

May Your Kingdom Come!

MISSIONARY SERVANTS OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT IN ASIA



DECEMBER 2018

Hearts on Fire



**"I HAVE COME TO SET THE EARTH ON FIRE,
AND HOW I WISH IT WERE ALREADY BLAZING!"
(LK. 12:49)**



"I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing!"

(Lk. 12:49)

Coldness of Indifference. Darkness. Impurities.

Daily news and experiences bombard us with realities that speak of our craving for the fire that will ease away the freezing coldness, the darkness, the impurities that seem omnipresent on earth. Now and then, the earth is desperately in need of Fire. The Good News is that Jesus has come into our midst and brought this fire we badly need.

Pope Francis said, *"The fire that Jesus speaks of is the fire of the Holy Spirit, the presence living and working in us from the day of our Baptism."* Priests, consecrated people and lay faithful: all are called to allow Jesus to set their hearts on fire with His love, His mercy, His joy, to grant Him the liberty to burn away their impurities and shed His light on them, and in turn be agents of the Kingdom of God here on earth.

"Now more than ever there is a need for priests, consecrated people and lay faithful, with the attentive gaze of an apostle, to be moved by and to pause before hardship and material and spiritual poverty, thus characterizing the journey of evangelization and of the mission with the healing cadence of closeness. It is precisely the fire of the Holy Spirit that leads us to be neighbours to others, to the needy, to so much human misery, to so many problems, to refugees, to displaced people, to those who are suffering" (Pope Francis, Angelus - 14 August 2016).

In view of the recently concluded Year of the Clergy and Consecrated Persons, we offer you in this issue the testimonies of priests and consecrated persons and our personal reflections on how the Lord has set our hearts on fire with His love for the mission of proclaiming this love to people. This coming year, the local Church of the Philippines is celebrating the Year of the Youth, and so we offer this particularly to the youth. We have also included reflections of some young people who have found joy and meaning in their faith in God.

Dear young people, it is our hope and prayer that this Christmas may enkindle in your hearts the fire of faith and love for Christ and His Mission. 🙏



Catechesis on

The Holy Spirit

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

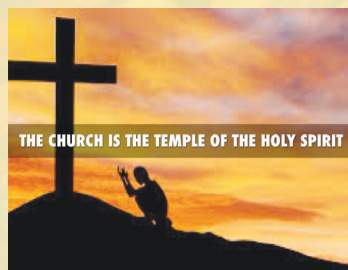
Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus continues His mission here on earth. He has given us His Spirit to empower us to carry out his saving ministry in our time. He makes use of docile instruments who keep their hearts open to the biddings of the Holy Spirit.

To honor the Holy Spirit, who is the strength and the power of those who have consecrated themselves to God's service, we have chosen to present a short catechesis on the Holy Spirit and the variety of gifts or charisms He has generated in the Church.



The Holy Spirit is a Person. He is the Third Person of the Trinity. (CCC 689)

The Spirit is truly God, consubstantial and inseparable from the Father and the Son. (CCC 689)



The Holy Spirit constitutes the soul, the life blood of the Church and of every individual Christian.

He is the Love of God who makes of our hearts his dwelling place and enters into communion with us.

The Spirit himself is "the gift of God" par excellence (cf. Jn 4:10), he is a gift of God, and he in turn communicates various spiritual gifts to those who receive him.

The Holy Spirit abides with us always, he is always within us, in our hearts.



Catechesis

Titles of the Holy Spirit

Jesus calls him the "Paraclete", literally, "he who is called to one's side". "Paraclete is commonly translated as "consoler".

The Lord also called the Holy Spirit "the Spirit of Truth".

We also find in St. Paul the titles: the Spirit of the promise, the Spirit of Adoption, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of the Lord, and the Spirit of God, and in St. Peter, the Spirit of glory. (CCC 692-693)



Dove - One of the most common symbols of the Holy Spirit is a dove. It comes from the story of Jesus' baptism, when Jesus saw "the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him" (Mark 1:10).



Wind - The Holy Spirit is also represented by wind. In fact, the original Hebrew and Greek words for "Spirit" can be translated as "wind." The wind that appeared on Pentecost (Acts of the Apostles 2:2) was reminiscent of the wind that blew over the waters at the beginning of Creation (Genesis 1:2). The wind calls attention to the Holy Spirit breathing life into the Church.



Anointing with oil - Anointing with oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit's uniting us with Jesus, the Messiah, the Anointed One.



Fire - Fire is another popular representation of the Holy Spirit. The fire that appeared on Pentecost (Acts of the Apostles 2:3) was reminiscent of the burning bush on Mount Sinai from which God spoke to Moses (Exodus 3:2). Fire calls attention to the strength and force of the Holy Spirit.



Cloud and Light - The cloud is used as a symbol of the Holy Spirit because clouds provide life-giving water. In the Old Testament, God often leads his people with a cloud or appears to them in a cloud (Exodus 16:10). The image of a cloud is often combined with the image of light to symbolize the God who is hidden and mysterious but also revealing and luminous.



Water - Water signifies birth and life. From the faith perspective, it represents the cleansing and life-giving action of the Holy Spirit at Baptism (Matthew 3:11; John 3:5).



Seal - Official documents in the past (Nehemiah 9:38; Esther 8:8), and some documents today, were sealed with hot wax. Then an imprint was made on the wax with the official seal of the person sending the document. In a similar way, we are "sealed" by the Holy Spirit to show that we are forever part of God's family (Song of Songs 8:6; John 6:27).

Symbols of the Holy Spirit



Catechesis

“The Holy Spirit, in the variety of his gifts, unites us and enables us to contribute to the building up of the Church in holiness.” Pope Francis



WISDOM

It is the grace of being able to see everything with the eyes of God. It is simply this: it is to see the world, to see situations, circumstances, problems, everything through God's eyes.



UNDERSTANDING

It is a grace which only the Holy Spirit can infuse and which awakens in a Christian the ability to go beyond the outward appearance of reality and to probe the depths of the thoughts of God and his plan of salvation. This gift enables us to understand things as God understands them, with the mind of God. For one can understand a situation with human understanding, with prudence, and this is good, but to understand a situation in depth as God understands it is the effect of this gift.



PIETY

It should be clarified immediately that this gift is not to be identified with having compassion for someone, feeling pity on one's neighbour; rather, it indicates our belonging to God and our profound relationship with Him, a bond that gives meaning to our life and keeps us sound, in communion with Him, even during the most difficult and tormenting moments. Piety, therefore, is synonymous with genuine religious spirit, with filial trust in God, with that capacity to pray to him with the love and simplicity that belongs to those who are humble of heart.



KNOWLEDGE

It is a special gift, which leads us to grasp, through creation, the greatness and love of God and his profound relationship with every creature. At the same time, however, the gift of knowledge helps us not to fall into attitudes of excess or error.



COUNSEL

Counsel, then, is the gift through which the Holy Spirit enables our conscience to make a concrete choice in communion with God, according to the logic of Jesus and his Gospel. In this way, the Spirit makes us grow interiorly, he makes us grow positively, he makes us grow in the community and he helps us not to fall prey to self-centeredness and one's own way of seeing things.



FEAR OF THE LORD

Fear of the Lord allows us to be aware that everything comes from grace and that our true strength lies solely in following the Lord Jesus and in allowing the Father to bestow upon us his goodness and his mercy. This is what the Holy Spirit does through the gift of fear of the Lord: he opens hearts. The heart opens so that forgiveness, mercy, goodness and the caress of the Father may come to us.



FORTITUDE

Through the gift of fortitude, the Holy Spirit liberates the soil of our heart. He frees it from sluggishness, from uncertainty and from all the fears that can hinder it, so that the Lord's Word may be put into practice authentically and with joy. The gift of fortitude is a true help. It gives us strength, and it also frees us from so many obstacles.



Catechesis

From the very beginning, the Lord has showered the Church with the gifts of his Spirit, thereby rendering her always vigorous and fruitful with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Among these gifts, some can be identified as especially precious for the edification of and for the journey of the Christian community: these are called charisms.

It often means a talent, a natural ability.

In the Christian perspective, a charism is much more than a personal quality, a predisposition that one can be endowed with.

*What
is a
Charism?*



A charism is a grace, a gift bestowed by God the Father, through the action of the Holy Spirit. It is a gift which is given to someone not because he is better than others or because he deserves it.

It is a gift that God gives him, because with his freely given love he can place him in service to the entire community, for the good of all.

How can we recognize it?

Charism is recognized within the community. It is within the community that the gifts the Father showers upon us bloom and flourish; and it is in the bosom of the community that one learns to recognize them as a sign of his love for all his children.



The Multiplicity and Diversity of Charisms

The most beautiful experience, though, is the discovery of all the different charisms and all the gifts of his Spirit that the Father showers on his Church! This must not be seen as a reason for confusion, for discomfort: they are all gifts that God gives to the Christian community, in order that it may grow in harmony, in faith and in his love, as one body, the Body of Christ. The same Spirit who bestows this diversity of charisms unites the Church. It is always the same Spirit. Before this multitude of charisms, our heart, therefore, must open itself to joy and we must think: *“What a beautiful thing! So many different gifts, because we are all God’s children, all loved in a unique way”*. Never must these gifts

Catechesis



become reasons for envy, or for division, for jealousy! As the Apostle Paul recalls in Chapter 12 of his First Letter to the Corinthians, all charisms are important in the eyes of God. At the same time, no one is irreplaceable.

That is to say that within the Christian community, we need one another, and each gift received is fully realized when it is shared with one's brothers and sisters, for the good of all. This is the Church! And when the Church, in the variety of her charisms, is expressed in communion, she cannot be mistaken: it is the beauty and the power of the *sensus fidei*, of that supernatural sense of faith which is bestowed by the Holy Spirit in order that, together, we may all enter the heart of the Gospel and learn to follow Jesus in our life.

MSBS Charism

Missionary Animation and Cooperation

By our life, prayer, witnessing and apostolate, we aim to make Christians aware of their responsibility in the Church's mission, and to encourage all forms of missionary cooperation.



Consecrated Life: a Response

The different forms of Consecrated Life which emerged in the Church are a response to the socio-economic and ecclesial situation of the time.

Widows and Virgins

It emerged as a mature response to the Gospel's call for self-dedication to Christ and to the needs of the newly-born Christian community.

Desert Monasticism

This form of life became more established when Christian persecution ceased. Many fervent Christians sought to live a kind of spiritual martyrdom by asceticism.

Early Medieval Monasticism

Monasticism developed when the Barbarians were invading the Roman Empire and classical culture was falling apart. Monasteries served as places of learning and sanctuaries of culture.

Historical Timeline

1st century

Jesus' Birth, Ministry, Death and Resurrection; Spread of the Gospel

2nd century

Inspired by the teachings of the Lord Jesus and the apostles, some faithful dedicated themselves to a life of virginity or consecrated widowhood. In the first and second centuries, there were in the Church enrolled widows and consecrated virgins.

3rd to the 4th centuries

Asceticism involved in the renunciation of an active sexual life had come to be seen as a kind of training for martyrdom, which was a very realistic possibility in the 2nd and 3rd centuries. And when the persecution ended in the 4th century, virginity and asceticism became a substitute for martyrdom.

3rd to the 5th centuries

These centuries are characterized by the development of Desert Monasticism. In the East, two forms of this life developed: the solitary life of St. Anthony of the Desert who lived in Egypt, and the cenobitical or community desert monasticism of St. Pachomius. In the solitary life, there are two kinds: the strictly solitary life and the form of life in which a number of hermits lived in a kind of loosely structured community.

Important Developments:

- St. Gregory of Nazianzen (330-390) wrote a very interesting treatise on virginity. He considered virginity or chastity, undertaken by vow, as means to achieve all the benefits offered by the life in the desert.
- St. Gregory of Nyssa (335-394) – introduced another element into monastic life – the importance of study.
- St. Athanasius and St. Jerome transported monasticism for both men and women to the West. In the West, monastic development moved in two directions: clerical, and non-clerical.

- Caesarius of Arles (470-543) – introduced some important elements into the organization of the monastery: stability, cloister for nuns

5th to the 12th centuries

Early Medieval Monasticism: considered as the classical period of religious life which began with St. Benedict of Norcia (480-547) and his followers. St. Benedict set up monasteries and wrote a Rule for them. This soon became dominant in the West and was considered for many centuries as the standard against which any authentic form of religious life has to be judged.

Until the 12th century, only the Augustinian and the Benedictine Rule were followed. This period is marked by the great spread of cenobitical monasticism.

Important Developments:

- The role of the abbot became central in both eremitical and communal form, whether lay or clerical.
- Cloistered and apostolic forms flourished side by side.
- 10th and 11th centuries- period of decline of Benedictine monasticism. So, reformed movements were initiated such as the Reform of Cluny (910), the Reform of the Camaldolese (1020), the Reform of Cîteaux (1098), the Carthusians (between 1030-1101).
- The Canons Regular, founded by St. Augustine, was revived.
- In the 12th century, the Military Orders were established in relation to the Crusades.

13th century

Development of the Mendicant Movement: This century is marked by the development of the Mendicant Orders. The great founders of this period are St. Francis of Assisi and St. Dominic Guzman (1170-1221).

Important Developments:

- The beginning of the development of a mobile as opposed to a stable form of religious life
- Religious working for a living in the larger society
- The combination of monastic and apostolic life with emphasis on the apostolic dimension
- Third orders developing as a form of religious life that allows people, especially women, to exercise an apostolate outside of the religious cloister
- The emergence of the Beguines, who represent a kind of commitment that is theologically very close to religious life

14th – 16th centuries

Although male religious life was in decline, interesting developments occurred among consecrated women.

Different Forms of Consecrated Life which developed during this period:

- Beguines - women who did not have religious vows but lived in the community, devoted to prayer and good works
- Anchoresses - consecrated virgins who lived in solitude and intense contemplation
- Third Order - group who had no public vows
- Company of St. Ursula - a group of women, practicing poverty, virginity and obedience but were not canonically religious
- Clerics Regular - priests living in a community, carrying out their apostolic work, with no conventual liturgy and distinctive garb
- Societies of Apostolic Life - a group of men or women who live a fraternal life in common and pursue a particular apostolic purpose.

17th-20th centuries

The foundation of Congregations of Simple Vows, both for men and women, proliferated. By the late 19th century, the Apostolic Congregation of Simple Vows had become the dominant form of women's religious life.

Forms of Consecrated Life

Consecrated Virgins (Continents), Ascetics, Widows

Their way of life: these men and women lived a life of virginity and self-restraint or abstinence from all sexual pleasure. They renounced marriage, wore no special habit and remained with their families. Some, though, lived in organized groups. They participated in public life and put themselves at the service of the Christian communities such as the care of orphans and sick people. They gave themselves to a more frequent ascetic and spiritual exercises.

Prominent consecrated virgins: four daughters of St. Philip (cf. Acts 21:8-9), St. Agnes, Pelagia, Perpetua and Felicitas, Cecilia



Missionary Servants of the Blessed Sacrament – Asia

Response to the Call of the Times

Military Orders

Toward the end of the 11th century, the Catholic Church began to authorize military expeditions or crusades, to expel Muslim "infidels" from the Holy Land. The military orders played a prominent role in the Crusades and in the military history of medieval Europe. These knights were called to live up to two important ideals of the 12th century, the ideals of the Catholic Church and that of knighthood and chivalry.

Mendicants and Canons Regular

These religious orders were established during the High Middle Ages. This was the time of the rise of cities, the foundation of great universities, the rise of the middle class and the emergence of poorer classes. There was the need for reform in the Church and for the evangelization of the cities and country folk.

Clerics Regular

It emerged in the heat of the Protestant Reformation, in response to the need for reform of the clergy and for intelligent defense against heretics. At the same time, new lands were discovered and so there was a need for people who will devote their lives to the propagation of the faith in the newly discovered islands.

Congregations of Simple Vows

It arose in response to the tremendous social and cultural upheaval in Europe.

The Hermits (Anchors)

Their way of life: The hermits leave their families in order to lead a solitary life, first to rural places, then far away in secluded and isolated spots. Each hermit lived an independent life, without particular regulations, meeting the others only on feast days for spiritual counseling and to assist at the Eucharist. The features of eremitical life were austerity, penitential life, reaching extreme and strange forms.

Founder: St. Anthony, the Abbot (251-356) lived in the Egyptian desert in Nitria. He attracted to himself and his kind of life a great number of men and women.



Cenobitic Monasticism

Their way of life: The monks lived a common life, guided by a rule, which defines the rhythm of the monk's daily life: work, prayer in common, and discipline. They shared everything in common and committed themselves to a life of fraternal charity.

Founder: St. Pachomius (292-348), in the year 320, created a model for a cenobitic or a common way of life. He established one monastery for men and one for women in Tebennisi, Egypt.



Variants of Cenobitic Monasticism

Oriental Monasticism: The form of life introduced by St. Pachomius reached the Near East, where St. Basil (329-379) became the father of Oriental Monasticism.

The Laura: This was a kind of village of distinct homes — a small house for each monk-hermit — with all the monks however subject to the same superior. It emerged in the Near East, along with the rule of St. Pachomius.

Western Monasticism: Monasticism developed more slowly in the West than in the East. The man who contributed most to the spreading of the monastic life in the west was St. Athanasius (295-375) during his long stay in Europe, after having been expelled from his episcopal see of Alexandria by the Arian-minded emperor of Constantinople.

Augustinian Monasticism: The first Augustinian idea of monastic life is of a clerical type, the same type already introduced by St. Eusebius of Vercelli (283-371), who had assembled the priests attached to his cathedral church into a community. When St. Augustine went back to Africa after his conversion, he transformed his Tagaste home into a kind of monastery. He also did it later at Hippo after his ordination to the priesthood. Once ordained bishop (396), he made his episcopal home a monastery for his clergy.

French Monasticism: The pioneer of French monasticism was St. Martin of Tours (317-397) who, having abandoned a military career and spent a few years in solitude, established the Ligugé monastery near Poitiers, a kind of Laura without particular rules, but under the direction of superiors. Appointed bishop of Tours, St. Martin founded another monastery at Marmoutier where he lived, with eighty monks. The monastery of Marmoutier would then become a center of evangelization for France and would give the Church many bishops. There were other famous monasteries in France such as the monastery of Lerins established by St. Honoratus (429), the monastery of St. Victor at Marseilles founded by the oriental monk St. Cassian (414).

Irish Monasticism: Its origin is attributed to St. Patrick (385-461), founder and father of the Church in Ireland. At the age of 15, he was captured by Irish pirates and kept in slavery for six years. Having succeeded in escaping, he embraced the monastic life at Lerins, France, and studied under the famous bishop St. Germanus of Auxerre. Ordained bishop in 432, St. Patrick left for the missions in Ireland, where a strong monastic movement



The Benedictine Monasticism

Founder: St. Benedict of Norcia (480-547), having received his education in Rome at the age of 17, retired to a solitary life in the hills near Subiaco, east of Rome. There he lived about twenty years establishing 12 monastic communities for the many disciples that had followed him. Benedict then left Subiaco, also on account of an uprising among his monks due to regulations that were given them and went to Montecassino where he laid the foundations of the famous monastery.

Their way of life: The ideals of monastic life of St. Benedict are stability, conversio morum suorum (conversion of one's behavior), obedience, community life, manual work, silence, and divine office (known as "ora et labora").



Military Orders

The Military Orders or the Order of Knights were established to defend the Christians in the Holy Land even by force of arms, and to minister to the sick.

Orders, their Founders and their Way of Life: The Order of the Knights Templars: Hugh de Payens (1119)

The order is composed of knights, chaplains (priests) and brothers who profess the evangelical counsels and lead a common life after the manner of the Canons Regular.

The Johannites/Knights of Rhodes/Knights of Malta (founded in the year 1137 in Jerusalem) are dedicated to the care of the pilgrims and the sick in Jerusalem hospital (hence the name of Hospitaller brothers).

Other Orders of Knights were established in Spain, such as the Order of Calatrava, who defended the Church and expelled the Moslems from the peninsula.



The Canons Regular

This was a kind of revival of the forms of consecrated life started by St. Eusebius of Vercelli and St. Augustine of Hippo for their respective clergy.

Their way of life: The canons regular live the monastic spirituality with a special stress on liturgical prayer and with a well-determined purpose: pastoral work.

Prominent orders: The Order of Premonstratensians founded in 1120 by St. Norbert (1080-1134), a German canon of the Xanten church in Rhineland; The Canons Regular of St. Augustine which trace their origin to St. Augustine.



Mendicant Orders

The term "mendicant" originally derives from latin verb "mendicare", which means "to beg". Mendicant orders refer to religious that practice begging alms to provide for their needs. They are committed by a vow to the renunciation of their common as well as individual possessions.

Their way of life: The characteristics of these orders are a strict common life as a sign and bond of brotherhood, fervent apostolic activities in harmony with their common life, some common observance as specific elements of conventual life and witness to a certain austerity of life.

Prominent Orders: Franciscans (1182-1226); Dominicans (1170-1222); Augustinians (1244); Augustinians Recollect; Order of Carmelites; Discalced Carmelites (1562); Servants of Mary (Servites, 1233); Minims (1435); Trinitarians (1198); Mercedarians (1218); Hospitaller Order of St. John of God (1537).



Reformed Monasticism

Monastery of Cluny

Founder: St. Beno (850-927), together with twelve monks, placed the foundations of the monastery of Cluny in Burgundy, France.

Their way of life: Since its very beginning, Cluny was directly dependent on the Holy See and exempted from the local bishop's authority. Leaving aside the Benedictine principle of autonomy of each monastery, Cluny became a centralized religious order with the abbot of the central monastery of Cluny as superior general, all the other monasteries being under the authority of priors elected by Cluny. All this was to safeguard the unity of the whole Cluny movement. The Cluniac reform was accepted by hundreds of abbeys and priories.

Camaldolese monks: St. Romuald (950-1027), a Benedictine monk of Ravenna, Italy, thought of monks with the advantage of both the cenobitical and eremitical life. He established the monastery hermitage of Camaldoli in the Tuscan Apennines. **Their way of life:** They first lead a common life, then after a trial period, go to the hermitage and, once there, they can ask to live entirely secluded. The hermit, however, remains always under the control of a superior, takes part in the liturgy together with his brother monks and at times, shared common meals.

Carthusians: St. Bruno (1030-1101), after having spent 16 years with the Benedictines of Molesmes in 1084, withdrew to the solitude of the Grenoble mountains in France, to a place named Chartreux. He was soon followed by a group of disciples.

Their way of life: The rule of the Carthusians places emphasis on the monk's private adoration in his cell, solitude, and silence.

Vallombrosans: St. John Gualbert of Vallombrosa (995-1073), thought that a return to the purest form of cenobitical life, to the rule of St. Benedict, was something needed at that moment in the history of the Church, and so, he established a monastery at Vallombrosa, Florence.

Citeaux and the Cistercians: Citeaux was an attempt to go back to the rule of St. Benedict in its entire simplicity.

Founder: St. Robert, abbot of Molesmes and other twenty monks

Their way of life: Citeaux was essentially a contemplative order. Everything in the order was arranged in view of contemplation: location of the monasteries, buildings, liturgy, work, the exclusion of pastoral ministry.



Clerics Regular

Their way of life: The clerics regular were given to all expressions of priestly work, with common observances cut down to the minimum. They took over, generally speaking, all priestly offices. The clerics regular are essentially priests, dispensers of the mysteries of God in the service of his people. The exercise of priesthood was specified and determined by the nature and purpose of each institute. Even the clerical institutes or their founders, gave origin to new forms of spirituality fit for their religious and apostolic life.

Prominent Orders/Congregations and their Founders: Society of Jesus (1540) - St. Ignatius of Loyola, Barnabite fathers (1530) - St. Anthony Mary Zaccaria; Ministers to the Infirm (1582) - St. Camillus de Lellis



Societies of Apostolic Life

Their way of life: They live a common life, without religious vows or with private vows. They are very similar to the religious institutes on account of both their community life and their apostolic purpose. Their end is always apostolic, and quite often exclusively missionary. Indeed, the majority of foreign mission institutions are Societies of Apostolic Life.

Prominent Orders/Congregations and their Founders: Oratory of St. Philip Neri (1575); the Oratory of France (1611); St. Sulpice (1642); the Congregation of the Missions (the Lazarists, 1625); the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris (1660); and the Congregation of the Eudists (1643); Congregation of the Holy Ghost (1703); the Congregation of the Missionaries of Mary (Montfortians, 1705); the Redemptorists of St. Alphonsus de Liguori (1732); and the Passionists of St. Paul of the Cross (1720).

Secular Institutes

Pioneer: St. Angela Merici - considered the pioneer of the modern secular institutes.

Their way of life: Secular institutes are groups of Christian faithful (lay or clerics) who profess the evangelical counsels in the world. Each member leads a form of life similar to the ways of life of any other faithful, undertaking any social and political activity according to each one's condition.



Ecumenical Communities

Community of Taizé, France: It is an ecumenical monastic order in Taizé, Saône-et-Loire, Burgundy, France. It is composed of more than one hundred brothers, from Catholic and Protestant traditions, from about 30 countries. Founded in 1940 by Brother Roger Schütz (1915-2005), a reformed Protestant. The rule of Taizé written by Brother Roger, prayer and silence are at the heart of the Taizé experience. Ecumenism (a movement promoting Christian unity among Churches) is the key to Taizé's appeal.

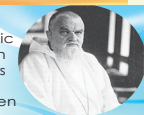


Monastic Community of Bose, Italy

Monastic community of Bose was established by a Roman Catholic layman Enzo Bianchi in 1965 at Bose, province of Biella, Italy. In August 1968: 3 members of community: Enzo, a pastor in the Swiss reformed Church, and a woman.

Characteristics: Ecumenical in membership and includes both men and women.

Today it is a community of monks and nuns belonging to different Christian Churches, seeking God in obedience to the Gospel and living in fraternal communion and celibacy.



The Beauty that Never Fades

Sr. Melanie S. Reyes, MSBS

People are naturally drawn to beauty. Modern society goes gaga over the latest beauty products, trends, and treatments. Deep beneath this seemingly human superficial attraction is the profound truth that the restless desire to find the true and Eternal Beauty is entrenched in our being. Sr. Ma. Rosaria Alberton, in the course of her journey as a Missionary Servant of the Blessed Sacrament, was fortunate to have found the eternal beauty, for whom our soul desperately longs. *"Pray, pray much to Jesus. Jesus is so beautiful,"* she once told a sister.

Sr. Rosaria is one of the pioneer MSBS, who joined the emerging community at 42 years of age. She was born on July 25, 1884, in Vicenza, Italy. She became part of the then Pious Union of the Missionary Servants of the Blessed Sacrament and was one of the first MSBS to profess the vows on April 2, 1934. She did not have any formal education and had learned to read with difficulty and yet she had possessed the most exquisite knowledge one could ever acquire here on earth – the knowledge of the "Ancient" and Eternal Beauty and the path that leads to that Beauty. *"Pray, pray much to Jesus. Jesus is so beautiful."* Indeed, it is in communing with Jesus in prayer that we will find Him, the Eternal Beauty. As she contemplated the Beauty of Jesus, her soul radiated that beauty that did not escape the notice of people around her. They saw how she burned with exquisite charity, joyous availability and humility.

One of our sisters who had lived with her narrated this simple story which attests to this. It was her feast day and the young sisters have given her a simple gift. "She was sitting next to the Mother Foundress with tears in her eyes and the smile on her face that showed she did

not know what to do and what to say. Madre invited her to conclude the simple celebration. At first, she tried to avoid speaking, then she thanked all and she invited us to love the Lord. Then she paused a moment and said, *'I'll keep this bag that is too beautiful for me and I will remember you.'* We all embraced her and her kiss full of gratitude and appreciation left a trail of humble goodness in each one of us."

Her life consists in fervent prayer, humble service, and missionary enthusiasm. She fed her soul with the Word of God and prayer. *"Cea (little child as she used to call the Sisters), how beautiful it is to spend time with the Lord."* With Mo. Caterina, the Mother Foundress, she often prayed to Jesus in the Eucharist, asking for strength and enlightenment, particularly in times of suffering and difficulties, which were inevitable in the early years of the Foundation. She accepted with availability and joy every mission entrusted to her. She served as General Councilor, as a portress and as mendicant, mission which she did with the same passion and enthusiasm. As a mendicant, she walked the streets of Venice with her handbags: handbags worn, torn, that she presented to the shopkeepers to be filled in for the needs of the community.

Even up to the last night of her earthly existence, she touched her co-sisters with her humility to ask pardon from them for her lack of generosity to suffer. Such humility and virtues could only come from a heart that has found the Eternal Beauty and has basked in its radiance.

As the face of Moses glowed brightly after having seen God face to face, so was Sr. Rosaria's face radiant with the Beauty, whom she has contemplated here on



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earth. Reading her life stirred up in me that desire to rest my eyes on the Beauty, which does not blind but rather clears up our vision, on the Beauty that seeps into our very being and radiates through us, so that with St. Augustine and the countless souls who have discovered this Beauty, I may exclaim:

"You flashed, you shone and you dispelled my blindness. You breathed your fragrance on me; I drew

in breath and now I pant for you. I have tasted you, now I hunger and thirst for more. You touched me, and I burned for peace."

Through the intercession of St. Augustine and of countless souls like Sr. Rosaria who have found Him, I pray that the people of today especially the young may discover the Eternal Beauty that will fill the void in our heart. 🙏

The Little Flower

Nov. Ma Thuon, MSBS

"Jesus has always treated me like a favorite child. It is true that His cross has accompanied me from my childhood, but He has made me love His Cross passionately." (St. Therese of the Child Jesus)

I grew up in a province, a place where I could see different kinds of plants, trees, and flowers. I used to go to the farm, rice field, or to the forest. I enjoyed the beauty of God's creation - the plants, trees of different sizes, leaves of varied shapes, flowers of diverse colors and sizes. All these differences compose a unique beauty. I like the beauty of wild flowers. Most of these are tiny, not easily seen by people. They are rare. Some are covered with other bigger plants, and thus are hidden. They have always been attractive for me and I like to gaze at them.

The beauty of a wild flower reminds me of a beautiful saint, known as the "Little Flower". This saint entered the convent at the age of fifteen and died when she was only twenty-four years old. Twenty-eight years later, she was canonized as a saint for the Universal Church. Now she is one of the most popular saints and one of the five women-doctors of the Church. This saint's name is St. Therese of the Child Jesus.

St. Therese understood herself as a little flower in the forest, too small in the midst of many other flowers. This little flower survives and

flourishes through all the seasons of the year. By entrusting herself to God, she weathered all the storms in her life. She lived a simple, humble and hidden life like a little flower for



Jesus, whom she loved much and to whom she offered everything. According to her *"to be little is to recognize one's nothingness, to expect everything from God as a*

little child expects everything of its father." For love of God, she practiced her "little way" to holiness. She understood that what matters in the Christian life is neither great deeds nor success, but great love, and that anyone can become holy by doing even the smallest things, for love of God. She shows us that God is everywhere, in every situation and person, and in ordinary, simple detail of life. Her "little way" invites us to do the ordinary things with extraordinary love; it could be a very simple thing as she did; a smile, a word of encouragement, suffering in silence, always having a positive word, and so many small actions done with love.

St. Therese teaches us the simplicity of heart. In the world today, the desire to be known, to be great, to be successful is so intense among people. St. Therese reminds us that greatness comes in simple things and in our spiritual journey, it is in the simplicity to surrender oneself to God. If we trust God and surrender to Him, then we can be little flowers in the garden of God, emitting the fragrance of God's presence and revealing the beauty of following Him. 🙏

Voice of the Voiceless

Sr. Goretti Jury, MSBS

“Those who surrender to the service of the poor through love of Christ will live like the grain of wheat that dies... The harvest comes because of the grain that dies,” these were the prophetic words of St. Óscar Arnulfo Romero y Galdámez before his death. Bishop Romero was born in El Salvador on August 15, 1917, and was ordained a priest on April 4, 1942. In February 1977, he was appointed the Archbishop of El Salvador. A vocal critic of the violent activities of the government armed forces in El Salvador’s civil war, the outspoken bishop died a martyr’s death in the hand of a gunman who shot him through the heart while celebrating Mass in a hospital chapel on March 24, 1980. It was a day after he called on the military to stop killing innocent civilians in El Salvador’s dirty war. Thirty-eight years after his death, his memory continues to live on and bear fruit in the Church, especially with his canonization by Pope Francis on October 14, 2018.

Bp. Oscar Romero’s life and virtues, particularly his love for the poor, is worth emulating. He considered the poor as the Church, the people of God and suffering Jesus. He is a martyr, a man of God and a man of the Church. He defended human dignity and stood for the rights of the poor and the marginalized in El Salvador until the last day of his life. He believed that human right is a divine right. Standing by the side of the people

in their fight against injustices and oppression, he knew well that he could get killed but he chose to speak the truth and be the voice of the voiceless, the poor and marginalized.

He is a true disciple of the Lord, ready to take the risk, up to the point of giving his own life for the poor. In the poor, he saw Christ who is hungry and suffering and he identified himself with them. In return, in him, people saw hope and felt the presence of Christ, the Good Shepherd who lives among them, who suffers with them and smells like them. People around him advised him to get a bodyguard but he refused, saying, “*Why should the shepherd have protection when his sheep are still prey to wolves?*” St. Oscar Romero followed the footstep of his Master in protecting the weak and the powerless.

The cry for justice and peace is everywhere even in our time, and

we need the unwavering spirit of St. Oscar Romero. Like him, we need to hear the cry of the poor and be like Christ who loved and served the poor.

As a Christian and a member of the Church, each one of us can become St. Oscar Romero in our own little way, to help those whom God wants us to help, to care for those whom God has placed in our path, and to stand with the weak in our society, in our community, and in our family. We can say that we are truly Christians and followers of Christ when the hopes, joys, miseries, illnesses, and hungers of others become ours. Let us do our part in sharing the love of God that we had received to those in need and to see our society with the eyes of Christ. In this way, we build and can build a better world and a just society.

St. Oscar Romero pray for us. 🙏



"A Life of Faith"

Sr. Ermelinda Bhiju, MSBS

There are many needs and "longings" in our society, in the world and in the Church; the need for peace, justice, respect and care for the weak, the innocent and the marginalized, etc. With these situations around us, the words of our Mother Foundress, Mo. Caterina Zecchini, echoed in my ears, *"Who will answer the longings of our Mother Church? Who will console Her?"* Our brothers and sisters are persecuted in numerous regions of the world. They are persecuted because of their refusal to abandon their faith. Despite the threatening measure of hardship and difficulties, they stand firm in their faith, arm themselves with courage and hope and become prophets of the love of Christ. The burning fire in their hearts cast away all the hardships, fears and difficulties. In the face of hardship, especially persecution, they are strengthened by the Gospel values, their faith and Jesus' promise: *"Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you [falsely] because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven. Thus, they persecuted the prophets who were before you"* (Matthew 5:11-12).

I find so inspiring the story of a man of fiery faith - Fr. Saad Sirop Hanna who is now the Auxiliary Bishop of Baghdad. He was kidnapped for twenty-eight days, from August 15 to September 11, 2006. He was tirelessly tortured by the Islamic extremists in an attempt to make him deny Christ. *"Back I fell, my head buzzing from the impact, and then came another and another and another. The wooden stick whipping through the air as they struck me,"* he narrated. He was brought from one unknown place to another in a vehicle trunk, blindfolded and had not enough food and drink. After days of torture, one of his captors asked him, *"You don't hate us, do you?"* Fr. Hanna answered him, *"No, I don't hate any person. My faith asks this of me, to love all people. Even those who*

harm me. I don't always accept the things they do, but I don't hate them."

These words he uttered were not empty rhetoric. Fr. Hanna refused to make his suffering in captivity a justification for the hatred toward Muslims, and he showed it in his choices. Once he attempted to escape by running toward and swimming across the Tigris River. He did not succeed and because of this attempt, he realized that his Muslim guard would be blamed and might be at risk. As he suffered another beating, Fr. Hanna told his captors, *"You want to kill me? ... Do it. ... But if you kill that guard, then you kill an innocent man. One of your own."*

The single thread that runs through this story is the shining and lively faith that he lives. His story helps me to realize what faith means. It is to see God in every circumstance and in every person. *"Faith need not wilt in the face of difficulties but can blossom, offering greater clarity... belief in the love of God compels us to see the love in one another."*

He believes that his mission and

vocation as priest has no boundaries or wall, rather, his vocation calls him to become a bridge to reach others. Fr. Hanna once said, *"You are not a priest just for Christian people but for everyone, and also for Muslims. You show this in how you act and your words. You must know how to speak and present your faith to those who are different in faith and religion."*

Let us offer our prayer for our Christian brothers and sisters in the Middle East. Let us thank all our Christian brothers and sisters who continue to live the Gospel values faithfully in their daily life. May God bless them all.

Thank you Bishop Saad Sirop Hanna for letting the fire of God's love, mercy and compassion be known through all the earth!



Moved with Compassion, Feed The Multitude

Edelyn Bechayda

In my everyday life, I often tend to focus on myself. What do I still lack? Often, I forget that there are many people who are deprived of so many things in life. I, like many others, see our needy brothers and sisters. Seeing them, I often say: “kawawa”. I am contented with having pity on them. A lot of times, I fail to realize that many people do not even have the necessities of life. Attending events like the Philippine Conference on New Evangelization, an annual event organized by the Archdiocese of Manila has greatly helped me to grow in this aspect. This 2018, the fifth year of PCNE, the theme was “**Moved with Compassion, Feed the Multitude**”. It was held from the 18th-22nd of July. Priests, consecrated persons, lay faithful, including the young people coming from Metro Manila, other provinces and even other Asian countries, attended the big event.

In accord with the theme, talks, conferences, the liturgy, and other activities reflect the aim of the event which is to promote deeper appreciation and understanding of the gift of ministerial and baptismal priesthood and of consecrated life. The gift of baptismal priesthood that each of us has received calls us to be in communion with others and doing so entails compassion rather than mere pity, the compassion which is epitomized by Christ who made Himself, the Bread, blessed, broken and shared. As a catechist, it is a great challenge for me to be a “bread, broken and shared” that others may live, and I realized, on these days that we reflected on this, that this would only be possible if we look at other people through the

heart. Looking at people through the heart can conquer our tendency to be judgmental, selfish and indifferent to the needs of our fellowmen, as the testimonies of people from all walks of life have shown us. Furthermore, with openness to others, each one could be a vessel of grace, a lamp in a dark alley, or a morsel of bread that could bring salvation, light, and nourishment to the multitude, especially to those who are hungry and thirsty for understanding, acceptance, and love.

Only through this will we be able to partake of Christ’s offering of His Body and Blood for the sanctification and salvation of humanity.



The Incorruptible Heart of Saint Padre Pio Visits the Philippines

Seemingly endless queues of people became a common sight in places where the incorruptible heart of a 20th century Saint was laid for prayer and veneration of the faithful. This was the heart of Saint Padre Pio, a Capuchin priest who became one of the most popular saints in the Catholic Church. In life, Padre Pio carried the stigmata, the wounds of Christ that miraculously appeared on his body. He was known to have performed bilocation, or appearing in different places at one time, cared for the sick, have the power of

healing and prophecy. His life was a testimony of the wondrous things God can do through people who are docile to His will.

From October 6-26, the reliquary containing his incorruptible heart toured the three major islands of Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. This visit coincided with the celebration of the Year of the Clergy and Consecrated Life. It was the most fitting time because “Padre Pio, given as a role model for them, can be an inspiration and challenge to us to have a heart like his, close to

the Eucharistic and forgiving heart of the Lord,” as Fr. Joselin Gonda, Rector of the National Shrine of St. Padre Pio in Batangas said. Thousands of pilgrims and devotees flocked to the National Shrine of Padre Pio in Sto. Tomas, Batangas, the University of Santo Tomas, Manila, Cebu, Davao and Lipa Cathedral to venerate and get a glimpse of the heart relic of Padre Pio, who was also known for healing the sick.

This visit came at a time when we Filipinos reel from different calamities and illnesses and Padre Pio had a simple yet wise words for us: *“Pray, hope, and don’t worry. Worry is useless. God is merciful and will hear your prayer.”* May the visit of his relic inspire Filipinos to place in God’s merciful hands not only their own afflictions but the greater ills that afflict our conscience, our moral and spiritual life. 🙏



Padel Bin: “To Love is to Serve”

Sr. Sherlyn Joy D. Dapito, AMSS

“What is love?” I think this is the question many of us have asked ourselves. People define love in so many ways. Love has inspired a lot of “hugot lines” and yet, it remains a great mystery to some. No matter how we define love, one thing is certain, our definition determines the way we live our lives.

“Amare est Servire” (To love is to serve). This is how Bishop Benjamin de Jesus, OMI, DD has defined love. It was a definition that shaped his life and priestly ministry and brought him to his tragic yet noble end.

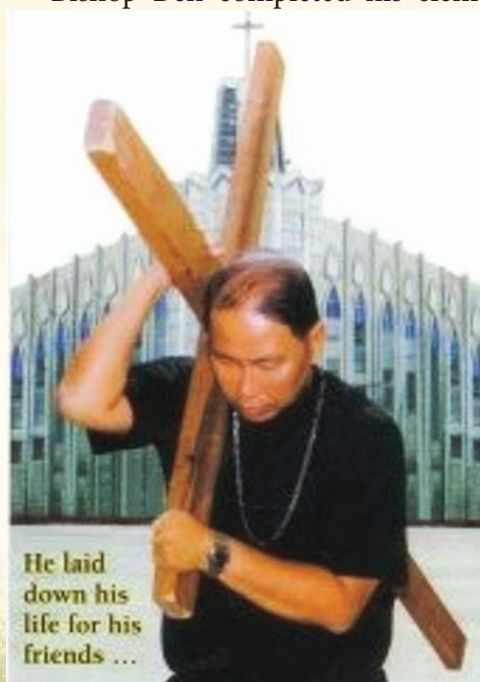
Bishop Ben was born on July 25, 1940 in Malabon, Metro Manila. He was the youngest of the six children of Fausto and Isabel de Jesus. Raised by pious parents, two of his sisters, Purificacion and Isabel, became Discalced Carmelite nuns in Laoag, Ilocos Norte.

Bishop Ben completed his elementary and high school education in Malabon. He joined the missionary congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) and made his first vows in Tamontaka, Cotabato in 1961. After philosophical and theological studies at San Jose Seminary in Manila, he was ordained a priest on December 29, 1967 in Cotabato. All of Bishop Ben’s pastoral assignments were in the OMI mission territories of Mindanao such as Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao, Sulu, Tawi-tawi, etc.

After 25 years as a priest, Pope John Paul II ordained him a Bishop in Rome on January 6, 1992. Within a month, he was installed as the bishop of the Apostolic Vicariate of Jolo. He took as his motto the sentence that best describes his life: *Amare est Servire* (To love is to serve).

He spent his ministry, not only in school and parish, but also with community development, implementing programs such as irrigation, carabao dispersal, credit unions, consumer cooperatives, housing projects, community organization. He understood well the need to build bridges of understanding and respect between Muslims and Christians.

“Padel Bin”, as he was fondly called by the children and the badjaos, was distinguished for his simplicity, humility, modesty and tireless zeal which gained the respect and love of all people, both Muslims and Christians. Bishop Ben would go around Jolo and the whole Vicariate always with a smile and a greeting of peace on his lips. He would listen tirelessly to the cry



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of his people, Muslims and Christians alike. In all simplicity, he would talk with the ordinary men and women on the streets and at coffee shops, or with the badjaos at the pier, while singing with them the famous song “Baleleng”. He would personally fetch incoming visitors at the airport or deliver letter of invitations to people. In his homilies, the recurrent themes were brotherhood, harmony, love, understanding, peace.

Despite his good intentions and dreams for peace and hope for the poorest of Jolo, Bishop was brutally murdered in front of the Cathedral on February 4, 1997. His death shocked everyone. There was crying especially among the children and the badjaos, the most marginalized Muslim tribe. They felt the loss of a true Father in the death of their “Padel Bin”.

To love is to serve, no matter what the cost. Padel Bin has shown the extent of his love by embracing a mission that could imperil his life. During the 25th Anniversary of the OMI presence in July, he said: *“I hope and pray (...) that I will be able to persevere unto the end, singing praises to God for the good things He has done in me and through me, to the people that I serve.”*

“No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (Jn 15:13). Bishop Ben’s love had no other model but the love of His Master, who laid down his life for love of his friends, the Master who bent his knees to serve because in service, love is best expressed. 🙏



Witnesses of Fidelity

Sr. Rosanna Favero, MSBS

People especially the young ones often ask us, religious, “Why did you decide to become a nun or a sister?” To such queries, stories told and retold reveal the Holy Spirit’s creativity in calling each and every consecrated person. They never fail to leave us in awe at how He can turn any event into a light leading to the Voice of He who continually prods persons to dedicate themselves to the service of the Kingdom. On the beautiful occasion here in the Philippines, the Year of the Clergy and the Consecrated Persons, I sought the insights and stories of our two sisters who have already spent long years at the service of God’s mission.

Sr. Pierina Cola, MSBS

Birthdate: July 30, 1926

Birth Order: Youngest of Seven (Her two brothers died at a very young age. She has two sisters - Sr. Teresina and Sr. Caterina, who also entered the MSBS Congregation, and one brother who became a religious of the Congregation of the Servites and was sent to Africa as a missionary.)

Entrance to the Convent: October 27, 1945 (She already celebrated her 70th anniversary in religious life.)



What or who inspired you to enter religious life? To join the Missionary Servants of the Blessed Sacrament?

Sr. Pierina: It was my eldest sister. When Sr. Teresina brought me to be baptized, she prayed *“Lord, please accept this, my little sister, and guide her that she will be consecrated to you.”* I didn’t know about her prayer. She never told me during the years of my formation. It was only when I came back from the mission in Australia that she shared about her wish and prayer for me.

Who has led you to the MSBS?

Sr. Pierina: I was guided by my spiritual director, the priest in San Zeno. He helped me a lot. He was the confessor of the Canossian sisters. I confided to him the feeling of being called by God when I was 17. He advised me to take time and reflect. After one year of preparation, he asked me if I was ready to take the vow of chastity. My answer was a joyful “Yes” and so he told me to be back next time and to share with him more about my vocation. When I was 19, he asked me which Congregation did I wish to join. He mentioned some of the Congregation but I didn’t feel any attraction to those. So he advised me to write Sr. Teresina, my sister who was already a professed MSBS. She came home soon, talked with my parents and then I joined her in the MSBS Congregation.

I was the youngest and so it was my task to stay with our parents and take care of them. But I felt that my sister Caterina would do better than myself in this task. She, too, wanted to enter religious life, but we agreed that I enter ahead of her. After the death of my mother, my father decided to join the Servites, even if he was already old and could hardly see. There, he dedicated the rest of his life repairing shoes and doing other humble services for the religious brothers.

What or who helped you persevere in your journey of following Christ in religious life?

Sr. Pierina: I was pleased and joyous in doing the apostolate especially among the children, but it was really the presence of our Lady of Monte Berico that has helped me. I’ve always felt her presence in my life. I have received help also from the confessors.

What were the challenges you have experienced along your journey and how did you overcome them?

Sr. Pierina: I was always contented and at peace in all the communities I was assigned to. There were difficulties at times, however, the Blessed Virgin Mary helped me to be faithful to my consecration. The time to nurture my spiritual life is also helpful. It was in one of our retreats that the spiritual director helped me to understand that the call for conversion is constant, that I’m continually called to change whenever I hear the voice of God within me. I experienced hearing clearly the voice of God calling me, challenging and reassuring me along my journey.

I also consider important the presence of my guardian angel. I have always been grateful for his presence. I can call for his help anytime I need it – when I have to do, say or decide on something. I realized that now I’m calling on him more often. *“Help me my Guardian Angel...help me to do this simple thing – to dress up when I have a hard time doing it.”* Immediately, I feel a new strength as if somebody is really present to help me in this simple task. The Sacred Heart of Jesus is also ever present to help and listen to me. I have many experiences of being helped and even healed by Him.

What message or insights would you like to tell the young people of today?

Sr. Pierina: To the young people of today I would like to encourage you to participate in the Holy Mass and receive the sacrament of confession often because the sacraments help us. I would like you to appreciate fidelity, to dare for greater things in your spiritual life and not to be satisfied with little. The Lord helps us to go on in our journey but ask always for something more, more generosity.



What are your dreams for the mission and for the young people of today, especially priests and religious?

Sr. Pierina: Now my desire for mission is quenched only through my commitment to pray. Prayer for those who need God’s help, for all those who are involved now in the different fields of apostolate.

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What message or insights would you like to tell young religious today?

Sr. Pierina: To the consecrated people and young religious, I would like to say *"Let us be faithful always and wherever we are assigned, faithful and obedient to the superiors. Don't get tired of obeying. Be joyful always, serene, calm. We cannot do what we want or what we like. Persevere!"*

Sr. Vittorina Nogara, MSBS

Birthdate: May 31, 1934

Birth Order: Fourth of Five Children (She has three sisters and one brother. Her eldest sister, Sr. Grazia Nogara, was also a Missionary Servant of the Blessed Sacrament.)

Entrance to the Convent: May 31, 1959 (Her 25th birthday and Foundation anniversary of the Congregation – She spent 56 years in religious life.)



What or who inspired you to enter religious life? To join the Missionary Servants of the Blessed Sacrament?

Sr. Vittorina: I never had the thought of becoming a religious until I was twenty. A few years back, I was engaged to Luciano, whom I loved very much. Luciano, however, fell ill with leukemia. At the beginning of his illness, I began to pray so much to obtain the miracle from the Lord but after seven months of illness, he died on May 3, 1954. It was a great pain for me. After his death, I continued to intensify the prayer for his soul. I went to Mass every day, which I was not used to do before.

My mother asked me a few days after his death, *"Lina, (my baptismal name) what happened to you? You have changed."* I replied: *"Mama, I felt my heart changed from that day of Luciano's death."* I did not understand how all this had happened but I said *"Lord your will be done"* and I felt a strong desire to consecrate myself entirely to the Lord. I think it was the miracle the Lord had in store for me. I was also inspired by Sr. Grazia, my eldest sister, who was a Missionary Servant of the Blessed Sacrament.

What or who helped you persevere in your journey of following Christ in religious life?

Sr. Vittorina: I was greatly helped by the Lord, the Superiors, Mother Mary, in whom I have much confidence. She is the Mother of all mothers. My devotion to her started when I was young. In the family, we used to recite the Holy Rosary together in the months of May and October. My optimism in life, which I consider as a gift from God, also helped me a lot.

How would you sum up your journey in a few words?

Sr. Vittorina: A thanksgiving to God. The Magnificat is the song of my heart: To you be all praise, glory, thanksgiving forever and ever O Blessed Trinity. May the Lord's Kingdom of Justice, Love, and Peace come in our hearts. In my consecration to the Lord, I never regretted embracing him. It has been 56 years and I feel young at heart. I am happy to still be efficient and doing well, through God's goodness and mercy. I cannot recount the many blessings he has given me during my journey. He has poured on me his love, trust and strength through His words, his presence in the Eucharist, my co-sisters and the persons I work with. Even if I was not sent to mission places, I have reached far lands and people through prayers and my humble service to the many missionaries I met who shared their stories and work. Wherever I am, He is with me telling me to pray, serve and do his mission. There is nothing more I can ask for. *"Thank you Jesus, praise and glory to you forever, Alleluia, Alleluia."*

What message or insights would you like to tell young religious today?

Sr. Vittorina: *"Dearest priests and religious of today, I invite you from my heart: Open the doors to Christ" (St. John Paul II). It is worth risking your whole life for the Coming of the Kingdom of God throughout the world. Let us continue to offer our life for the mission until there is a soul to be saved, a heart to burn with love for Christ. May the Name of the Lord be praised and glorified through all the world.*

"The Lord has done great things for me and holy is His name." (Magnificat) ✠

Searching Beyond the Glitters

Asp. Vu Thi Hang, MSBS

The day I decided to come to the Philippines to join the Congregation of the Missionary Servants of the Blessed Sacrament was the turning point in my life. It marked the beginning of a journey of searching beyond



the glitters of this world. To make this decision was not at all easy, especially at the age of 18. I was enjoying my life. I was full of dreams and ambitions. The glittering world lured me with its promises of boundless happiness, opportunities for success and fulfillment. The future was opened widely to me. A lot of new, exciting and interesting stuff beckoned me. However, the love of Jesus was irresistible and

overwhelming. Like St. Paul, Christ's love urged me to search beyond the earthly things and pursue greater and more sublime things.

The call I felt within moved me. The invitation to respond to His call was so strong and mysterious. At the time, I was confused. God did not appear to tell me directly: *"Come and follow me"* as He did to Saints Peter and Andrew. The inkling that God has this particular plan for me was a surprise. It was not easy to give up whatever I had to be God's disciple. I was afraid but I decided to heed His voice.

Saying goodbye to my dear land and people, I departed to the new land, where a lot more surprises await me – new people, culture, language and style of life. The MSBS community welcomed me with warmth, joy and hospitality. I felt loved since the first moment I set foot in its home. The MSBS formation house, the cradle which nourishes and forms many zealous sisters for the mission, was to be my home and a place where I carry out His plan. It is where I began to learn even simple things. I learned to pray, to be intimate with God, to work according to the MSBS way and even to

love the tasks assigned to me.

Our life here is very simple. The first thing we do at the break of dawn is to pray the lauds and participate in the Mass. These open our day. In the Eucharistic celebration, we thank God for His providence and loving protection during the night. From the Eucharist we receive, we get strength, nourishment and inspiration to work, pray and sacrifice for God's Kingdom as our Foundress Mo. Caterina Zecchini taught us. As an aspiring religious missionary, I am invited to form myself each day. Formation provides me the information to be transformed into Jesus - the Master whom I follow, to do the things with joy and willingness, to accept the unexpected with trust in God's Will. Here, I am pruned as the vine is being pruned by the vine grower. My formators and the people around me help me to grow more and more each day. I am taught to love and embrace tightly my vocation, the plan of God for me.

Choosing this life means turning my back to the false promises of the world. It is not always easy to look beyond the glitters for we tend to confuse them with gold, with the real treasure that is worth the search. For this reason, I need to have a little more trust in Him. There are times I balk and hesitate, but the love of God impels me. He never abandons me. He assures me gently through different instruments. Thanks to these instruments who encourage, accompany and support me in my vocation journey, thanks to them I continue to pursue the real treasure God has prepared for me, and that is, a life of radically following Him. 🙏

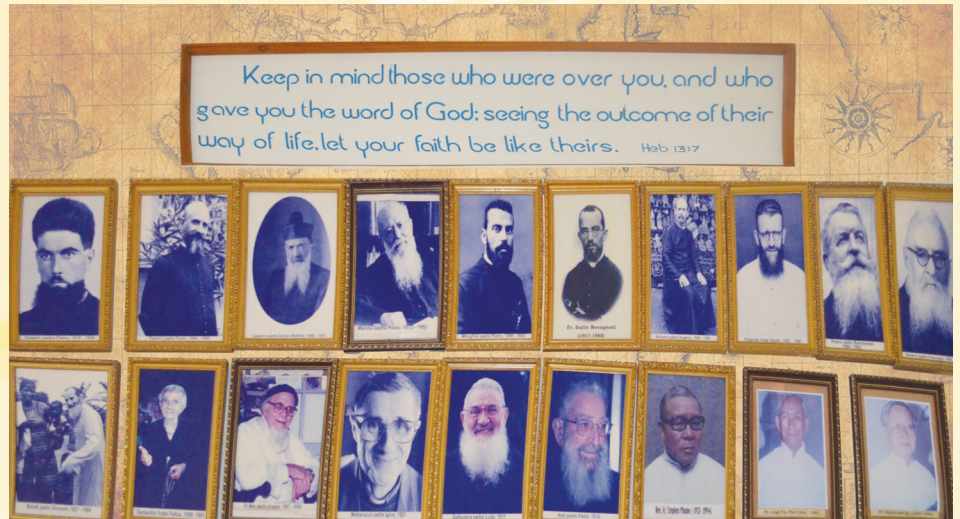


Vocation for the Missionaries

Post. Aye Aye Mu, MSBS

Before coming to the Philippines, I took up a short course in the English Language in Yangon, Myanmar while waiting for my visa. There, I met a woman who was then taking care of her sickly brother priest. One evening, she invited me to visit him. "Yes, I will," my immediate response to her invitation. The following evening, I went with that woman to the priest who was seriously ill at the time. He is Fr. Doro, an enthusiastic and diligent priest.

Although it was my first time to meet him, I felt like we knew each other before because of the way he addressed me. Eventually, his sister told him about me, about my plans to enter the convent. From his sick bed, he began to share his stories, struggles, and sufferings in life. He also shared proudly the things he has done for the Church as well as his eagerness to do more but his physical condition does not allow him to do everything that he wanted to do for the Church. Quoting Matthew 26:41, he said that his spirit is willing but his flesh is weak. Then he continued saying, *"I am glad to meet a young lady like you who want to offer your life to God and to whom I could count on. Please pray for me that I may get well soon. I trust in your prayer."* This simple experience was like a primer to the life that I have chosen, the life of a Missionary Servant of the Blessed Sacrament, whose heart is filled with the desire to help the missionaries all throughout the world through prayers, works, and sacrifices. Simple as it may sound, this vocation is necessary because the world today is in great need of more missionaries, especially during this time.



Many people still long to know Jesus, to discover His love anew and to be faithful in serving and loving Him. I am sure that Fr. Doro is not the only one who needs prayer but also the many other missionaries who face courageously the daily struggles and challenges. I remember my former parish priest, Fr. Shano, who was also sickly. Despite his illness, he used to travel on his motorcycle to remote places where there are no means of transportation and electricity, and scarce resources such as food. He built some chapels where people can pray together. It must be difficult for him and for other missionaries who face the same or worse situation and yet they continue to embrace these difficulties and challenges with passion. They continue to carry out their mission trusting in God and in our prayers that will sustain and strengthen them in their struggles because none of us can live alone. They need our support and help as much as we need the service they render in the mission of the Church.

As a postulant, I am being prepared to give myself fully to this particular ministry in the Church by knowing and understanding myself and others. As the years pass, I find myself more and more at home with this Congregation because my desire to support the missionaries are fulfilled as we offer daily our prayers, works, and sacrifices for them. I believe that the learning I gain and the experiences in my formation will be a great help in the fulfillment of my vocation. I am thankful for all the blessings I have received especially the grace to realize that He has called me to participate in His mission because He has given me the capacity to share and help those in need. May we render Him thanks for the goodness and love He has shown us. †

Missionary Servants of the Blessed Sacrament—Asia



The Treasure

Nov. Maria Gisela Weu, MSBS

Eureka! This Greek word which means "I've found it" is attributed to the Greek scholar Archimedes when a brilliant idea lighted up in his mind. Full of excitement, he ran out naked through the city street, shouting "Eureka! Eureka!" This simple word fascinates me. I do believe that every one of us has felt that happiness and excitement upon finding someone or something which is of great value. In my life, I have searched for this precious pearl. It wasn't easy because of fears and hesitations but a seeker does not quit even when the road seems impossible to walk on.

At one point in my life, this road seemed impassable. It was when my beloved mother has gone to rest in His loving arms. I was angry with myself and honestly even with God. I told Him, *"You really are a God of surprises. Why could you not give me at least the last chance to give her a hug and a kiss?"* The tears of pain and brokenness gushed forth profusely from my eyes. The words of St. Paul to the Ephesians rang loud in my ears, *"Give thanks for everything."* I questioned myself, *"Do I need to thank God for this painful moment?"* St. James also said; *"Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you encounter various trials."* These statements sounded insane. In the midst of all my questioning, Jesus' overflowing love rushed forth to fill my heart. Gazing at the Cross, I felt consoled as I remember His loving sacrifice to ransom us from death and make

us his friends. I was awashed with shame as I remember the people who are in great difficulties, the missionaries who are abandoned, persecuted, the migrants, the refugees, and the list could go on and on. There are a lot of people out there who are experiencing so much suffering, desperation, and death. In the midst of these rubbles, I found my treasure.

Eureka! I have found God. In the midst of pain, He manifested Himself through the presence of my Sisters in my religious community. Their love, patience, and encouragement inspired me to go on sharing Christ, to be His hands, heart and all of His faculties to others. In all we do, we are taught to live the virtues of a disciple – generosity, kindness, patience, compassion, love, understanding. Challenges and difficulties are part of the journey but I believe that a true disciple is able to walk through the path that Jesus wants us to take, amidst pain, joy or unpleasant surprises that come along our journey. I know that this is not the end, but I will always hum

in my heart *"My heart is ready, O God."* I continue my journey of formation in religious life and I am now in my second year of novitiate. I started my apostolic experience in our community in Mindoro. I felt so blessed and glad to have this opportunity. I am grateful to my superior Sr. Rosanna for letting us taste the apostolic mission. For Sr. Cle and all the members of the Community of Mindoro, I am thankful for their warm welcome, patience, and guidance during our apostolate. We thank all the people who have been part of our service. We thank them for their kind help and laughter they shared with us. 🙏



MSBS in Asia convened for its Second Delegation Assembly

The Missionary Servants of the Blessed Sacrament (MSBS) in Asia, belonging to St. Francis Xavier Delegation convened on June 1-5, 2018 for its Second Delegation Assembly. With the theme **“Vocation to Community Life: Embracing its Richness and Challenges Today”**, the delegates reflected on the gift of community life and on the realities that challenge us toward a more authentic and effective witness to our consecration.

The Delegation Assembly, which is held every three years, aims to make an authentic evaluation of the life and mission of the Delegation, and to encourage a collective conscious responsibility in reading, planning, and in living and passing on of the legacy of the Eucharistic-missionary spirituality in the very rich, diverse and challenging context of Asia.

As what Sr. Rosanna, the Delegate Superior has reiterated in her opening remarks, the aim of this particular assembly was *“to renew our appreciation for community life, and encourage each one of us to face the challenges that this entails, with availability, fervor and firm conviction that our first and principal mission is to witness the Trinitarian and ecclesial communion through our fraternal life in the community.”* To guide us in this task, Sr. Clemence gave a talk with the theme **“Community as the First Place of Mission”**.

With openness and earnest desire to cooperate better to the fulfillment of the mission, the delegates confronted the challenges to greater witnessing and proposed concrete lines of action to convert these into opportunities to spread God’s Kingdom to the ends of the earth.

The Assembly concluded with a liturgy that reminds us of our sublime vocation to live community life and with this message of encouragement from Mo. Ilia: *“The feet of the sisters can sometimes have signs of wounds, hardships, inconsistencies... but they are the feet of those who are called by Jesus to be with Him and to proclaim Him. And this is also my wish for you: despite the inevitable hardships, tensions, weaknesses, strengthen yourself more and more in this service of love. Then, indeed in this way, the community will always be a place and source of mission.”*

Along with Mo. Ilia Mittone, the Superior General, Sr. Giusy Sozza, the Vicar General, Sr. Sebastiana, one of our co-sisters from Italy, Sr. Naw May Phaw and Sr. Virgie also participated in the said Assembly.



Called to be for His People

Sr. Naw May Phaw Fatima, MSBS

We, human beings, have an insatiable thirst for knowledge. We ask many questions, and we do ask because we are searching for something. The disciples of Jesus questioned him many times. *“Master, Why I can’t follow you now?”* (Jn 13:37). *“Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?”* (Mk 9:11). *“Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”* (Jn 9:2). Just like the disciples, I, too, had many questions in life. *“Why now, Lord?”* was the resounding query of my heart when I received the news that my father met an accident a few days after my first profession. This question echoed in

my heart when I received the news that my father was seriously ill some days after my perpetual profession. Why this sort of surprises whenever I give my response to His love? In all these, Jesus whispers to my heart His responses. As he told Peter, *“Let the dead bury their dead. But you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God”* (Lk 9:60) so did He tell me to focus on the call and mission He has given me - the mission to take care of God’s people.

My life is not for myself alone neither for my family. My life is for all. As I have embraced God, I have to embrace all the people who come to my life, in the community, in the mission, everywhere. This realization hit me one morning when I was about to cross the street. I heard a voice calling me “Sister”. I looked back and saw a sister who seemed strong and healthy, but when I looked at her hand and saw her walking stick, I immediately gave her a hand. We crossed the street together. She told me where she needed to go and I accompanied her. When we arrived there, her friends were surprised to see her back. She told them that God has sent her a guardian angel. Her friends thanked me. At that moment, the words of Pope Francis in his message on World Mission Day rang in my ears: *“People need you.”*

As I have chosen to embrace God’s call, He gave me so many chances to help and serve those near me. In the International Center for Missionary Animation in Italy (CIAM), where I have been assigned for four years, we welcome people from different parts of the world who are attending different short courses and meetings. With a missionary spirit, we make everyone feel at home and focus on their studies as they prepare themselves for the mission. Although there is also difficulty with communication because of the language barrier, the language of God, which is love, helps us understand one another. Many pilgrims pass here too, sharing about their encounter with the Holy Father. Unforgettable for me was one lady, who was a cancer survivor. With teary eyes, she narrated her encounter with the Holy Father during which, he had listened to her and blessed her. This and many other stories shared with us have always reminded me how much people need God’s missionaries. This



service that I am doing is freely chosen. I strive to live it wisely and calmly during the various moments of the day, absorbing and enjoying the richness and beauty contained within different peoples whom we welcome from the different continents.

In this journey of being for the people, His Word gives me life and inspiration. *“Abide in my Love”* (Jn 15:9). I am called to abide in Christ’s love. This is to be a true disciple – not only to be one who follows what the Master is doing but also to be constantly aware that apart from the love of Christ, we are nothing. His Love is the reason for my existence in this world and for my life as a consecrated person. This too is a journey of growing in trust, a journey forward together with the people. All of these years of journeying in this path, only one thing stands out: my deep encounter with Him and His love that moves me to love Him more passionately and serve Him more generously. 🙏

A Glimpse at Life's Paradox

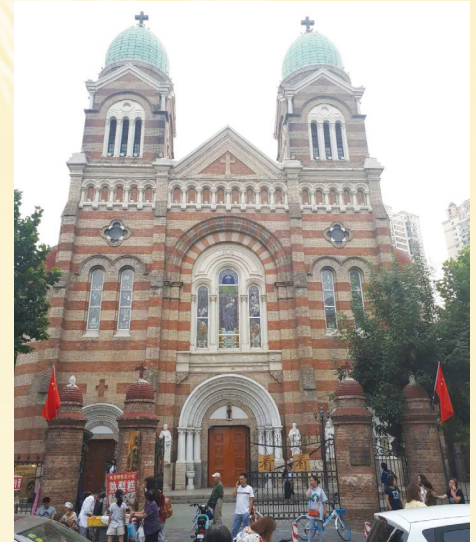
Sr. Amelita M. Cadio, MSBS

"Wherever you go, go with all your heart." Confucius

I breathed out a sigh of relief after passing the Immigration Officer in Beijing. For weeks I have been anxious of the unknown that was waiting for me and stressed out by the twice denial of my visa application to China. When at last, I have set foot in China, I was pestered by paranoia until we have reached the City of Tianjin, our destination. Seeing this beautiful city let me forget the terrific traffic in Manila and the soaring prices of commodities. This journey to a foreign land was a promise of a privileged experience to augment our knowledge and widen our horizon in the field of Chinese Medicine. Three of us from the Philippines were fortunate to be among the twenty people from different countries who were granted scholarship in the "International Training Course on Modernization of Medicinal Plants for One Belt One Road Countries." I was so impressed with the hospitality of the Chinese who hosted the seminar. We were all treated like VIPs, with free accommodation, food, transportation and additional allowance. I was astonished to see their university progressively planted in an area of 50 hectares.

The University caters to thousands of international students who get to enjoy advanced technologies which facilitate learning. I was so impressed to know that almost all transactions, even in cafeterias and small shops, are completed through their famous app, the WeChat. Roaming around downtown, I did not see a single beggar loitering in the streets. It seemed that nobody goes hungry. Basic commodities are so affordable. But after a week, I felt the pangs of severe hunger and thirst amidst the abundance. Yes, I felt so dry. The beautiful room where I stayed served as my small haven where I could replenish myself spiritually. It is there and then that this realization dawned on me with more meaning. No amount of material progress can ever satiate the deepest longing in my heart. Having tasted and enjoyed in a short while the goods of the world: good education, traffic-free transportation, affordable living, security and so on and so forth, the soul longs for something more meaningful. Even before I set foot in this land, I knew the situation of the people there especially the Catholic faithful. For this reason, I also travelled to this land with a great desire in my heart that this land will also one day be open to people's plea to express freely their faith. I myself needed to somehow hide my identity. I refrained from wearing my habit though this did not take away my essence as a religious. I could not go to the church daily as I used to do in the Philippines and this made me really thirsty spiritually.

The thirst was somehow quenched when one day we found the church, St. Joseph Cathedral. It was a lovely church. It is also called the French church because it is located in the original French Concession and was built by French missionaries in 1916. But the thirst was just temporarily relieved for the Church was closed at the time of our visit. It opens only on Sundays and our schedule did not permit me to attend the Mass there. My hope to attend the Mass, to witness with my own eyes the faith of the people was in vain, but I was consoled to see some families praying in front of Mother



Mary's grotto. This means faith is alive despite the restriction. When we went to climb the Great Wall of China, the longing in my heart intensified. How I prayed that their faith may continue to be as great as the Great Wall, enduring the suppression or persecution that they face daily. Bringing with me these experiences, I went home with an "excess baggage" - my loads of prayer for the land and people of China that one day the Eucharistic Sun will rise on this beautiful land, and they will be able to adore and praise Him and proclaim His love to all the world.

My experience in China gave me a glimpse at life's paradox. I was being fed but has not been full. I had eaten but was never satisfied. I had received but I still felt empty.



In the end I thought to myself, I would still choose to embrace a life surrounded with poverty and all sort of inconveniences but with hearts free to express my desires and longings especially in regard to my faith. I can die poor materially

but rich spiritually. I may be hungry but spiritually satisfied. Life gives us so many choices and crossroads. The decision always depends on us. Which would we prefer to embrace? In my heart, I know I will always choose "the better part."

Formation of the Youth

Sr. Ermelinda Bhiju, MSBS

"Dear young friends, never be afraid to go out from yourselves and begin the journey. The Gospel is the message which brings freedom to our lives; it transforms them and makes them all the more beautiful."
(Pope Francis; 2015 World Day of Prayer for Vocations)

The formation of the youth is important in today's time. We come to know more and more the role of the youth in our society and in our Church. They are the present and the future of the world. The future of our country and the Church lie in their hands. They are a blessing to the Church. They are filled with tremendous and immense ambitions and dreams and they only need a chance to prove themselves.

In 2014, I was tasked to collaborate in the formation of the young people discerning their vocation for religious life. They come from different countries, the Philippines, Myanmar, Indonesia, and Vietnam. It is a gift and at the same time, a great responsibility. At first, I felt so nervous and afraid because I have never imagined myself handling or forming young people. I cannot deny that this is not an easy task. The young generation of today possesses

both valuable and positive characteristics and deficiencies; personalities, behavior, attitudes, upbringing which influence the way they perceive and live their lives. Sometimes, they are idealistic, demanding. They have a variety of needs and characteristics.

Friends, family, social media, technology, religion and culture are a big part of their life. They are often armed with passion and optimism. When they feel accepted, listened to, appreciated, and cared for,

REFLECTIONS

they begin to discover themselves as well as their talents and skills. They begin to offer their gifts to the community and the Church like the gift of leadership, service and their creativity. Although our age gap is not that wide, we can already say that we grew up in two very different eras. It is not easy to close that gap so as to impart or to pass on the time-honored human and Christian values we want them to learn. However, we do everything we can to encourage them to learn and understand these values and discover their true vocation. It is always a great challenge to understand them and to be patient in dealing with them, but there is great joy in seeing them grow in their human, intellectual and spiritual aspect, sharing their talents and skills. My sincere wish for them is that they may persevere

in their vocation and find meaning in life through their encounter with Jesus, who is the source of strength and joy. Pope Francis said that the young people are the living stones of a Church with a young face. In his Letter to young people on the occasion of the Presentation of the Preparatory Document of the 15th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, he encouraged the youth: *"A better world can be built also as a result of your efforts, your desire to change and your generosity. Do not be afraid to listen to the Spirit who proposes bold choices; do not delay when your conscience asks you to take risks in following the Master."* Young people will have the courage and strength to face and live up to this great challenge with our help, unwavering support, and patient accompaniment. I thank those who

are handling the youth or working with the youth (the Institutions, Formators, etc.). I thank God for the Catholic Church, who is taking an active role in helping them. May the fire that burns in their hearts give hope and joy to all those whom they encounter. I would like to conclude this article with the thought of our Holy Father; *"The life of a young person means moving forward, being restless—a healthy restlessness—the ability not to be satisfied with a life without beauty and without color. If young people do not hunger for an authentic life, I wonder, where will humanity go? Where will humanity go if young people are complacent instead of restless?"* May we continue to tap into the well of restlessness in the young people's heart and help them find rest in the God of life. 🙏



The Miracle of Prayer

Matt Aaron A. Quilit

My name is Matt Aaron A. Quilit. I am 10 years old and a grade 5 student at Mother Caterina School of San Jose, Occidental Mindoro. I was diagnosed with mild autism when I was 4 years old but with therapy and the support of my family, friends and teachers, I am living a normal and happy life. In fact, I am a consistent honor student in our school.

When I was 8 years old, I started feeling weak in my legs. I could not walk straight and I often fell down. So, my parents took me to the doctors for checkup. After a series of painful physical and laboratory tests, the doctors told us that I have Muscular Dystrophy. It is a condition marked by progressive weakening and wasting of the muscles. They said that there is no cure for muscular dystrophy. So, it meant that someday I will not be able to walk and I will be too weak to move. I was so sad and scared but Mama and Papa told me they love me and whatever happens, they will always be there to take care of me. They also told me to have faith in God. They said that God is good and He can do anything, even the impossible. I just have to pray and trust that He will answer my prayers and heal me. After a few months, I became a lot weaker. I could no longer walk on my own. I

could not fully open my hands or raise my arms. I could not sit up and move my legs off the bed.

I was too weak to lift things. I was sad because I could not play games with my friends anymore. But I was grateful because of the people who were always there, willing to help. At home, my family took good care of me. At school, my teachers and schoolmates showed how much they care for me. My teachers carried me around even though I was heavy. My classmates helped me too. They helped me get things I could not reach. When I was sad, they would tell jokes

to make me laugh and smile. They always made me happy and they never made me feel alone. Every day at school, they give time to say a prayer for my healing. The sisters and many other people told me that they always include me in their prayers. It was such a blessing to have good people around me. Through faith and prayers, I slowly regained my strength. Now, I am stronger. I can walk on my own again. I can climb up and down the stairs. I can lift and move things with my hands. I can dance. And most of all, I can play with my friends again. Recovering from muscular dystrophy is impossible but through God's grace, I am now healed. It is a miracle. I now know that God will never leave me and is with me through everything. With Him, everything is possible. 🙏





*"Small gestures of love, of tenderness, of
This is how the d*



care make people feel that the Lord is with us.
 door of mercy opens.”

Pope Francis

Family: Sent on a Mission

Marius and Eleonora Nacar

How did it begin? My child is one of the MSBS scholars in Mindoro. Because of this, I and my husband would always come to accompany our child whenever he receives gifts from them.

In one of those occasions, Sister Denden approached us and invited us to join the Family for the Mission Parenting Seminar. We immediately accepted the invitation and attended the seminar which was held on February 15-17, 2013. After the seminar, we were so grateful and happy for this has helped us understand our duties as husband and wife and as parents to our children. We have learned how to be instruments of Christ's love to them. Our first mission as a married couple is to help our children grow in loving God and in relating with other people. Our mission is to help them understand what it means to be a missionary, which is to share oneself joyfully with others and to do acts of charity in our own simple and little ways.

Thanks to the Family for the Mission Association, our family life has improved. Our relationship as a couple may not be perfect but it was certainly strengthened. We have grown in the capacity to understand and be patient with the weaknesses of each other as well as with the peculiarities of our children. We became more committed to attending Mass together on Sundays and on the first Friday of the month.

The monthly guide for prayer provided by the sisters nourishes our prayer life. The praying of the Holy Rosary strengthens our relationship and faith in God

the Father through the Virgin Mary and empowers us to respond to the mission of the Church through our prayers. And because of this Association, we had the opportunity to visit and share our blessings with our brothers and sisters in the mountains. It is difficult but very fulfilling. Making other family happy by sharing blessings with them warms our heart.

In this association, we experience and live equality and mutual acceptance – no distinction between the rich and the poor. There is friendship, love, sharing and the spirit of belonging to one big true family. We really witness and feel in each one of the members the spirit of service and sincerity in helping other people. Our tribute and profound gratitude for the Family for the Mission for inspiring us to live for the mission, the mission to love one another to share our very own self with our brothers and sisters, the mission of faith, of humble service and of charity. Thank you very much! Long live, Family for the Mission Association! 🙏



What is the Family for the Mission Association?

This Association was established by Sr. Luciana Lucatello, one of our sisters in Italy in 1988. The fundamental aim of FMA is to enliven the missionary spirit in the families. The families who desire to be part of this Association commit to offer an hour of prayer every month for the mission.

Thanks for the Hope!

Darling E. Ysug

The gentle face of a little child greeted me a few hours after she has lost consciousness. Intense longing mixed with anxiety filled my heart from the moment my one-year-old child was wheeled in to the operating room up until she was brought out of it. It was a risk I willingly took, clasp on the hope we were fortunate to have found.

We are poor. There were times when we had nothing to eat and sometimes, I was tempted to give up amidst life's difficulties. But every time, my husband and I think of our two children, giving up is left out of the question. So, we gather the courage to go on with life for the sake of our children. No difficulty is unsurpassable if it is for their own sake.

We continued with our simple life until Lira arrived. I gave birth to her, our youngest daughter on July 28, 2016. Sadness, though, has overcome me when I saw a lump on her forehead. I did not know what to do at the time but my brothers and sisters as well as my loving spouse encouraged me to be strong and to offer all the pain I'm experiencing including the mockery of some people around us. We continued asking Him to send us people with generous hearts to help us. One day, a sister approached me and offered help for the operation of Lira. After our year-long wait, the operation was done



on February 2018. I was overjoyed when the day of Lira's operation had come. Time seemed to be excruciatingly slow but we waited with hearts full of prayers for her successful operation which the specialists called NEM (Naso-Ethmoidal Meningocele) Repair. This operation needs much care and complexities. We first needed to make sure that Lira can endure the surgery. We gave her enough nutritional supplements as well as protected her from cough, cold and other conditions which can interfere with the surgery. We took extra care of her until we have reached that very crucial moment. I am grateful to Sr. Rosanna and Sr. Aldine as well as to all MSBS who became God's instrument and answers to my prayers, to all those who helped us through the MSBS, people who unhesitatingly extended their help though they did not know us personally.

After more than a year of residing with the sisters in Manila, we returned to our humble home, bringing not only the material help we have received, but above all the love of the God of mercy and compassion, who is always with us. This wonderful and memorable gift we have received will bring much joy to our celebration this Christmas season. Many thanks again to those who have let their hearts burn with the love of God, which they in turn share with those who are in need like us. May the Lord bless you more for your immense generosity. Your offering, no matter how little, is great for us because they allow us to experience more God's loving touch, giving us hope to face every single day.



God's Call

Janeth Empacta and Maureen Awit

The skies were dark and rain showers dampened the soil but not the youthful and determined spirit of young people from the parishes of the Apostolic Vicariate of San Jose. They flocked to the Talita Kum Gym inside the Mother Caterina School Compound in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro to attend the Day for Vocational Discernment. This memorable event happened last August 25. For the first time, the youth from our parishes were called together to reflect on the call to priestly and religious life.

The local Church of the Philippines celebrates the Year of the Clergy and Consecrated Persons, a choice made in preparation for the 500th anniversary of evangelization in 2021. Even days before the gathering, the rain continuously poured, making the roads nearly impassable. This continued until the morning of the 25th, but those who had felt summoned were unstoppable. A good number of young people from different villages, who were invited to start journeying and listening to the voice of the Lord, who have already placed curiosity and restlessness in their hearts arrived. Five hundred delegates were expected. Unfortunately, it was impossible for delegates from Ilin Island to join us. Others arrived late and wet. Nevertheless, 340 young people assembled inside the Talita Kum Gym, all excited to meet us, to get to know each other and share stories. The theme chosen for this day's event was "Young People: Called to Discernment". After the opening Mass, we listened to the sharing of Sr. Edevina "Denden" Cariazo. She spoke to us about these things: our relationship with Jesus; prayer, which we often do hastily, if not, we totally forget about; our sharing with Jesus' adventures, dreams, and difficulties, and the importance of being able to talk about our dream. Included in the day's programme is the sharing of sisters, priests, and deacons of their vocation story. We had a few moments of reflection, sharing by group and other activities which helped us realize the gifts that the Lord has given us and the reason why these gifts were given to us – the mission.

As the hours passed, the energy, the joy, and attraction to invest our lives for a love greater than our little desires grew intense. It was like a contagious force that pushed us to go beyond our fears and resistance and as Sr. Maricel said, to find strength in prayer, in the relationship with Jesus and to believe that with Him, everything becomes possible in the end. If at the beginning of our sharing in small groups, we were afraid to say that we sometimes felt that Jesus is calling us to follow Him by giving ourselves at the service of our brothers and sisters, at the end of the day, we shouted together that we are ready to listen to His voice and to embrace the mission.

In the evening, the two of us reflected on what had happened. We have known each other for years since the time we have been welcomed at Angels' Home. We shared disappointments, hardships, and desires for ourselves, for our loved ones and for our companions. At some point in time, the journey seemed so difficult that we could not reach the goal of finishing the study. After the day-long celebration, we both understood how important is the spiritual support we have received from the sisters. If today we could recognize that Jesus speaks to us and loves us so much that he makes us participate in his mission, it is because these years, we have been nourished by his word, love, and hope. We have been taught to recognize our talents and values and to share them with simplicity through little services to others. We finished our studies and we are now teaching at Mother Caterina School.

Today, we have felt that we can do something more and we have promised to pray for each other so that the Lord will help us discern the plan of life He has for us. We also ask your prayer for us and for the young people of the whole world, whom Pope Francis wants to be "street preachers", joyfully bringing Jesus to every street and every corner of the earth! 🙏



MCS DAY Celebration: A Tribute to the Clergy and the Consecrated Persons

Sr. Benedetta Ri Moe, MSBS

In sync with the local Church's celebration of the Year of the Clergy and Consecrated Persons, this year's MCS Day celebration was purposely designed to highlight the vital role of clerics and consecrated persons in the Church. More importantly, the aim was to make pupils appreciate them and their noble vocation. Preparation for the said celebration began as early as the first week of October. The theme song entitled "Father, Bless them" was sung as the opening prayer in first period classes.

Dear Seminarians,

I hope that someday, you will become one of the best priests in the world. There are some people who believe in you. Do not lose hope. I know it takes a lot of studying. The world needs you to become a priest but never let God out of your life. May God bless you for your commitment to walk with me. Jesus and God, help them overcome temptations in the world. Give them success and perseverance in their studies and constant growth in virtue and holiness. May your life be filled with love, hope and happiness as you continue your training.

Thank you for your service and Good luck!!!!

Love,
John Russell G. Toleso



It was a delight to see how eager the children were to understand the meaning of the song and memorize the lyrics and the choreography. The senior pupils of MCS, the five and six graders, had a discussion on what the Year of the Clergy and consecrated persons is all about. In connection to this, they were asked to write an open letter to Pope, Bishops, Priests, Deacons, Seminarians, Nuns, and Missionaries, expressing their gratitude and appreciation for their services and sacrifices.

For the celebration, the plan was to have a presentation including a dramatic presentation of the life of the clergy and consecrated persons. In the flurry of other school activities and tasks we had to attend to, we were very much engaged in and hyped-up with the preparation. We supervised their presentation and practiced with them. I took charge of sewing their costumes. In the silence and enthusiasm of doing my part, the prayer of my heart was really to make MCS Day Celebration memorable and an effective means of promoting clerical and religious vocation. The day of the celebration has come and we

waited with anticipation for the presentations. We were so delighted to watch the grade 6 pupils not only in costumes but also in character. They really enjoyed and tried to get into their characters as priests and sisters donning their vestments and habits. I am sure that the hearts of their parents were not unmoved by what they have shown. I believe that the dramatization reminded the parents and the pupils of the goodness and mercy of the Lord shown in the person of the clergy and religious,

who, not only administer or celebrate the sacraments that sanctify us but also take care of the least and the lost. In thanksgiving to Mother Caterina Zecchini, the foundress of the MSBS after whom the school was named, the concluding presentation focused on her life as a humble servant and faithful religious, who has passionately invested all her strength and creativity in serving the needs of the Mother Church. The celebration was capped by the praying of the Holy Rosary which was offered for the clergy and consecrated persons. The pupils were joined by their parents and the faculty. That moment of prayer made us feel more intensely the gratitude for our religious vocation. This religious vocation fulfills the deepest meaning of our existence and this could only be lived fully by sharing and living our life with others. The image of the Blessed Virgin Mary against a heavenly backdrop, the candles and the aroma of the incense as we pray together with the pupils and their parents will surely be etched deeply in my heart. 🙏

A Heart Captivated by Missionary Life

Sr. Maricel G. Dilengencia, MSBS

“Are you a foreigner father?”

Those were the words I uttered to a missionary sitting in front of me. He was just staring at us silently as we and the PMS Diocesan Mission Directors of the Philippines were sitting outside a fast food restaurant in Mall of Asia (MOA), chatting while waiting for a bus that will bring us to the Capuchin Retreat Center in Lipa City for the 65th National Assembly of PMS Diocesan Directors on July 9, 2018. When I asked him that question, he laughed at me heartily and he said that he is a pure Filipino. He was Fr. Romeo Benitez, SVD (who is fondly called Fr. Romy). As our conversation went on, I discovered that he was the newly-elected Archdiocesan Mission Director of Nueva Segovia, Ilocos Sur. Little did I know that this funny encounter would usher in a greater opportunity for mission works. In August this year, Fr. Romy and I had a chance to talk and he invited me to do Holy Childhood Association (HCA) animation to the children in his parish as well as vocation promotion.

Sr. Rosanna, my superior, happily assented to this proposal. I also thank Msgr. Bong Lo, the PMS National Director, for giving me his blessing to do this as an MEC (Mission Education

Commission) representative. On October 10 until 15, I and Sr. Ma. Goretti Jury, my co-sister from Myanmar, went to five parishes, most of which are in far, mountainous places. It is the first time for these parishes (and to the Vicariate) to have the members of HCA.

We introduced to the children the Holy Childhood Association, the World Mission Sunday, the Mission Rosary and Propagation of the Faith Association (Pro Fide) for the High School students. Although, it was quite tiring, I was strengthened to see the eagerness and excitement of the children to know the associations. As we talked with the children, I saw in their innocent eyes the twinkle that was also in my eyes when I was a child, awed by the

testimony of a priest, who served God with joy and peace. Then, I realized how powerful is the presence of religious in the eyes of the children. It is my sincere wish that our encounter with them, through the grace of God, will plant the seed of missionary vocation in the mind and heart of these children. Thanks to Fr. Romy, I was captivated once again by wonder at the life of a missionary. I was really impressed at the love, dedication, and sacrifices of Fr. Romy, Fr. Rosmel, and Fr. Carlito who are assigned in the mountainous places. They celebrate Mass in the sitios and barangays at the mountaintops, places where the clouds and the mountains kiss. Some of those are reached only by walking for hours. One time, Fr. Rosmel



jokingly told me, "Sister, do you want to come along with us? We will celebrate Mass in a barangay, two-hour drive and then, we have to walk for two hours, sleep over in one sitio. Afterwards, in the early morning, we have to walk again for three hours." The sacrifice he has to make, though, is not a joke. He once related to me that there were times he and the sacristans had to start walking

at three o'clock in the morning but reached the place at four in the afternoon.

Whew! It is very challenging but he finds joy doing this because he is convinced that it is part of his mission as a priest of Christ. The experience also led me to a deeper encounter with the Missionary Christ who through his priests re-captured my heart once again with love for the beautiful,

difficult and challenging life of the missionaries. I thank those priests for their love and sacrifices for Christ and His people. Truly, your presence, our presence as religious makes a difference in the life of young people. Let us continue to work together with the young people and all for the building up of God's Kingdom here on earth! 🙏

Sharing From the Mission Field

Trust in the Mercy of God

Mingalarbar! I am Martina. I am 15 years old. I came from Korle, a remote village in Myanmar. I am a Grade Nine student. I have been staying in Via Pacis Home for four years now. I thank God for bringing me to this boarding house and I thank MSBS Sisters for accepting me, for educating me and nurturing my faith. I thank the sisters for teaching me how to pray and trust in God. I used to take things for granted but now I study harder and pray more often. As I look back to my life, I feel the gratitude for Him in my heart for making me a Christian. I grew up and was educated in a Buddhist environment. Our family was not a devout Christian. My father was a soldier so he was always far from us. Other families also lost their faith. They experienced the worst things in life and some even lost their lives. But now, I can say that my family has experienced God's graces because we were able to escape from that situation. Because of that, I realized that the love of God for me is so powerful and will never diminish. He cares for us and protects us from every danger. It was him who brought my father back to our family and I am very glad to be with my father again. I came to understand that God is merciful and He would never abandon us whenever we call upon Him. This experience helped me to grow more in faith and to realize that being a Christian is not just taking on a name but it is more about being kind to those who are near me and being merciful toward others.



Martina

To believe is to Obey

One of the things that God asks us to do is to obey him. Obedience is one of the virtues that we value in Myanmar. If we do not listen especially to our parents or teachers, we might experience harm or difficulty in life. Due to the difficult situation of my family, I was offered by the sisters to stay in Via Pacis boarding house. In the beginning, I was not a polite person. I was a naughty child. I did not know how to relate to other people. I made other people sad and angry. Staying with the sisters in the boarding house, I understood better how important it is to obey the elders. Every time I make mistake, I was corrected by the sister with a smile. When Sr. Rosanna visited us she told us to listen and obey the sisters and to study hard. This is for our future. This helps not only my life in the boarding house but also in my studies and in my relationship with others. I learned that I have to obey, first of all, God who has given me life, to trust in him and love him. I thank the Lord for giving me life, for giving me a chance to grow, for protecting me and for teaching me how to grow in faith through the people around me. I believe that to obey God is the way to profess our faith.



Roselyn

Seed of Vocation

To know the Scripture is to know Jesus and to know Jesus is to know God. The first time I attended the Bible study, I felt that I became closer to God. I heard about the testimony of the participants on how their life has changed and how their faith has grown after their encounter with the Scriptures. Even though my life may not have changed totally, I believe that the Scriptures tell us to avoid evil and do good. It can also bring us closer to one another as we listen to the sharing of each other. Because of this, I also want to share with others what I have learned. For this reason, I am trying to do well in my studies.

As a member of the Holy Childhood Association, I was asked what I want to be. I told them I want to be a missionary because I want to teach other children about the Bible, about our faith, and to go to places where there are no teachers, to the poor and to the homeless. There are many people who are not educated and who have no knowledge of faith nearby our villages. I believe God sent someone to guide me and give me light for this purpose. I was helped to grow in faith and dream to be a missionary. I am very impressed by the life of the sisters because as a missionary, they left everything to go to unknown places and help those who are poor and the needy and to proclaim the love of God. When I saw the generosity of the sisters and the other people, I also want to be like them. All my experiences with our benefactors and the sisters have become my strength and encouragement to become a religious missionary someday.



Lucia

The Greatest Antidote

Sr. Amelita M. Cadio, MSBS

Does the word holiness still mesmerize us nowadays? The whole world suffers from unimaginable tragedies, natural and man-made. The Church is riddled by so many scandals. So many people no longer relate meaningfully but instead submit themselves as slaves to technology. Humanity gropes in darkness and uncertainties. In this era, does the call to holiness still resonate in us? In the midst of these realities, the Mother Church reiterated the fundamental call of every Christian in the document *Gaudete et Exsultate*, an apostolic exhortation of Pope Francis on the call to holiness in today's world which was issued on March 19, 2018, the Solemnity of St. Joseph. The document reminds the Christian faithful that holiness is not only for the bishops, priests or religious. Accordingly, *"We are frequently tempted to think that holiness is only for those who can withdraw from ordinary affairs to spend much time in prayer. That is not the case. We are all called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves. Are you called to the consecrated life? Be holy by living out your commitment joyfully. Are you married? Be holy by loving and caring for your husband or wife, as Christ does for the Church. Do you work for a living? Be holy by laboring with integrity and skill in the service of your brothers and sisters. Are you a parent or grandparent? Be holy by patiently teaching the little ones how to follow Jesus. Are you in a position of authority? Be holy by working for the common good and renouncing personal gain"* [GE, 14]. Thus, each of us is given the opportunity to live holiness in our daily lives, in the midst of the day's burden, in the blossoming of one's success, in many other ordinariness of life, every single second is a chance and a building block to fill the world with the sweet flavor and aroma of holiness which can conquer or counteract the power of darkness. Hence, holiness is the greatest antidote to the poison of darkness. Pope Francis also stresses the two enemies of holiness namely: Contemporary Gnosticism and Contemporary Pelagianism. Holiness becomes elusive when one relies so much on one's intellect and power. When a person relies on these two, there will be no room to hear God's voice, his plan and design for us.

POPE FRANCIS GAUDETE ET EXSULTATE



ON THE CALL TO HOLINESS
IN TODAY'S WORLD

Apostolic Exhortation



CATHOLIC
TRUTH
SOCIETY



PUBLISHERS
TO THE
HOLY
SEE

"The Catechism of the Catholic Church also reminds us that the gift of grace surpasses the power of human intellect and will..." So, as the saints embraced their struggles and allowed themselves to be clothed with humility, we are also called to do our part. Like them, we are all called to place everything in God's hands with much trust and confidence. Let us all walk the road to holiness and rediscover in the depths of our hearts the fundamental call within us – to live as His children, holy and unblemished in His sight. The road is arduous and yet full of promises. Let us tread this path and together with the Holy Father, *"Let us ask the Holy Spirit to pour out upon us a fervent longing to be saints for God's greater glory, and let us encourage one another in this effort. In this way, we will share a happiness that the world will not be able to take from us."*

#Synod 2018: Listening to the Youth

OCTOBER 3-28, 2018. On these days, the Holy Father along with the bishops undertook a very enriching journey with the youth. This was preceded by year-long intense reflection and studies, inaugurated by the presentation of the Preparatory Document for the 15th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops early last year, January 13, 2017. Disseminated to all the dioceses in the world for reflection of the lay faithful, the said document served as the groundwork for the 15th Ordinary Synod of Bishops. The synod was attended by about 300 bishops, priests, nuns and lay participants and enriched by the generous collaboration and participation of many young people from the four corners of the world.

For the young people who were fortunate to attend the said event, a taste of the openness of the Church left a lasting impression on them. They found their voice and they experienced a listening Church. *"For me, this was a life-changing experience. I have hope in my heart now,"* Daniel Bashir, a 25-year-old medical doctor from Pakistan, said. The leaders of the Church, including Pope Francis, were surprised and delighted by the effect of the young delegates. The young people sometimes whooped or cheered the brief speeches, grading them according to a "clap-o-meter" they developed. The rich and meaningful exchange among the Church leaders and the young people ended with a Mass attended by about 10,000

people.

In his homily during the Closing Mass, Pope Francis begged forgiveness of the young people. *"I would like to say to the young people, in the name of all of us adults: forgive us if often we have not listened to you, if, instead of opening our hearts, we have filled your ears."* The sentiments of Pope Francis and of other participants are manifest in the title of the final synod document – **"A listening Church"**. It is also to be the aim and mandate of the Church to all Her members as we embark together on the journey ahead of us. For as Pope Francis said in his closing homily, *"Listening is the first step in helping the journey of faith. It is the apostolate of the ear: listening before speaking."*

What is the Synod of Bishops?

The Synod of Bishops is a permanent institution of the Catholic Church. It was established by Pope Paul VI in 1965, shortly after the close of the Second Vatican Council, to continue the spirit of collegiality and communion that was present at the Council. The Synod is an assembly of bishops from around the world who assist the Holy Father by providing counsel on important questions facing the Church in a manner that preserves the Church's teaching and strengthens her internal discipline.



Letter from the Synod Fathers to Young People

XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops

We the Synod Fathers now address you, young people of the world, with a word of hope, trust and consolation. In these days, we have gathered together to hear the voice of Jesus, "the eternally young Christ", and to recognize in Him your many voices, your shouts of exultation, your cries, and your moments of silence. We are familiar with your inner searching, the joys and hopes, the pain and anguish that make up your longings. Now we want you to hear a word from us: we wish to be sharers in your joy, so that your expectations may come to life. We are certain that with your enthusiasm for life, you will be ready to get involved so that your dreams may be realized and take shape in your history. Our weaknesses should not deter you; our frailties and sins must not be an obstacle for your trust.

The Church is your mother; she does not abandon you; she is ready to accompany you on new roads, on higher paths where the winds of the Spirit blow stronger - sweeping away the mists of indifference, superficiality and discouragement. When the world that God so loved, that he gave us his only Son, Jesus, is focused on material things, on short-term successes, on pleasures, and when the world crushes the weakest, you must help it to rise up again and to turn its gaze towards love, beauty, truth and justice once more. For a month, we have walked together with some of you and with many others who have been united to us through prayer and affection. We wish to continue the journey now in every part of the earth where the Lord Jesus sends us as missionary disciples. The Church and the world urgently need your enthusiasm. Be sure to make the most fragile people, the poor and those wounded by life your traveling companions.

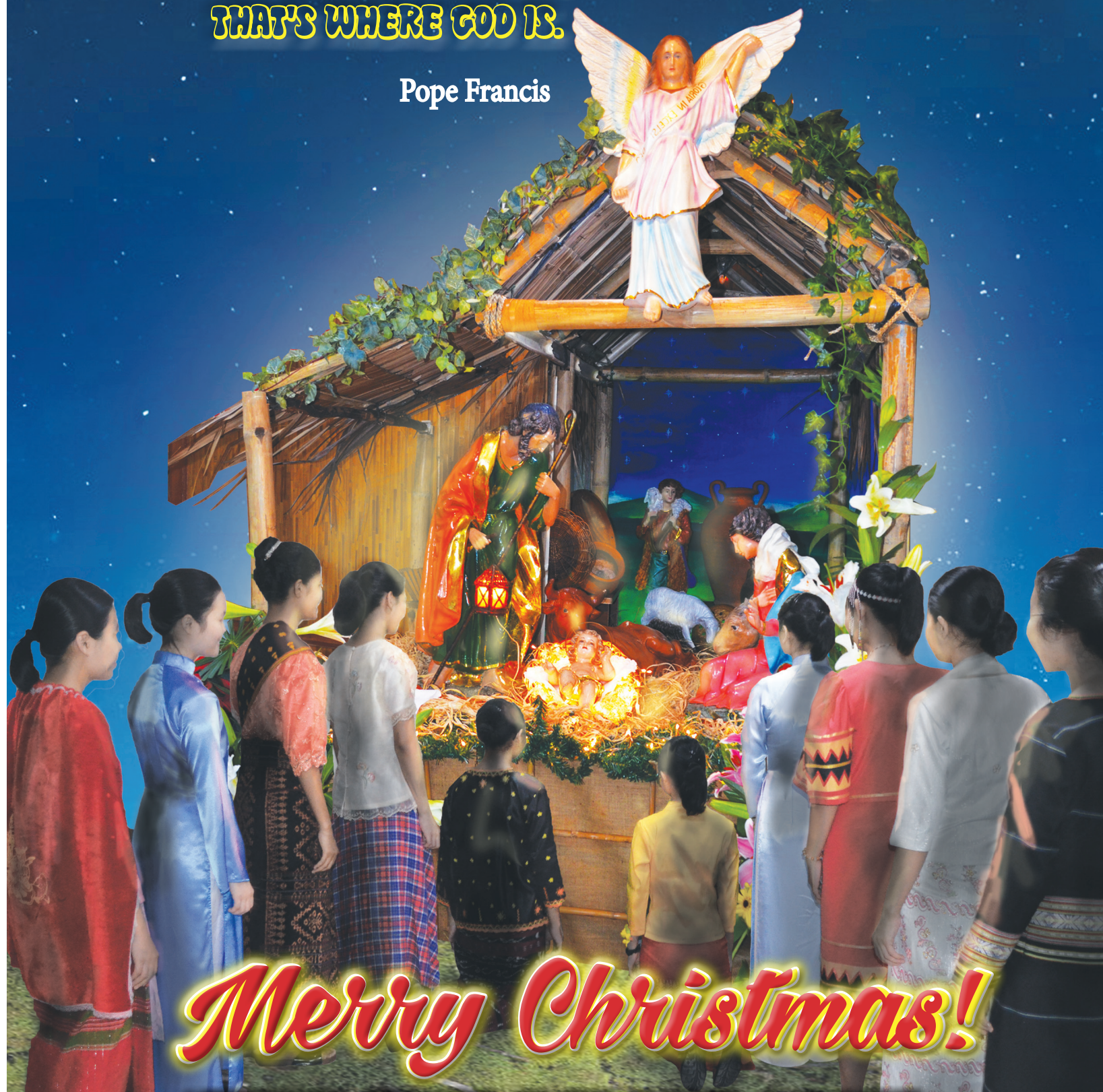
You are the present; be a brighter future.



*Let us contemplate this image:
the fragile simplicity of a new-born baby.*

THAT'S WHERE GOD IS.

Pope Francis



Merry Christmas!

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