through this, we met and became close to the sisters, who then introduced to us the Association of the Family for the Mission. They presented to us the characteristics and aim of the Association as well as the story of its beginning. The Association is composed of families who are willing to offer material support and an hour of prayer for the mission of the Church. This is not a difficult task for us considering its noble aim, which is to strengthen the bond of love and unity among family members, among the members of the Association and to support the mission of the Church in simple ways. Offering an hour of prayer for the mission is a simple and easy task yet the great challenge is to be faithful in the promise and commitment to do this.

We, the members of the Association, cooperate in the Feeding Program of the MSBS. This is a great help in giving



some members of the Family for the Mission Association with the indigenous people in Emok

proper nutrition to the poor children. In view of this, the members were divided into four groups and each group will manage the feeding once a month. Each member also donated old yet usable dresses, shoes and toys, and these were distributed to our indigenous brothers and sisters in Emok last April. It feels good to help others, to cooperate in the mission of the Church.

In spite of all the trials that come into our lives, I know that God always accompanies us and strengthens our relationship. 



the author and her daughter helping in packing the goods to be donated


To Love and Serve God

By: Melinda Pacheco

"I want to love You the best way I can. I feel in my heart the great desire to be an apostle of Your great love." Mo. Caterina, in these words, expressed her burning desire to love and serve God.

Two years have already passed and I still remember that one midnight when I couldn't sleep. Her words echoed in my ears and inspired me to put into music her Act of Offering to the Merciful Love, in which her burning desire to love and serve God is expressed. I was experiencing some crucial trials then and in that moment, the prayer of Mo. Caterina helped me. I realized that my frustrations in life are caused by too much anxiety. Mo. Caterina's words reminded me that instead of looking at the problems, I have to learn to gaze at the face of God, with my heart aflame with zeal to serve Him. In that moment too, I realized that I have wasted many years of my life but I was consoled knowing that it is not yet too late. I know that with the help of Mother Caterina and the Sisters of the Congregation she founded, I will go on with my journey.

Sr. Rosanna, a Missionary Servant of the Blessed Sacrament Sister, encouraged me to teach catechism to the aspirants of the Congregation and this has helped me a lot. I am a professional catechist but in almost 8 years, I did not practice that. Because

of her trust, I started reading again books that will help me accomplish the task she offered to me and so the fire of mission was rekindled in my heart. The MSBS opened a new door in my life: the teaching about God. Her invitation hit me with the realization that I can still do something. That new door led to a great change in my spiritual life. I regained strength in myself, realizing that I still have a role to play in the plan of God. So, I also embraced the teaching of catechism to the high school students in Meycauayan, Bulacan and I teach not only catechesis to the MSBS aspirants but also how to play organ and guitar and some liturgical songs. As a former nun and now a lay, I still have a mission in life, to live in the presence of God with holiness and faithfulness in service. I am revitalized and inflamed by the realization that I still have a place in the mission of the Church, in the saving plan of God. I thank God so much for the friendship of the MSBS Sisters. Their kindness and love as a friend and a sister in faith inspire me more to serve God. They are cheerful, kind, respectful and humble and above all passionate for the mission, traits that I know they have learned from Mo. Caterina. With their friendship and guided by the inspiration of Mo. Caterina, I go on with my journey, serving and loving God the best way I can, that is by sharing my life and my talents for His greater glory. 



I WANT TO LOVE YOU

Words of Mother Caterina Zecchini (MSBS Foundress)

Composed By: Melinda Pacheco

I want to love You the best way I can.
I want to love You
even for those who don't love You.

I will accept Your Divine Will
in union with the pain that You endured;
by myself I can do nothing but with the help of
Your grace I can do everything.

O my God and my all
I feel in my heart the great desire
of becoming the apostle of Your great love.

I implore You never to abandon me
nor to look at my weakness
but to use me according to Your mercy.



Melinda Pacheco

✧ *Formation...Formation...Formation* ✧

In the second year of novitiate, the novices are given a period of exposure to the mission activities and apostolate of the Congregation as part of their formation. For this, they were sent to three different fields: to the Pontifical Mission Societies National Office, to Radio Veritas-Asia and to three schools in Quezon City. The exposure aims to allow them to experience the reality of life of the Congregation and its specific activities.

NOVITIATE

Collaboration with the Mission

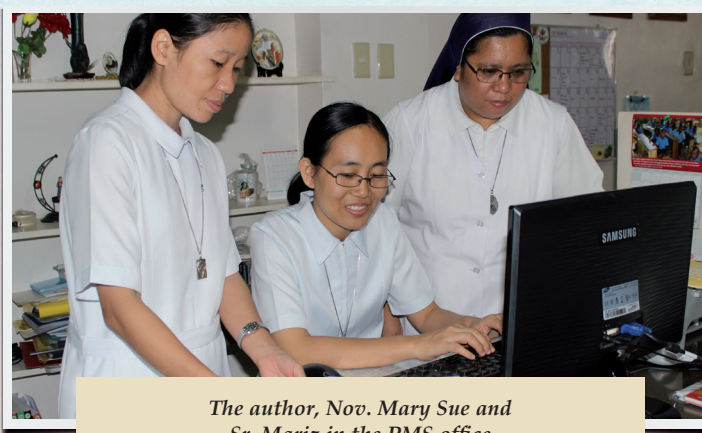
By: Nov. Elizabeth Samarmo, MSBS

"All missions, without exception, will benefit from our prayers, works and sacrifices, as well as from the things and contributions collected with particular concern."

This was the statement of Mo. Caterina Zecchini, our Foundress, showing us that the support of mission in every possible way is inherent in our charism as a Congregation.

For us MSBS, one way of promoting and supporting the mission is to collaborate with the Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS) which is composed of the Propagation of Faith, Holy Childhood, St. Peter the Apostle and Missionary Union. The PMS keeps the mission going by reaching out to the needy ones, addressing accordingly the request in different mission areas with the help of donors, facilitating and organizing mission programs and activities.

I and my co-novice Mary Sue were sent for our exposure to its national office in the Philippines. As an MSBS novice, bound to embrace fully the charism of the Congregation, it is my privilege to be sent there. We helped in organizing the archive, doing the inventory and arranging some of the documents. These are simple tasks yet by these, we



The author, Nov. Mary Sue and Sr. Mariz in the PMS office

support and collaborate with the mission, contributing our time, talents and skills. These are ways by which we serve others especially the mission and the missionaries. Doing those simple tasks brought us the joy and sorrow of knowing the many and diverse realities in our world.

The fact that there are many people who are suffering, exploited and neglected in every part of the world is not anymore surprising but this reality still pains us. What brought us joy is the affirmation that many missionaries work tirelessly for the poor and they get through because of God's help and the material, moral and spiritual support they receive. They embrace all the problems and difficulties in order to provide the basic needs of the poor and to proclaim the Gospel with their lives and words. In this difficult mission, the missionaries too, need our material and spiritual support. Through prayer and material contribution, we can help and assure them that they are not alone in doing the mission of God among the peoples.

Working in the PMS, we have also learned about its history and activities and this enriched us with stories of many generous souls who have shared their time, effort,



The author with her co-novice

sacrifices, resources, and all that they can give for the mission of the Church. This encouraged us even more to serve, to spend our lives, supporting and doing the mission of God. As MSBS, the desire and enthusiasm to cooperate in the Mission should flow in our blood. In this sense, our exposure is a help for us to value and own more our missionary vocation and identity.

It inspired us to go and listen to the reality around us, attentive to the needs of mission and always ready and available to render even the simplest and humblest service. It widened our knowledge about both good and

dismal realities in which we have to do our mission.

At the end of our exposure, we keep in our hearts new insights, discoveries and learning that will help us carry out more zealously our task as novices now and our future task as full-fledged MSBS committed to a life of mission in the Church. We keep in our hearts the joy of having collaborated with the mission through the PMS, of surmounting the challenges and difficulties that come with it, inspired and strengthened by our Foundress, who desired that all missions will benefit from our prayers, works and sacrifices. 🙏

Reaching out to far Lands

By: Nov. Elizabeth Moe Wai Phu, MSBS



*(from left) Nov. Bridgid, Nov. Dayday,
Nov. Erma and Nov. Elizabeth at the RVA*

Send us, Jesus, to lands far and new! Our exposure at Radio Veritas in Asia (RVA) is like being sent to lands far and new. We, four of the novices of the Missionary Servants of the Blessed Sacrament (MSBS) were sent to RVA for our exposure.

In this exposure, we remained within the borders of Philippines and yet through the works we have done there, we were able to reach far lands, conquering geographical borders and distances. We experienced the joy of sharing the Word of God, the life of the Saints, the charism of our Congregation and liturgical music online or on-air. We experienced the pains and joy of translating the message of Pope and some teachings of the Church. It was a difficult work but our love for God and our desire that people may hear, appreciate and live these treasures

of the Church strengthened us. The thought that this can enrich the spiritual life of the people and strengthen their belonging to the Church help us endure the difficulties and offer them as sacrifices for the mission. We did not meet or talk with many people personally but in little ways, we participated in the work of evangelization.

Encoding the news in the website updated us with the events in the Church and in the world. It was also a venue for encouraging people to extend help to those in need, to respond to the call to be a brother to one another, reaching out and extending material or spiritual help to a brother in need. These works were little things yet we found great joy in accomplishing them. All these have allowed us to experience the joy of being instruments of evangelization which will not be possible without the aid of God, without our community and without the generosity, support and help of Fr. Paulinus, Sr. Lucia, Fr. Gabriel and Fr. Carlos who accepted our request for exposure and warmly welcomed us. We thank God and all people who journey together with us in this mission. As our Foundress Mo. Caterina said, "I will fly and announce Your name to every soul." We carry this spirit in our hearts and do little or great things with enthusiasm and joy for the mission. 🙏



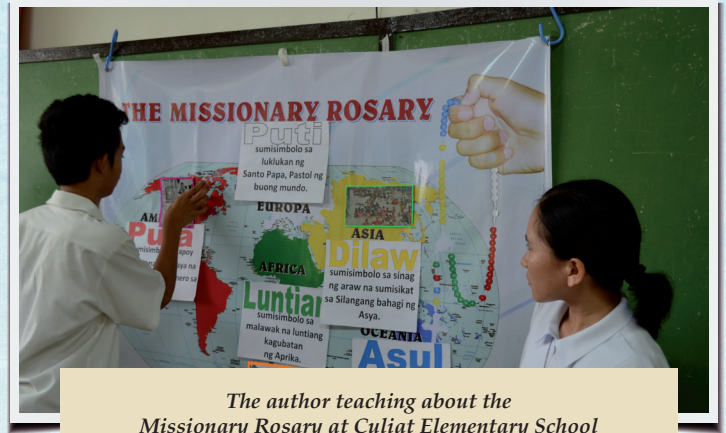
The four novices at work

Our mission among the little ones...

By: Nov. Sherlyn Dapito, MSBS

Noise, cheers, laughters, soft little hands touching ours, greetings of good morning sisters' and 'bless po' welcomed us as we enter a crowded school in Quezon City. That day and in the other days to come, we had a mission to accomplish, and that is to make little kids know that they count, that they can contribute to the mission of the Church. We were tasked to go to Tandang Sora Elementary School, Culiati Elementary School and Colegio de San Lorenzo to promote missionary awareness and to introduce the Holy Childhood Association (HCA), one of the four Pontifical Mission Societies. Mother Caterina, our Foundress, desired that everyone, even the little ones, be involved in mission; to strive to be like Jesus, "saviours of the poor children who do not believe yet," through prayer and sacrifice. Bringing in our hearts the same longing and desire, we have set to accomplish our task. The eight of us, 5 Myanmar and 3 Filipina novices, were sent to the schools who gave us the opportunity to teach their Grade IV to VI pupils. In some classes, there are non-Catholic children such as Muslims, Mormons, Iglesia Ni Cristo, Jehovah's Witnesses, Born-again Christians and others. We shared about the mission of every Christian, the missionaries and their need for our prayers, the Holy Childhood Association and the Mission Rosary. We taught them the various contributions they can give as citizens of this world and as members of the Church. We taught them how to be responsible citizens, to care for the environment, to be a good member of the family and of the Church.

While listening to us, we could see in their eyes the eagerness to do something good for their "kapwa", the joy at the discovery that even as little children, they can



The author teaching about the Missionary Rosary at Culiati Elementary School

help the missionaries through their little ways. In one of the classes, my co-novice told the children, "Don't you know children that all of us are missionaries, that you too, are missionaries?" The children welcomed this idea with joy by proclaiming "Yes, I am a missionary!" Our main task is to let them become aware of their mission and yet aside from teaching them, we also intervened when there are children who are quarreling or bullying. One time, two kids were quarrelling. One of us noticed it so, she approached and told them to make peace with each other, to ask sorry from and forgive one another. At first, the two were too ashamed to do what she said. They covered their faces and abashedly said they won't do it but her insistence won them over. This made us realize that our mission is not simply to tell them about the mission. These little children, by their simple smile and greetings, their active participation inside the classroom, their eyes that look at us with joy and their actions that speak of energy and excitement, have made



The novices and the pupils at Culiati Elementary School



Nov. Christine teaching the children at Tandang Sora Elementary School

the experience meaningful and fulfilling. By looking at their faces, we could see longing in their hearts; longing for love, respect, values and meaning in their lives. We do not know whether our sharing, our lessons will affect or shape their lives but we keep in our hearts the hope that they will be good persons, good Christians and so good missionaries in their own way. In the eyes of those little ones, I saw a semblance of light, a light that comes from discovering a little bit the meaning of life and the longing in their hearts.

For my Myanmar co-novices, this is also an opportunity to share the life of the missionaries who have to struggle with the language of the people they serve. They



Nov. Elsi leading the children in prayer

had to learn and speak a little Filipino in order to be understood, in order to communicate more effectively to the children. There are hilarious experiences, difficulties and struggles but these are nothing compared to the joy of hearing the children affirm their being missionaries, the joy of meeting these little children who are full of energy and enthusiasm.

This apostolic exposure is a blessing of God and we owe much gratitude to our religious community for their support, love and care. This experience helped us grow more in our vocation and in the love for the mission. These experiences will be a source of inspiration and strength as we continue our journey to religious consecration. 🙏



MSBS Novices

“Let us participate through prayer and sacrifice in the apostolate of the missionaries. Let us do with generosity our part in the conquest of souls, so that the Kingdom of Jesus may spread all over the world, and that there be one fold and one Shepherd.”

(Mo. Caterina Zecchini)

Windows opening up for the world...

By: Sr. Melanie Reyes, MSBS

"Today, I see twelve windows opening up for the world," said Fr. Antonio Pernia, SVD, in his homily, alluding to the twelve of us who renewed the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience that day, May 30, 2014. Joy coursed through my vein upon hearing those words. These conjured in my mind the image of a huge castle filled with windows, and at the moment of our renewal, twelve windows flung open letting the wind and light of God's presence enter in. The wind of God's presence fills the people with the experience of His love and mercy while His light empowers people to see beyond the walls of that huge castle.

As I renewed my vows, renouncing some of the gifts that I can rightfully enjoy, I hope to be a window through which God's presence may be channelled to others. But how do I become this window?

First of all, it is by virtue of my choice to live solely for Him. I remember some people I met in the road of life who have shown me that my consecration is a sign of God's presence. I remember the woman I met who shared about her aching need to be understood and how she felt consoled and listened to by God, an acquaintance and her sharing of sorrow for a brother who committed suicide, the stranger I met on the road who shared his struggle to sustain his family especially his sick wife. I believe that they and the others shared about their life to me because of my relationship with God. I believe that some people respect and give priority to religious because they consider it as service to God. Aware of my sinfulness and limitation, the thought of being an extension of God's presence is heart-warming. I felt so privileged and at the same time, challenged. The thought dares me to become more docile to God's grace so to be more and more, a fitting instrument of His love and mercy.

Second, I can become an open window for the world to feel and experience the love and mercy of God if I abide by the Gospel's mandate to love as Jesus loved. The Lord Jesus said, "As I have loved you, so you must love one another" (John 13:34). What does it mean to love as He loves us? To love as Jesus loved, I must give all that I have: "ten for you, nothing for me," said Fr. Pernia, the former Superior General of the Society of the Divine Word in his homily that day.

Here lies the great challenge. "Ten for you nothing for me" is as good as saying love until the last drop of my blood or die to myself. This is what Jesus did to show the depths of His love. The test then, of how much I love lies in the way I live and love my fellow sisters. This self-giving love must then extend to the larger community of the Church, to the


world. To be an open window, I ought to be a real missionary capable of offering anything and everything for God and others. In many parts of the world, our brethren suffer in hopelessness and despair due to war, violence and injustices. In the footsteps of Mo. Caterina, I ought to be able to feel this need and so offer my prayers, works and sacrifices so that they might experience the joy of knowing and loving the compassionate and merciful God and thus find hope in Him. There are hurdles even in living this out but together with the community, I am gradually formed into an open window for the world, into an authentic missionary capable of transcending all sorts of border so to allow God's presence to permeate the lives and hearts of men.



Sr. Melanie



MSBS juniors renewing their vows

Amidst joy and struggles, success and failure, I continue to thank God for the wonderful gift of being consecrated to Him. I continue to journey with hope that I'll reach that point when I give ten for God and my brethren and leave nothing for myself. Since that beautiful day of my renewal, I kept in my heart the desire to truly be a window through which the love and mercy of God touches and penetrates the world soaked in the murky waters of greed, selfishness and hatred. I continue to tread on the path of consecration, with my paces guided by the hope that when I reach the fullness of my years here on earth, I can humbly present to my Creator a self that has learnt self-giving. 



MSBS sisters in the Philippines with Superior General Madre Ilia Mittone, Vicar Sr. Giusy Sozza and Fr. Antonio Pernia, SVD

"Oh how much I desire to make you understand and appreciate the greatness and sublimity of our missionary vocation: I want to see you burning with the fire of the divine love...."

(Mo. Caterina Zecchini)

POSTULANCY

Come and see...

By: Post. January Eguillon, MSBS



Sr. Maricel and Postulants going to their module

Can a heart remain hardened if it hears the voice of the Lord? Only those who choose to be deaf and stone-hearted do. The voice of the Lord is louder than the thunder and all noises on the earth because His voice echoes in the depths of every heart and it surely can soften stony hearts.

I heard His voice calling my name; I was disturbed and so obediently sought Him. "Seek and you will find," says our Lord. I sought Him and I found Him in different situations of my life and that encounter with Him filled my heart with the desire to love Him. Seeking to know and follow him more closely, I joined the Congregation of the Missionary Servants of the Blessed Sacrament in 2008.

On July 20, 2014, after one year of search-in and five years of aspirancy, I, together with my four companions, Geniven and Evelin (Myanmar),

Doan Thi Thien (Vietnamese) and Gea Pido (Filipina) was accepted as a pre-novice, responding to the invitation, "Come and Follow Me!" With grateful hearts, I welcomed and celebrated this new phase of my life as a postulant. I am blest because it is not only the Lord who invited and trusted me but also the community who became an instrument of God as they generously accompany me in this journey and help me grow in maturity.

To follow the Lord is not easy! Together with my co-postulants and supported by our formators, I embarked in the journey of formation with nothing but trust like that of a child in the loving embrace of the mother. In this journey, we are called to be malleable and flexible and so to be formed into the person God wants us to be. Our human formation helps us know and accept ourselves. By becoming in touch

with ourselves with our strengths and weaknesses, by accepting and understanding ourselves, we have also become more capable of accepting and understanding others. In this journey, prayer and silence are important because they help us dig deep into ourselves, listen to the gentle yet resounding voice of God in silence. We are nurtured by our relationship with God, who continues to reveal himself to us in the events and experiences of our lives, in the past that have shaped us. He is with us in our every step especially in times we have lost sight of him; he listens and is present with us. He is the wounded Healer, who in our woundedness invites us to receive His love, to allow ourselves to be touched by his gentle healing presence. Knowing that He loves us, we dare to face the truth about ourselves despite the fear, pain and failure. We have also been helped to realize the importance of the community. The community is a

gift and a treasure. I and my other companions came from different cultural backgrounds and family upbringings yet our desire to come and see the life, to which we feel God is calling us, unite and allow us to support and be with each other in our journey as postulants.

Now I am already halfway of my journey and I have experienced to:

Come and see the unnoticed tender presence of Him, and His Compassion and Mercy
Come and see my littleness, a creature in the Holy infinite space of His hand.
Come and see my human nature.
Come and see myself, others and God.
Come and see God in me and God in others.
Come and see my family and all the children of God.

Come and see love, peace, joy in my heart.
Come and see my vocation and mission....
Keeping in my heart the desire that God's Kingdom may come! 🙏



MSBS postulants with Sr. Clemence, their formator



MSBS postulants during the World Mission Sunday celebration

Are you ready to meet Jesus?

By: Sr. Susan Droza, MSBS

"Don't be afraid to die, if we die, we will be angels and we will see Jesus," said Lovely to the little child who is a cancer patient like her. Lovely is an eleven-year old girl who has been staying with us for almost a year while undergoing chemotherapy for bone cancer. She comes from a poor family in Samar but despite poverty, her mother found the way to seek treatment for her. We welcomed them in our house in Manila.

I heard about what Lovely said to her fellow cancer patient when I was asked to visit her and her mother in Philippine General Hospital, where she was admitted. I was then talking with her mother about her condition while watching Lovely play with other young patients. As we talk, one woman joined us. She was the mother of one of the young patients whom Lovely considers a friend. The woman expressed her pain about the condition of her daughter and with tears trickling down her face, she related to us the words of Lovely to her daughter. Though she admired the disposition and courage of Lovely, she seemed not ready to hear about the possibility of her daughter's dying. I chose not to say anything. I just smiled hoping to give a little comfort.


On my way home, her words resounded in my ears. I was touched and amazed by her courage and faith in God. She is ready to face death convinced that upon its coming, she would behold the face of Jesus. Reflecting on this, I questioned myself, "How do I give hope to others in the midst of their suffering and helpless situations?" As good Christians it is our duty to lead others to Jesus, to give hope even in the midst of pain, suffering and desperate moments of life. Despite her suffering since childhood, Lovely radiates joy and serenity. This is a blessing and a gift she shares to the community and to other people she meets. She is a great inspiration and example to all of us who complain to God even for slightest difficulty. She has encouraged many to be close to Jesus even and especially in the midst of the great storms in life, in difficulties and pains. She is a lovely ray of hope and consolation to others especially to those who suffer. Her life, her disposition, her spirit speaks of the beauty of life, beauty that no external circumstances can just take away. Life remains a beautiful gift no matter what.



Lovely with one of her little sick friends



Lovely chose to be "St. Bakhita" for the celebration of All Saints' Day in the Parish of Mary, the Immaculate Conception

Her mother shared to me how joyous and excited her daughter was to meet the priest for confession and to lead the praying of rosary every six o'clock together with other patients. This made me realize that she has this vivacity and energy because she had an experience of God even at a young age. She was always motivating other patient or other persons telling them not to be afraid of dying because everybody will die anyway, and we will meet God when we die. By this, I can see how she channels to others the gift of life and faith she has received. She is, in many ways but especially in her sickness and suffering, a real Christian, a real missionary. She proclaims the Gospel in her own simple way, with joy and childlike trust and confidence. So I ask, "Where is the sting of death?" It is lost in childlike trust and confidence in the Merciful God who has first conquered death. It is lost in the hope that the Merciful God awaits us with his loving embrace. 



Let us pause before the Child of Bethlehem. Let us allow our hearts to be touched... Let us allow ourselves to be warmed by the tenderness of God... – Pope Francis

God's coming among us is His great act of love for humanity. In this Christmas season, may we pause and contemplate the Child-God as Pope Francis has invited us. We live in a world weighed down by misery and suffering of all sorts but in the midst of it all, we also find glimmering signs of hope that Christ, the Tender God who came into this world to redeem us, has scattered around us. Touched by the tenderness of God, let us live this season with hope and peace in our hearts.

Merry Christmas!



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