

*May Your Kingdom Come!*

## MISSIONARY SERVANTS OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT IN ASIA



DECEMBER 2016

### The Face of God Unveiled Before Us

*In the little town of Bethlehem, a Virgin gave birth to a Child, the long-awaited Messiah whose coming was foretold by ancient prophecy. "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone... For a child is born to us, a son is given us; upon his shoulder dominion rests. They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:1, 5)*

In humanity's naked eyes, the night of the Child's birth was but one usual night. Yet, people who dared to listen to the inner promptings of their hearts and braved the darkness that lies ahead have realized the wonder and sublimity of that night and availed them of that once-in-a-lifetime experience of being the first ones to witness the marvelous Mystery of the birth of Emmanuel, God among us and within us.

That one special night had a lot of untold stories worth-telling: the story of the shepherds, the Magi, that of St. Joseph and of his Spouse, the Blessed Virgin Mary. The story of how the birth of Jesus changed the lives of the shepherds who went in haste to see the newborn King is unrecorded yet worth retelling. From being outcasts, they who live at the fringes of the society had become

part of the unfolding of God's plan. The story of the Magi who set out on a journey under the guidance of the star, leaving their lands and facing uncertainties and dangers is open to our imaginations. They who were non-Jews knelt in homage to the newborn babe in the manger, clothed with nothing but poverty. The travails and joys of Joseph and Mary as they collaborate in the fulfillment of God's design of salvation are told in a few lines. But how immense the richness is that we could gain from contemplating them!

Their stories could become our own when we too set out on a journey of life, searching for God, seeking to love Him in whatever form He may appear to us.

*"This habit of remembering our life is not a very common practice. We forget things; we live in the moment and then forget the past. And each of us has a story: a story of grace, a story of sin, a story of journey, so many things. It is a good thing to pray with our history. The act of remembering our own lives is to give glory to God." (Pope Francis)* So we retell these simple stories of encounter, hoping that in doing so, we may give glory to God. May these stories dwell in our hearts and be told by our lives because as we have "seen" and experienced Him, we are enjoined to share the joy of our encounter with the God, who has unveiled His face before us.







# Catechesis on Beatitudes

*"The joy promised by the Beatitudes is the very joy of Jesus himself: a joy sought and found in obedience to the Father and in the gift of self to others....By looking at Jesus you will learn what it means to be poor in spirit, meek and merciful; what it means to seek justice, to be pure in heart, to be peacemakers."*

St. John Paul II,  
WYD 2002 Welcoming Address

**T**he beatitudes are Jesus' self-portrait. Through his preaching, he is opening a door of understanding into his divine and human life. The virtues He articulates are part and parcel of his life. To follow Him is to become a person of the beatitudes.

**As we reflect on God's manifestation in our midst, let us allow the beatitudes to unveil JESUS' FACE TO US...**

## What are the Beatitudes?

The BEATITUDES are not a series of commands. Rather, they picture for us the face of Christ in sketching the vocation of every disciple of Christ. They spotlight the essential qualities, actions and attitudes of Christian living. They offer the paradoxical promises which sustain hope in our tribulations. (CFC 744)

**Beatitude means happiness but what is happiness?**

Happiness is lasting and pervasive. It permeates our being. It grows and carries us toward the future. It is frequently uncomfortable and sometimes even painful yet it brings the caring that makes us realize that none of us is ever truly alone.

## THE PUZZLE

Why do the Beatitudes seem to bless the very experiences that most persons shun throughout life: poverty, sorrow and persecution, when none of these brings happiness in the natural order of things?

The answer to the puzzle is in seeking identity with Christ. Christians are called to recognize that one's true happiness can be found only in the Kingdom of God and the suppression of self-seeking love and ambition.

*"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*

**What does poverty in spirit mean?**

Poverty in spirit signifies the imitation of Jesus' humility. Jesus is God who stripped himself of his glory. He chose to be poor although he was rich in order to enrich us through his poverty (cf. 2 Cor 8:9). This is the mystery we contemplate in the crib when we see the Son of God lying in a manger, and later on the Cross, where his self-emptying reaches its culmination.

**How do we make poverty in spirit a way of life?**

✕ By trying to be free with regard to material things. The Lord calls us to a Gospel lifestyle marked by sobriety. It means to put Jesus first. He can free us from the kinds of idol-worship which enslave us.

✕ By experiencing a conversion in the way we see the poor. We have to care for them and be sensitive to their spiritual and material needs. Let us go out to meet them, look into their eyes and listen to them. The poor provide us with a concrete opportunity to encounter Christ himself, and to touch his suffering flesh.

✕ By learning from the poor. The poor have much to offer and teach us. They can teach us about humility and trust in God.





*"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the land."*



*What does meekness mean?*

✕ To be meek is to be gentle. Gentleness is about yielding not to all things but to the will of the Lord. Giving oneself to the Lord requires strength and sometimes aggression so that those persons and things that stand in the way of such full giving can be overcome. Gentleness yields self-love and ambition to the works of the Lord.

✕ Gentleness is calmness in the face of trials and serenity when confronted with that which cannot be changed.

*How does one become meek?*

Meekness and gentleness and goodness are part of the fruits of the Spirit. They are produced in the Christian by the Holy Spirit. So the direction people should follow to cultivate a spirit of meekness would be to walk by the Spirit, or be controlled by the Spirit of God so that the qualities of Christ can be produced in and through them.

*"Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted."*

*What kind of mourning does this beatitude speak about?*

The mourning that leads to comfort in the kingdom is a mourning not just for the suffering and sadness of life, but for the sinfulness that causes it. They understand that their grieving is ultimately for a world that is lost and ruined, in which God and his will do not prevail.

So the promise is that they will be comforted. They will be consoled above all when God wipes away all tears, and death will be no more, nor grief nor tribulation (cf. Isa. 25:8; Rev. 21:4). This is what citizens of his kingdom can expect.

*How do we live this beatitude?*

We can say that we live this beatitude when we mourn over our betrayal to our call to be faithful to God's plan and authority. We grieve and admit our sins — sins of envy, greed, gluttony, jealousy and aggression — against our neighbor and against the earth.



*"Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."*

*What does it mean to be hungry and thirsty for righteousness?*

This beatitude does not simply describe those who are righteous, or who try to do good things. It is describing their passion in life - they hunger and thirst for it. To hunger and thirst for righteousness means to long for the generous justice of God as we long for bread or water when we have gone without them.

*How do we intensify this desire?*

This has to come from the development of the spiritual life. Paul teaches that the spiritual person is one who yields his or her members as instruments of righteousness. So it begins with commitment to God's will. Then, as the spiritual walk is guided by the Holy Spirit, He leads the believer into righteousness. And the closer one lives to the Lord, the more sensitive he or she becomes to the unrighteousness and injustice in the world. The truly spiritual person then will begin to long for righteousness.

*"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall be shown mercy."*

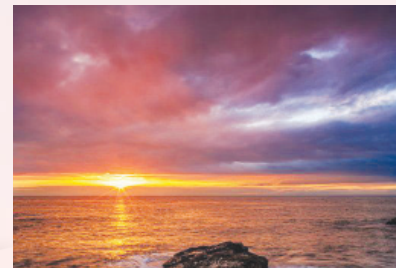
*What does mercy mean?*

Mercy is the loving disposition towards those who suffer distress. Love, compassion, and forgiveness towards one's neighbor will bring peace in your relationships. We say in the Lord's Prayer: Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. As we are merciful to others, so our Heavenly Father will be merciful with us!

Showing mercy to others includes both the forgiveness of the sinner and compassion for the suffering and the needy.

## How does one become merciful?

The act of showing mercy comes from the genuine spiritual experience. People who know more of God's mercy will be merciful. It is important, then, that people have a good understanding of the grace of God in their own lives. This will come from the experience of confession of sin and thanksgiving for forgiveness.



*"Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God."*



## What does purity of heart mean?

To be pure in heart means that the decisions one makes, the desires one has, the thoughts and intentions of the will, are untarnished by sin, and that the will is determined to be pleasing to God. From the pure of heart come only good things, acts of love and mercy, desires for righteousness and justice, decisions that please God.

## How does one acquire a pure heart?

It begins with conversion when God gives us a "new heart," and it continues through the spiritual growth as we follow Christ. Walking in the light, meaning learning to live by the Word of God, will change the way we think so that our hearts will grow more and more pure. But as the light of the Word reveals impurities, we must deal with them and change.

*"Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called children of God."*

## Who are the peacemakers?

The peacemakers are people who understand what true peace is. Their effort is to strive to establish a peace that embraces God's provision of peace, so that people will be in harmony with one another because they are at peace with God.

## How does one become a peacemaker?

- ✘ By spreading the Gospel of peace,
- ✘ By promoting reconciliation within the household of faith
- ✘ By reconciling adversaries, quenching hatred, uniting those who are divided, promoting true understanding and spiritual love.



*"Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of God."*



## What does Jesus tell us in this beatitude?

In this beatitude Jesus is telling us that those who are suffering for His name's sake will inherit the kingdom of heaven. They are the ones who courageously fight and defend their faith; those who are willing to die for Christ Jesus.

The beatitude is not simply for all who have suffered persecution. God, as the righteous judge of the earth, will deal with that as well. But this beatitude is for followers of Christ, those who suffer persecution for the sake of righteousness. They have been identified by their faith; they proclaim the good news that there is a kingdom of righteousness and peace that is spiritual and eternal. But they will find opposition. Nevertheless, they should rejoice, for their reward in heaven will be great.

## How does this beatitude challenge us?

We should be people for Christ in this world, living the way members of the kingdom should live, championing righteousness and justice, showing mercy, remaining meek and poor in spirit - all the things that the beatitudes praise.

*The beatitudes call us to a new way of being and doing that can radically transform our lives and the lives of all we touch. They bring true happiness and the deepest of joy as we find our true identity in our relationship with God and true peace both inwardly and outwardly.*



## ALBANIAN PRIEST NAMED CARDINAL BY THE POPE

The Albanian priest whose testimony moved Pope Francis to tears in 2014 is one of the 17 international bishops and priests elevated to the College of Cardinals on the 19th of November this year.

Father Ernest Troshani Simoni, 88, is one of the last survivors of the terrible Communist persecution in Albania. He shared his testimony with Pope Francis in 2014 during the Pope's daytrip to Tirana, Albania. Fr. Simoni was a seminarian in December 1944, when an atheistic Communist regime came to power in Albania. The regime sought to eliminate the faith and the clergy with arrests, torture and killings of priests and lay people for seven straight years, shedding the blood of the faithful, some of whom shouted, "Long live Christ the King," as they were shot.

In 1948, Communists shot and killed Fr. Simoni's Franciscan superiors. He continued his studies in secret and was later ordained a priest.

Four years later, Communist leaders gathered together priests who had survived and offered them freedom if they distance themselves from the Pope and the Vatican. Fr. Simoni and his brother priests refused.

On Dec. 24, 1963, as he was concluding Christmas Eve Mass, four officials served him a warrant of arrest and decree of execution. He was handcuffed



Pope Francis and Fr. Ernest Troshani Simoni

and detained. During interrogation, they told him he would be hanged as an enemy because he told the people, "We will all die for Christ, if necessary." He suffered immense tortures but said, "The Lord wanted me to keep living."

"Divine Providence willed that my death sentence not be carried out right away. They brought another prisoner into the room, a dear friend of mine, in order to spy on me. He began to speak out against the party," Fr. Simoni recalled.

"I responded anyway that Christ had taught us to love our enemies and to forgive them and that we should strive to seek the good of the people. Those words reached the ears of the dictator who, a few days later, freed me from my death sentence," he explained.

The priest was given 28 years of forced labor instead, during which time he celebrated Mass, heard confessions and distributed Communion in secret.

Fr. Simoni was released only when the Communist regime fell and freedom of religion was recognized.

"The Lord has helped me to serve so many peoples and to reconcile many, driving out hatred and the devil from the hearts of men," he said.

"Your Holiness, with the certainty that I am expressing the intentions of those present, I pray through the intercession of the most holy Mother of Christ, that the Lord grant you life, health and strength in guiding the great flock that is the Church of Christ. Amen."

After concluding his remarks, a visibly moved Pope Francis dried the tears in his own eyes and embraced the Albanian priest. 🙏



Fr. Ernest Troshani Simoni











*This is the reason for our joy and gladness: this Child has been "born to us"; he was "given to us", as Isaiah proclaims (cf. 9:5). The people who for two thousand years have traversed all the pathways of the world in order to allow every man and woman to share in this joy are now given the mission of making known "the Prince of peace" and becoming his effective servant in the midst of the nations.*

*Pope Francis*

## *A Journey Towards the Encounter*

*By: Sr. Melanie S. Reyes, MSBS*

*"They (the Magi) listened to a voice deep within, which led them to follow that light. It was the voice of the Holy Spirit, who works in all people."* (Pope Francis)

The journey of Mo. Caterina Zecchini finds resonance in the journey of these wise men. Since she was young, she would spend hours of Adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. There, she heard the 'voice' which inspired her to take on a spiritual journey that led her to a life of consecration to the Lord. At 35 years of age, she again heard the call in her heart to found a new Congregation as she knelt in prayer before the Eucharistic Jesus.

A woman of contemplative action and active contemplation, she allowed this encounter with Him to take over her life. She let her experience be transformed into concrete actions and initiatives. She gave her whole heart and

dedicated all her actions to what she felt was an urgent need in the Church: that is, to support the missions and the missionaries. She initiated and accomplished several activities for this purpose such as encouraging other people to offer a moment of prayer for the missions. She visited religious communities in order to establish the Hour of Adoration for the Missions every month. She gathered children in the Parish and called them 'Little Apostles of the Holy Childhood'. She nurtured and cultivated in them the missionary awareness at an early age. She also did manual work for the mission such as making liturgical vestments and other useful things for the missionaries and their mission. Although she was already doing great things, a greater call awaited her response, a response which

will propel her in a journey towards uncertainty and the trials and difficulties that this entailed. Despite these, she trusted and was certain about one thing: God's love for her and her love for Him.



*The Young Caterina Zecchini*

The foundation of a new Congregation required much from her. She endured misunderstanding even from people she loved and esteemed, the lack of means and a painful disease. She endured it all with the help of the strength and courage bestowed upon her by Jesus in the Tabernacle. Our First sisters testified to how she would spend hours in prayer and deep contemplation, immersed in God. It is this daily encounter that enabled her to embrace all that God had sent her, transforming even the most challenging and difficult situations into opportunities to contribute to the mission of Christ.

Her journey leading to Jesus is characterized by listening, trust and sacrifice. Mo. Caterina nurtured



*Mo. Caterina and the Sisters*



herself by listening to the voice of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and there she basked in the immensity of his love so much so that when a sister asked her to talk to her about Jesus, her only reply was, *"What can I say? Jesus is Love, True love. Learn to love him and he himself will teach you."* She listened to His voice speaking in the realities around her and she was able to respond concretely and with much zeal and passion to the needs.

She also trusted in the Divine Providence. Seemingly insurmountable problems, misunderstanding and other obstacles weighed her down but she remained trusting in the Lord's providence. *"These things (problems) should not frighten us because the Divine Providence will take care of them. I let them be and do not worry about them and together with my daughters we do in silence whatever we can solely for the good of souls and the Lord's pleasure."* On her part, she did all she can to fulfill the mission she feels she is called to do. Her journey is also characterized by the spirit of sacrifice. *"Before God who became a baby, there is no*

*room for becoming proud. One can only, in all seriousness, think about the abyss of deep humiliation the Divine Word had gone through for our salvation. We become similar to Jesus, who became obedient unto death even to death on the Cross when we sacrifice and offer up ourselves completely."* More than these words, her life itself speaks of her remarkable capacity to sacrifice. In the world that has become deaf to the suffering and to the voice of Truth, the capacity to listen like her is a priceless gem. Listening allows us to hear the voice within us, urging us on to choose to do the right thing and will ultimately lead us to the voice of the Truth, the Way and the Life. In short, it enables us to hear God's whisper and know where our life could worthily be spent and for what we should fight and offer our lives in every circumstance of life. There is uncertainty in our journey ahead but no matter how perilous it could be, no matter what challenge we are up to, God will make his star shine to guide us so we may not get lost in the dark. Trust plunges us into the unknown, not without fear and pain but with the sure assurance that He will meet us where we are. And



*Members of the Little Apostles of the Holy Childhood*

as what I have experienced many times, trust plunges us into countless possibilities and delightful surprises which we never could have imagined. Lastly, authentic search and encounter with God demands sacrifice, leaving behind some things of inestimable value in order to find Him who is worth all things in this world and beyond. Like the wise men who left their land to search for God, we too are called to let go of things that will hinder us from having a real and life-changing encounter with Him. 🙏

***"The Child Jesus will come to you with hands overflowing with joy and peace, the peace that the world cannot give."***

***(Mo. Caterina Zecchini)***





## *A Missionary in Lacub*

By: Sr. Ludgardis Bupu, MSBS

***"How I wish you to appreciate the greatness and sublimity of our missionary vocation."  
(Mo. Caterina Zecchini)***

In November last year, I and two of my co-sisters went to Vigan, Abra and Lacub for vocation promotion. Thanks to the SVD priests assigned in those places, we had a place to stay as well as the opportunity to share and talk with the young people in Divine Word College - Vigan and Bangued and in the parish of Lacub.

It was our first time to go to the northern part of the Philippines and three of us were Indonesians. Although I know a little Filipino, I still felt inadequate for the task. I was anxious about this but thanks to His grace, I was able to overcome my insecurities. With a mix of Tagalog and English words, we were able to share about our Congregation, our charism and spirituality and our vocation stories. I had the joy of sharing these things with the young people. The experience with them enriched me and gave me insights on what the young people are interested about, their questions, especially about the life of consecration.

We spent the last days of our vocation promotion in Lacub, a place located in the mountainous area. The two priests accommodated us in their parish convent. They were Fr. Simon Petrus Bala Duli

Koten, also known as Fr. Petrus, an Indonesian and Fr. Paolo from Fiji. Both of them belong to the Society of the Divine Word. Two scholars, Jed Edward and Karen were also

first time he set foot in the place, the challenge of overcoming the language barrier was already awaiting him. But with a heart that beats passionately for the mission,



*Sr. Erdys with the Students in Lacub*

staying in the convent with them. During our stay in Lacub, Fr. Petrus shared with us his experiences. Fr. Petrus is from Larantuka, Indonesia. He was ordained a priest in the Society of the Divine Word in 2009. Right after his ordination, he was sent to the mission in the SVD Northern Province in the Philippines.

Fr. Petrus has a good heart and a special love for the mission. His mission is not devoid of difficulties and challenges. In fact, at the very

he was able to learn in no time the dialect of the people there, which is Ilocano. He did so through frequent interaction with his parishioners especially with the children. Learning their dialect made it easier for him to communicate and deal with people effectively.

As a good shepherd, he did not neglect those who were at the peripheries. He visited his parishioners who live far from the church and cannot frequently attend the Mass because of the distance. In





order to reach them, he had to travel on foot for 18 hours because the roads are not passable to vehicles. So, this young priest, with his good heart and availability, schedules and finds time to visit them. He did not only go there to say Mass but also spends time with them before going back to his convent. He also had to work in the rice field for his daily sustenance. At times, he feels beset by fatigue and difficulties but his heart cannot turn back from

the people. He said that although reaching out to them is tiresome he also gets his strength from the people, that is, in seeing them happy and able to receive the sacraments. While listening to him, I can see from his eyes the joy of serving the people and his strong love for the mission.

The story of missionaries like him who are living in these challenging realities with dedication and joy makes me

appreciate more the greatness and sublimity of my missionary vocation. Its greatness lies not so much in what we are able to do but in the willingness and dedication to carry out at all cost, the gospel mandate we received from the Lord. 🙏

## Seeing God in Those We Serve

*By: Sr. Helen, MSBS*



God speaks in our lives in different ways. These manifestations keep our hearts burning and strengthen us to do our mission.

In the first year of my assignment as a professed sister in Mindoro, I had so many meaningful encounters with the people, especially with the children and the needy. I got to meet our brothers and sisters who need physical and emotional help. The place generously offered me the chance to express my love for the

children, for the people and the Church. As I served them, they too have enriched me with their way of living, their simplicity and friendliness. They strengthened me to become more an animator. From them, I learned to love more, to care more and to be more simple in my life.

Each time I encountered them, their thirst, longings and needs, I would go home more enriched.

The pupils who have more difficulties in learning have taught me to be more understanding and to love more the mission of teaching. Being with them, I learned to give what I have, without counting the cost. I want to give and teach them all the values and knowledge that I have as much as I can that they might grow intellectually and spiritually. I sometimes lose my patience but I overcome this because I want them to learn. I

want to see them live a better life. Reflecting on these experiences, I realized how God manifests himself in our needy brethren. In my encounter with them, he forms me into becoming a more loving and caring person, more compassionate with the least, the last and the lost. So before my day begins, I ask His grace and strength to be able to see His presence in the children whom He has entrusted to my care. 🙏



**“Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.” (Matthew 25:40)**



## Hands to Heal, Hands to Build

By: Asp. Maria Vu Thi Hang, MSBS



Life is very beautiful because we are under God's eyes. With His mercy and compassion, He continually showers upon us His blessings, the beauty of life and the millions of things that we cannot count. He also gives each of us different talents so that we may continue to cooperate with His plan. He is like a talented composer who tries to arrange the notes and create harmony to make a meaningful song and we are the musical notes. Some may be low and some high depending on the arrangement of the composer. But no note is less important. We also depend on how God puts us together to complete each other. God is creative: that is why we call Him Creator. He gives us different graces so that we can use them to serve others. Have you ever asked yourself what God gave you? It might take a very long time for you to tell what He did for us.

As for me, I am proud of being a Catholic. I am also happy to be the salt of the earth commissioned to bring His Kingdom to everyone. As a Catholic Youth, I actively joined the activities in the Parish. One particular activity which I could not forget happened on August 9, 2014. It was the first general assembly of the youth in all the parishes of the Diocese of Vinh. The

theme of the gathering was "Meet in Love". What made it special was the sharing of Duong Quyet Thang – a disabled person who won Vietnam's Got Talent in 2013. He loves music. He dreamt of being a music teacher but his family was very poor so he tried to help his parents as much as he could. One time, while he was preparing for a wedding feast in order to earn money, he suffered an electric shock. He was brought to the hospital. When he woke up, he did not have hands anymore. At that moment, he felt doomed to hopelessness. He did not want to continue his life anymore. He said: *"I do not want to wake up anymore."* But God wanted him to continue because He had another plan and mission for him. Thang started a new life – a life without hands. Even simple chores became very challenging for him, how much more playing music, which is his passion. God provided him the grace to go beyond this impediment. He played music again. Music helped him a lot. He shared: *"Music helped me express my feelings. I can sing to connect with people, and I feel happy. Now, my greatest happiness is to go around the country to perform, pass on my passion for music and inspire others to persevere and be optimistic."* Thang ended his story by saying: *"Dear friends, you are blessed by God. You are very lucky for God has given you complete hands. Respect and take care of them, and use them for good deeds".*

His words hit me and I immediately looked at my small hands. I am happy and grateful to God. Even a million thanks will not be enough because He gave me so many beautiful

things in my life. God gave me two hands capable of receiving and giving, of making this world better and more beautiful. He gave me hands in order to continue His mission and to be a herald of God's gift on this earth. God gave me hands so that every day, as I receive His blessing, I may thank Him, transform his gift and share it with other people. If God's hands is full of love, mercy and compassion, always open to accept and love me, my hands should be an extension of that love, when I pray, when I work, when I reach out to the wounded world, and especially when I generously to give and share my talents with others.

I thank God for guiding me on how to use my hands to build love, peace and joy. Mo Caterina said: *"Who can console the Church?"* With open hands, everyone can do this and be God's gifts to the world, showing the face of the Almighty God. I believe that I can use my small hands to heal and help build God's kingdom. 🙏





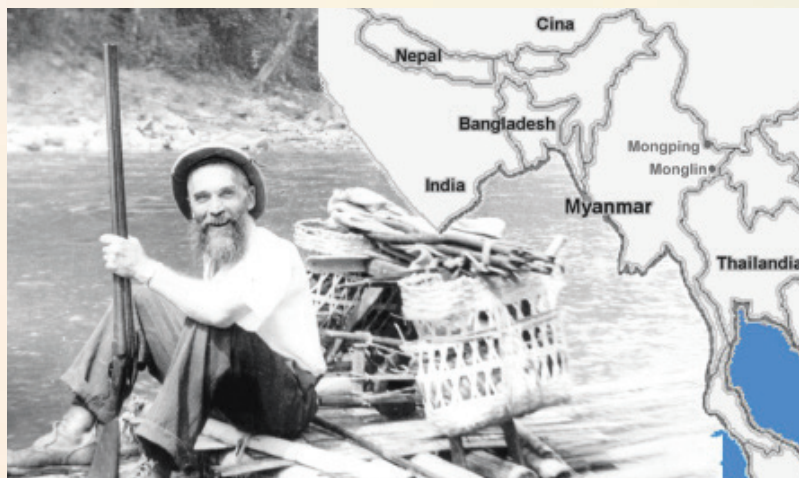
## Fr. Vismara: A Life Consumed for Others

By: Asp. Aye Mu, MSBS

"Life has value only if you give it for others," Fr. Clemente Vismara once wrote.

Fr. Vismara was an Italian missionary of the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Mission (PIME). He was born in 1897 in Agrate Brianza, Italy. He was ordained in 1923 and two months after, he left for his first mission in Burma. He first set foot in Toungoo for a six-month study of English in the bishop's house. Afterwards, he set off for Kengtung, an almost unexplored land of forest and mountains inhabited by tribal people. After 14 days of perilous and exhausting travel, he arrived at Kengtung and remained there for three months to learn the dialect. Then, he was accompanied to Monglin. He arrived in that place after six days on horseback.

He had a difficult mission but his trust in God's providence, his sense of humour and missionary zeal helped him overcome the adversities thrown his way. Burma was a place of a totally different culture, beliefs and religion, and a different climate yet he learned to adapt to the life of the locals. There were very few Catholics in his mission area. In one of the letters he wrote while in mission, he said, *"If I want to see another Catholic, I have to look in the mirror."* So, he would visit the tribal villages on horseback, pitch his tent and make himself known. He would also bring medicines and extract decayed teeth. He took in orphans and abandoned children in Monglin to educate them. Later, he founded an orphanage which housed 200-250 orphans. Women who were victims of abuse found shelter and food through his help. He did not have much resources but his creativity and trust in God's providence



had helped him find benefactors who supported his mission. He had to face and try to evangelize the opium addicts, black magicians, illiterates and guerrillas. He had a church constructed near these people. He promoted peace among warring tribes and stabilized nomadic tribes within the territory, providing them opportunities to raise their standard of living. He called in as many orphans as he could with no worries about the food and basic necessities because he trusted in the Divine Providence.

He loved God in the abandoned children, opium addicts, lepers, disabled and the sick. Since he had fallen in love with Christ in the poor, the orphans and the needy of Burma, he decided not to return to his own country but chose to die in Burma. He died on June 15, 1988 in Mongping and was buried near the church and the Grotto of Lourdes, which he built. His life was spent for others and for the love of God just like His Teacher.

I am so grateful for the life and missionary works of Fr. Vismara. He has greatly contributed to the growth of the local Church in Myanmar. As one of those who brought the Catholic faith in our country, I believe that I owe him my growth in the knowledge of the faith and I thank God for making him an instrument of His love for us. His missionary zeal inspired me to participate in the mission of spreading the Good News. As MSBS, I will be able to participate in this mission by following the footsteps of Mo. Caterina, our foundress who dedicated herself in supporting the missionaries with all her prayers and sacrifices. As MSBS, I am called to pray zealously so that God will send more missionaries like Fr. Vismara into this world. In doing so, I believe that my life would also find its meaning.

Fr. Vismara and Mo. Caterina, pray for us. 🙏





## An Angel Announcing the Good News

By: Sr. Benedetta Day Day, MSBS

*“If you become a Christian, you will be persecuted too just like our Lord Jesus who was persecuted till His death on the Cross, but I assure you that He will be with you.”*



*Daw Regina*

This is one of the challenging words Daw Regina told us as we prepared for our baptism.

Daw Regina is a catechist. At a young age, she responded to the call to help the Church by joining the Little Evangelizers, a Catholic organization in Myanmar. In 1992, she was sent to Daw Li To village, her first mission and in 1994, in Daw Pho li. Both villages are located in Shadaw, a vast land inhabited by people who were longing to hear the message of God

and a place of martyrdom for many martyrs and missionaries like Blessed Mario Vergara and Isidore Ngei ko Lat.

Language was the first challenge for her but as they say, nothing is impossible with a heart that loves ardently. In a short time, she learned the dialect of the people. Malaria is also a constant threat to those assigned in this remote area and she was not spared from this. She got sick with malaria but despite this, she took care of herself, catechized the people and taught the children. As her sickness gradually weakened her, the needs of the people became more demanding for her. After some years, she decided to stop because of her poor health.

However, she was found willing to respond to the needs of the Church and to offer her life for the Kingdom when Bp. Sotero asked her to go to a new mission. *“If there is a need in the Church, then I will go,”* she told him. So in 1998, she arrived in our place called Daw Sann Boon. Most of us in that place were animists. Daw Regina catechized and taught us liturgical

songs. She taught us how to pray the Rosary, and to love our mother dialect because most of the villagers then were speaking in dialects but no one knew how to read and write in the dialects.

Some people appreciated what she was doing. Her sacrifices and witnessing bore fruit. Two elders went to meet with Bishop and expressed their desire to be baptized. With joy, she began to prepare the needs of the catechumens. In the midst of the preparation, she received a letter from the Governor saying that some villagers submitted a complaint against her and the two elders. During the military rule, to be reported and be called by a military governor is a thing to be feared. However, she asked the Holy Spirit to grant her the gift of courage. Arriving at the place, they were greeted by the anger of the Governor. All the people in the meeting room just bowed their head and listened to him fearfully. When the Governor forbade her to stay in the village, she replied courageously: *“As a Catholic missionary, we are ready to go where*



*Bishop Sotero with the Catechumens*





*Daw Regina with the Catechumens*

*we are sent by our bishops."* One who answers back to the Governor will surely be imprisoned but fortunately, she was spared from it. She was called by the Governor not just once but whenever she was called she felt God's presence with her and the Holy Spirit taught her how to speak.

Unbelievers in the place also made her mission difficult. I remember that unforgettable event in my life. I, together with other 42 members of our community, were preparing

for our baptism. Daw Regina was the one who assisted us. One evening, almost all the villagers gathered in our meeting area. Many of the men there pointed their fingers and shouted at her with harsh words. They were mad at her because she brought the Catholic faith to the village and encouraged 43 members of the community to be Catholics. They asked her to leave but she stood her ground with courage. Because of this, she was forced to move the place

for catechism and also to surrender the key of her house. They locked her house so that she, together with the newly-baptized Catholics will move to a Catholic village named Five Miles. Out of love for the people and for her mission, she defied their order. Not one of them left the place. The unbelievers responded by taking away a piece of land intended for building a small church.

To the person who strikes her on one cheek, she offered the other one as well. In spite of what those people had done, she offered to them any help she could give in times of need. Her steadfastness, courage and charity fostered a sense of solidarity, sharing and peace in the village. For me, she was an angel who proclaimed with joy the salvation brought by God. She was an angel who helped me learn to love the Church, to be proud of my being Catholic and inspired me to partake of the joy of announcing God's salvation to other people. 🙏

## Christ Dwelling Among Us

*By: Asp. Naw Judith, MSBS*

One day, I met this teenager in the jeepney. He was dirty and his body had an awful smell. He was wearing shabby clothes and had fresh and open wounds on his body. I feared that he would sit near me but as the jeepney was filled with people, I was forced to move beside him. He looked very weak. He leaned his head in the corner and closed his eyes. I was afraid he might fall on me. I wanted to move away from him and ardently wished him to get off. I felt very uncomfortable.

As I dwell on this feeling, something flashed back in my memory. I remembered the sharing of one of my friends about a deacon. This deacon was sent to take care of the lepers for his exposure. Once, while he was feeding the leper, the leper took rice in his plate and asked him to open his mouth. He was afraid to accept it from a leper's hand but couldn't let him down. So he imagined that this was the hand of Jesus and accepted the rice from the hand of the leper with joy. This memory snapped me out of my disgust and I realized how badly I had acted to this teenager. I realized that it was also a chance Jesus gave me to show



him my love through this poor child.

I tried to feel how this teenager felt that moment. I couldn't say anything to him but I felt the presence of God through him. I felt joy, pity, pain, loneliness, thirst for love. This poor child had become an instrument for me to feel God's presence. I felt sorry for not being able to accept this teenager as my brother. When I came home that day, I prayed for him and for all our brothers and sisters who thirst for love. 🙏



*We must bend down, in order to pass through the portal of faith and encounter the God who is so different from our prejudices and opinions – the God who conceals himself in the humility of a newborn baby.*

*Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI*

## *Chances for Encounter*

*By: Asp. Maria H'Alang, MSBS*

**I**t was vacation time and our community gave us the privilege of spending these days of rest and recreation in the province of Mindoro. The journey was long and enriching. During the travel, everyone wanted to give the best space for others especially for those who had difficulty with travelling. Along the way, we talked and teased each other to while away the time. When our energy and excitement subsided, we kept silent. Some slept while some prayed. We had fun travelling, not only because we saw many new things along the way but most of all because of each other's company.

In the time of silence, I looked around the faces of my companions and was touched by the realization of God's great love for each one of us. He loves each one of us, though

we are different. He put us together in this journey and through living together, He blesses us. He blesses us through our misunderstandings and mistakes as much as He blesses us with joy, growth and little success.

Arriving in the community, we were greeted and welcomed by our Sisters. Their smile and gestures eased away our tiredness. Their friendship had once again shown me how loved I was. They made sure that our stay would be meaningful and joyful.

During our stay there, they prepared some activities. Since it was Lenten season, we had the chance to join the Grand Stations of the Cross. I enjoyed walking and did not feel tired because I was following the footsteps of Jesus. I saw that some of my co-aspirants were a little tired

but they were still smiling and were also happy to follow Jesus Christ until the end. In silent prayer, I felt their love and was grateful for it.

We also had some dance lessons. This is unforgettable for me. For some, dancing is easy and fun but not for me. When we started the first lesson in dancing, I noticed that I and others had difficulty. I was also a little shy at first because I was not used to modern dance moves. But all of us tried our best to learn. The next day, my body felt sore. Dancing has become more difficult for everyone and yet I could see happiness and enjoyment in their faces during this activity. As days passed by, we learned little by little, thanks to the patience, cooperation and attentiveness to one another. As a culminating activity, we had a program. It was really beautiful and





enjoyable because everyone participated and cooperated. I could see that everyone expressed their love with their smile, cooperation, and patience.

Reflecting on these experiences, I realized that each second that passes is a chance for an encounter with the other. Living with a big community composed of very different people gives me that chance for a variety of this encounter. Sometimes there is joy and sometimes, pain but in all these moments, I can feel His presence if I learn to open my eyes and ears to these chances. 🙏



## On Bended Knees

By: Sr. Maria Lam Bieng Kim Hien, MSBS

A soft voice called me from within. I slowly stepped into the peaceful house where a dim light burns continually. I bent my knees, and with my hands clasped together in prayer, eyes closed and head bowed down, the dialogue between God and I began. In the atmosphere of silence, the realization of his love and mercy came to my heart and mind.

On bended knees, I examined my conscience and as I did so, these words echoed in my ears, *"My dear, I love you and have compassion on you."* These words are like a song, a melody sung

by a father to his child, a lullaby that puts his child to sleep in the peace and security of his loving arms.

On bended knees, I travelled deeper into His heart. There, His countless blessings were revealed to me. I saw how He blessed me since I was in my mother's womb. I heard Him say, *"I welcome you to this life and I have called you to follow me."* I saw how He blessed me with a loving Catholic family where I received the warmth of love and care and was nurtured by good human and Christian values. I saw how He blessed me when He called me to religious life

where I experienced a life with a bigger family, with another reality and way of life.

Along these years, he helped me appreciate the ability to know and complement one another. This helps us acknowledge and appreciate the goodness in each one, to affirm, to lift up the person while at the same time to help one another grow. He blessed me with an experience of the beauty of living together in a community where we could see God's presence. On bended knees, He made me see my wounds, my weaknesses and vulnerability which impeded me in my journey of growth. I felt pain looking at them again but it helped me as well to be grounded and to surrender myself to his grace. God shows me his love, understanding and acceptance through the people around me.

Kneeling before God, in the act of humbling myself, has led me to that encounter with His Divine Presence, fed my soul with his loving kindness and bathed me with His grace and mercy.

Indeed, it is good to give him thanks, to sing his glory for his unfathomable and unconditional love. 🙏





## The Eucharistic Presence

By: Post. Maria Gisela Weu, MSBS

Living host, where the font of strength rests,  
the piece of life outpouring graces.

Dwelling in sacred, mantled in humility,  
Gleams with bright rays, shreds every marrow.

Bids every soul to give reverence,  
Empowered by its radiance,  
I urge you, ãCome and Taste!  
the great power that pierced every fiber of our being,

H e conquers pains, frustrations and everything.

H e fills us with endless joy,  
Binding us in H is True Presence.

**T**he moment of Adoration reminds me of the totality of Jesus' love. Hidden and in disguise, He made himself present in the Consecrated Bread. How generous and patient He is, waiting for us without getting tired! Some flocks remain faithful while some go astray. But Jesus will stay in this fountain of life, waiting to grant us complete joy, love, mercy and forgiveness.

In His presence, I often ponder and am struck by awe looking at the souls who long to encounter Him. These thoughts come to my mind, when we pray as a community. We come from different countries, with different languages and cultures but we come kneeling

and adoring Him, the Lord of lords, King of kings encased in the monstrance. This reminds me of the first Christmas, when the magi found Jesus, the newborn King. They bowed down in an act of humility and did him homage. We too, were called from different nations and we come by His grace, bringing the treasures He himself has given.

Just like the Magi, our homage and alliance to the great King does not end in the cave of Bethlehem. As they went home with a mission to protect Him and proclaim to their own people the birth of the Saviour, so are we called to adhere to him in faith even in the tragic and unpleasant situations after adoring Him in the Sacrament.

Truly, adoration does not solely consist in kneeling down to worship him but also in the act of humble service. We adore when we extend service to our brethren, allowing ourselves to be broken and be shared in order to give life to others. One way of living the Eucharist is to allow the events around us to break us: the suffering of countless people in the world, the material, spiritual and moral poverty around us. When these break us, we learn how to share their experiences and do what we can to alleviate their pain and suffering. The thought of this makes me appreciate the commitment we took since 2012, to pray for a particular country every day. In this activity, we are helped by a guide prepared by Gioventù Missionaria, a missionary







organization in Italy. This guide was translated and regularly posted in our bulletin. Every day, we learn more about a particular country's social and ecclesial situation and offer to the Lord our prayer for their

## Finding God in the Poor and Needy

By: Post. Shella Cajefe, MSBS

The poor and the needy show us the face of God. In spite of poverty, they do not lose hope in the certainty that God will provide for their daily sustenance. The needy feel the presence of our Lord through kind-hearted people who generously extend their hands to help their fellowmen.

I grew up in the small island of Ilin, which is composed of eleven barangays. The people in our place live simply and the common sources of income are fishing, seaweed farming and agriculture. Some families live on producing charcoal or in harvesting seasonal fruits and selling them in the town market. The people endure the heat of the sun and the hard labor so as to earn for their food and education of their children. Much of our sustenance depends on the God-given resources. Life is difficult especially with a hand-to-mouth existence but despite this, people can still smile and share what they have. As for our spiritual needs and nourishment, our parish priest would visit each barangay once a month. At times, he would travel on foot from one barangay to another while other times, he would ride a small boat. It is good if the sea is calm but there are times that they have to travel through a rough sea.

When I was already adolescent, I often went along with our parish priest and the generosity and kindness of the people moved me. I saw how the people prepared for the celebration of the Holy Mass in a small and poor chapel. In some barangays, the chapel is just a place with seats made of bamboo or wood and a small makeshift table for the altar. They do not have much but when the priest comes to visit, they would really prepare food and simple

needs. What joy it is to transcend geographical barriers and extend our service to all parts of the world! In this way, my horizon is widened. I become more aware and in-touch with other people living in different situations, facing their own brokenness as a nation and living up to various challenges.

With this awareness, I do not kneel before Jesus, uttering empty words but rather, I bring at His feet these countless people, who I know have a place in His magnanimous heart. Thanks to the Eucharist, I have these countless opportunities to meet Him and my brothers and sisters in many parts of the world, bowing before Him with boundless trust in His love, His mercy, His compassion. 🙏



offerings and during Mass, they would sing and respond to the Mass to their heart's content.

In my experience, this hardship and simplicity of life helped me to see and feel God's presence. My family is also poor. We faced great trials but we did not lose hope. We continue to believe and trust in the mercy and love of God. I remember a particular experience when my father was hospitalized. We did not have money for hospital bills and medicines. Many of the people we have asked for help could not also give anything. In this time of great need, we trusted in God and kept on praying. He answered our prayers through the generous souls who helped us. This also happened when my sister was confined in the hospital.

Through these experiences, I felt the overwhelming love of God and recognized his interventions in my life. I realized that he dwells among us and works his wonders among us in many ways. All I need is open my heart and mind so as to feel his presence in other people. Through these, I also felt the desire to offer my life, my prayers, works and sacrifices for those in need. 🙏



## Embracing the Plan of God

By: Nov. Geniven, MSBS


"Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to your word" (Lk. 1:38). The consequences of this irreversible yes of Mary to the plan of God for her and for humanity are not at all easy. From the day she conceived the Son of God in her womb to that moment when she held his lifeless body, her resolve to be God's maidservant remained firm. This humble, steadfast and obedient woman has been my constant companion and guide. Since I was young, I used to pray the Rosary and offer special intentions. When I felt the call to become a religious, I asked her guidance and intercession. She is truly a mother for me, teaching me by her example of humility, faithfulness and obedience.

By her life, she shows me that embracing the plan of God involves joys, struggles, sorrows and pains. So when I experience these ups and downs, I look up to her example. Her obedience to God's will at all cost helps me overcome the little difficulties I encounter along my journey. I remember that when I was just new in the convent, I had difficulty getting up early in the morning, but I asked the grace through her and indeed, I was able to overcome this difficulty.

During my aspirancy, which was the first stage of formation, I was asked to complete a bachelor's degree in education, to deepen my knowledge about the faith and to learn music. I had difficulty studying because of my poor English. One day, I was very disappointed because I could not follow my lessons in school. So after class, I went straight to the chapel and prayed, "Lord if You want me to be a religious, help me." His answer to my prayer was prompt. That very evening, I was helped by one of my co-aspirants. I was so happy and I felt strengthened to continue my studies.



When I graduated, I was admitted to the postulancy. In this stage, I discovered more about God, my true self and others through the help of formative activities, my formator and the community. Nonetheless, I had to struggle in dealing with my past hurts and wounds. During novitiate, I found myself closer to God and feel more the sense of belonging. I became more involved with the life of the community and was helped to discover more the beauty, meaning and value of my missionary vocation. This stage too has its own challenges and difficulties but each time I was faced with difficulty, I was reminded by her example to be faithful to what I have resolved to do, that is, to follow the voice of the One who called me and to cooperate with His plan for me.

Mama Mary is always at my side like a star guiding me and leading me to her son Jesus. She is always there for me. When I am lonely, she gives me joy. In my troubles, she gives me peace. In my inner chaos, she gives me inner silence. In my despair, she gives me hope. Through her prayer and support, I am able to overcome my struggles unto this day and I am certain that I continue to persevere in this journey because of her intercession. In her obedience to God's plan, I am inspired to surrender my will in God's hand and to have trust and confidence in His plan for me, to be faithful to my calling and to give humble service to others wherever I may be. 

## Something to Celebrate: 25 Years of God's Grace

Twenty five grace-filled years have passed since the first two MSBS sisters, Sister Rosa Viscovich and Sr. Rosanna Favero arrived in Occidental Mindoro. During these 25 years, through the events, the sisters, formandees, friends, benefactors and the recipients of our apostolic work, God has given life to a mosaic of His Blessings, Providence and Hope!!!

Let us sing to Him our gratitude... May Your Kingdom Come!

**25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Presence of the Missionary Servants of the Blessed Sacrament in the Philippines**



## Visit to the Sick Sisters in Bassano

Sr. Ermelinda Bhiju, MSBS

*"Love one another."* This is the commandment of Jesus. In our Congregation, we express this love also by praying for one another. In fact, we, sisters and formandeas in the Philippines, have one or two sisters, whom we consider as a spiritual mother. These spiritual mothers are our own sisters in Italy and Colombia, who are older than us. On some occasions, we write letters for them and send them our simple gifts.

Our special solicitude also goes to our old and sick sisters. As a fraternal service and expression of gratitude for their contribution in the mission of the Church and the Congregation, we support them with our prayers and affection. We thank God for their faithfulness and dedication in their missionary vocation and whisper to Him our wishes and hope for them. They, in turn, support us by the offering of their suffering and pain. As they have offered their love, sacrifices, generosity, energy and time when they were at the peak of their missionary life, they continue to do something for the mission through their infirmity. Some who are not seriously ill continue to work despite their advanced age. We often hear from them that they

continue to remember us and pray for us. I nurture this spiritual bond with them and so I consider meeting them personally a happy opportunity and a privilege.

After the General Assembly of the Congregation in Rome last July, we had the opportunity to visit all our communities in Italy.

When I heard that we will also visit our sisters in Bassano, I was delighted and eager to meet them. In the afternoon of August 3, 2016, after visiting our community in Semonzo, we headed for Bassano. When we arrived at the place, we were guided to the rooms of our sick sisters; Sr. Carla Andriollo, Sr. Gemma Longo, Sr. Tarcisia Zanardi, Sr. Assunta Bernardi, and Sr. Maria Termini. We greeted and embraced them. After that, we were accompanied to the hall room so we could have a little space. We had a short conversation with the help of Sr. Rosanna who translated for us. They asked us about the life of our communities in the Philippines. After our conversation with them, we expressed our gratitude to them through song and dances. To cap the



joyful moment of sharing, we sang "Dolce Madre," a song composed by our Foundress. They joined us in singing. I couldn't find words to describe what I felt in my heart at that moment. A lump in my throat made it difficult to sing and tears stung my eyes and when I looked around, I saw that others were crying too but we kept on singing till the end of the song. This experience speaks of our spiritual union with each other. I believe that it is God who made us united in this precious encounter. Looking at them sitting in the wheelchairs, except Sr. Carla, I did not see any trace of sadness. Their eyes and gestures spoke of joy, calmness, generous acceptance and serenity. Witnessing this, I gained strength and inspiration in my spiritual journey. That precious moment reminded me of Jesus who was tortured and yet uttered not a single word of complaint. Instead, he offered his greatest love, his forgiveness and sacrifice so that we may live.

This experience encouraged me more to offer my life with peace and joy, accepting my imperfections, weaknesses and limitations and learning to offer them for the mission. God whose mercy is revealed to us each day has shown his love and compassion to our sick sisters. They in turn, pass it on to us, the younger generation, as we continue to live the spirit of our Foundress, Mo. Caterina Zecchini who said, *"It is my hope that you will leave your weak and small hearts within the great and measureless heart of Jesus, so that you may be swept away by His love which knows no limit."*



Sr. Lin with her spiritual Sister,  
Sr. Gabriella



## Kneeling Before God

By: Sr. Sherlyn Joy Dapito, MSBS

*"If we want renewal, let us learn how to kneel again. If we dream of renewal, let us kneel again in repentance, in adoration and in service. If we want renewal, we must learn the humility of kneeling from the heart and with the knees."*

This was the theme of the CBCP pastoral exhortation for the Jubilee of Mercy.

When Bishop Soc Villegas visited our community in Mindoro last July, he also emphasized the importance of prayer and humility. He said, *"To kneel means to acknowledge and adore Him, who is greater than us. To kneel in adoration and in recognition of the One who has authority over us requires the virtue of humility which does not mean humbling ourselves but rather others seeing us humble. Kneeling also means learning how to pray, to intercede and thereby recognize that we need God, his grace, his mercy, his forgiveness."*

In line with this, he also shared with us the story of St. Pachomius, one of the desert Fathers. St. Pachomius had a vision of a devil. The devil had two horns, was black in appearance, was thin and covered by a thin cloak. This appearance suited his idea of the devil but what struck him was the fact that the devil did not have knees. This made him realize that they never would have knees because they know not how to kneel, to adore, to forgive and to ask forgiveness. The devil will always be out to obstruct the process of growth and renewal and to fight them, we must remain humble, kneeling before God and before others to ask forgiveness for our wrongdoings.

I was touched by this invitation from an inspiring servant of God. Being a consecrated person, I also need to forgive and be forgiven. When I commit mistakes and wrongdoings, I am invited to humble myself before His loving presence, to

acknowledge my weaknesses and limitations and learn how to rise up from my failures while holding on to the grace of God, which will strengthen and empower me. This is also an exercise of mercy in my relationship with others.

Like the humble shepherds and the Magi who bowed down when they recognized the presence of God, offered their gifts and worshipped Him who dwelt among us, I am called to submit myself to His plan for me and for humanity and offer the gifts that He has given me in the spirit of generosity, humility and availability. Being able to do many things is not a guarantee to happiness. We can only be happy if we do these with humility and love. So I strive to do simple things with extraordinary love as St. Teresa would say. I strive to be faithful in little ways, in every work, acknowledging His goodness, appreciating the little sacrifices of others, praying for the needs of the world and by my humble acceptance of my shortcomings and offenses. 🙏



## The Poor Widow's Contribution

By: Sr. Goretti Jury, MSBS

**H**e said, *"I tell you truly, this poor widow put in more than all the rest; for those others have all made offerings from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty has offered her whole livelihood."* (Luke 21:3-4)

This passage reminded me of my experience with a poor widow in a village in Myanmar. It was summer of 2016. I went to an old village for

vocation promotion and at the same time, to meet the girls who would be staying in our boarding house in Loikaw, Myanmar. There, I met Fr. Paul Than, the parish priest of Han Oo, a parish in the diocese of Phekhon. He invited me to visit a grotto, which is called Mary of the Waterfall. This is located in a nearby village named Lan Gone which is part of Fr. Than's parish. I, the two deacons, my cousin and Fr. Paul went


to the village to see the grotto. The village and the grotto looked exquisite on the top of the mountain.

The lifestyle of the people there is very simple. Their main livelihood is planting rice and chili. Chili is the main source of income for them. They would dry and sell them at a good price. When they have a visitor, this is usually given as a gift. Since the village is on the mountain, they have scarce



water supply. In order to get water, they have to go down to the stream which is at the foot of the mountain. After visiting the grotto, we were invited by the wife of a lay minister to her house. Along the way, we met a woman who was carrying the water. Her left hand was wrapped with a piece of cloth. She looked pale. Since I could speak a little of the dialect of the people, I greeted her and asked what had happened to her hand. She told me that she had a fracture and that she had already her check up in the clinic and was advised to go to the hospital. But she did not because she did not have money for this. She has been suffering from these for two weeks. Seeing her need, I felt the desire to help her but I did not have money to give her. I felt my poverty. Though I wished I could give her some help, I had no

money to offer. So, I just assured her of my prayers. As we continued to talk, I came to know that she is a widow with three children. Before I left, I gave her and her family a small cross which had been blessed by Fr. Paul. She, in turn, invited me to her house. Since my companions had already been waiting for me in the house of the lay minister, I told her that I will visit her house next time. While we were in the house of the lay minister, this poor widow came and brought with her two cups of dried chili and gave them to me as a gift. This touched me that I could hardly hold back my tears. I

knew her situation and I did not want her to give me anything. Instead of giving this chili to me, she could have sold it to earn money for her family. But out of her poverty, she generously gave them away with a smile and told me to really visit her next time. I was touched by her act of generosity which had become an inspiration for me and at the same time, a reminder as I live my vow of poverty as a religious. 



## Breaking Borders

By: Sr. Benedetta Ri Moe, MSBS


I was born in a rich and beautiful culture of Myanmar and I am proud of this. However, because of my desire to be a missionary, I left my beloved land and went to the Philippines for my formation and mission. In the beginning, it was not that easy because I had to learn to relate with new people with different cultures, beliefs and practices. I had to leave behind some of my old beliefs, and practices. I remember the day when I first stepped in a foreign land. I was nervous and unsure how the people and environment would

be. At the same time, I was excited to see, discover and learn about other cultures and beliefs. As the saying goes, “*when in Rome, do as Romans do.*” In time, I learned to appreciate their culture. Besides, I tried to speak their language so that we can understand each other and have a better relationship. As a missionary, I had to set aside some aspects of my culture and beliefs because they should in no way, put border between myself and others. After some years of struggle, I learned that when one wants to discover God in another people,

she cannot but compromise something and break the wall that separates herself from others. As a follower of Christ, I should get rid of the borders because God’s love knows no borders. In the end, being able to sacrifice something also made me happy and strengthened my sense of belonging.

I am learning how to appreciate the differences and embrace the diversity in the community. I am learning how to love, respect and accept others. Though we are so different in many ways, we are able to live together in unity because the truth is that despite our differences we are so much the same. We all aim for something good and have a common goal.

I understood that “to be different” isn’t wrong. It is God who made us different and He lives in each one of us.

So as a missionary, I learn to embrace the presence of Christ in other culture so that there is no more “my culture”, but “our culture”. We are one in God’s creation and that oneness comes from our identity as sons and daughters of God. 



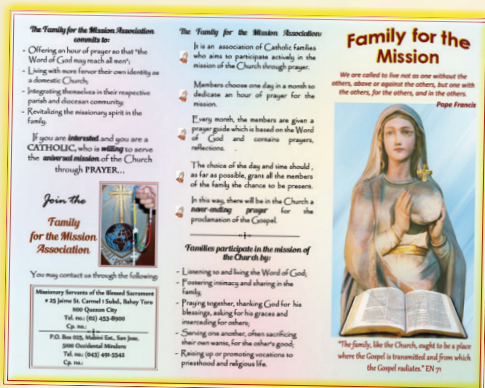


## Family for the Mission

By: Sr. Juliet Mejia, MSBS

In spite of all the terrible things that happen in the world today, I still believe that love dwells in every man's heart, the love that comes from Christ, a love inspired by his self-giving love and service. This love begins and grows within the family. Media offer us a view of different stories of life, stories of people who sacrifice to give a good life to their loved ones. They do everything they can, ready to endure hardship and suffering to let their loved ones know that they are valued and loved.

But this love must flow beyond the family and this is what the members of the Family for the Mission Association aim to do. They extend their service and love to the other members of the family of God. I know that the time they spend for prayer and reflection on the mission demands sacrifice and to my great joy, I hear from them that these



activities strengthen their bond as a family and enhance their relationship with others and with God. Through a prayer guide that is given to them once a month, they pray with and for the Church. This prayer guide contains passages from the Scripture, short reflections, and prayers of praise and intercession. Every year, a theme is chosen in line with the significant events or issues in the Church. For this year, the theme is on corporal and spiritual works of mercy, in answer to Pope Francis' invitation to live this Jubilee Year of Mercy more concretely.

The reflection deepens their knowledge and appreciation of the Word of God and serves as a guide and example on how to be good Christians. Through the prayers of intercession, they are helped to become in touch with the needs of the Mother Church and other people. Besides these, they also participate in the monthly celebration of the Holy Mass for all the members of the association.

Every first Friday of the month, they gather together and partake of the Body and Blood of Christ. I was touched to see them united by one aim in spite of their differences. To see them gathered together in the house of God, praising, loving and serving Him as choir in the Holy Mass is a joy for me.

In addition to the prayers, they also take initiatives to help the less fortunate through the outreach and feeding programs as well as contribute to the activities of the Holy Childhood Association every second Sunday of the month. I am aware that trials and challenges are part of their lives but in spite of it all, their love for God and their neighbors are strengthened. They allow themselves to be instruments of the unconditional love of God. Their activities are really simple but these have the power to ease sadness and bring happiness to the people they meet and to those they reach through their prayers. They have heeded the call and the mission that God has entrusted to them. To witness what they are doing brings me joy. More than this, I rejoice to see how they are formed by these into families who inspire goodness in the society which is becoming more and more fragmented and individualistic. It is prayer and charity that





bind them and strengthen their bond of communion and love with one another. Indeed, God cannot be outdone in generosity. As they generously help others, God also gives them the grace to be faithful to their vocation as families, which is to be witnesses to the Gospel by their love for one another.

I consider as God's blessing the opportunity to be with them and to see them actively cooperate with one another like a family. As I continue my journey of serving Him in the mission, I hold on to these precious experiences as jewels I can one day lay down at His feet as I pay Him homage because I believe that all these are His ways of showing me the depths of His love not only for me but for all those He has created. 🙏

## MCS Celebration of Mother Caterina Day

By: Nov. Doan Thi Thien, MSBS and Nov. Evelin, MSBS

**M**other Caterina School (MCS) celebrates Mother Caterina Day every year. It is a chance to impart to the children and their families the sense of mission, and an occasion to pay tribute to Mother Caterina, the foundress of the Missionary Servants of the Blessed Sacrament. One of her idea in founding the Congregation is to help the missions through missionary animation and cooperation. In accordance with this, the Missionary Servants established MCS with the aim of awakening in the children the missionary spirit. The sisters are serving in the school, teaching and making the pupils aware of their mission as baptized. The theme of the celebration this year was "Mercy is the Church's Life and Mission". On that day, the pupils, their families and the staff were divided into five teams which were named after the five continents of the world. They were asked to wear T-shirts according to the color of the team to which they belong: green

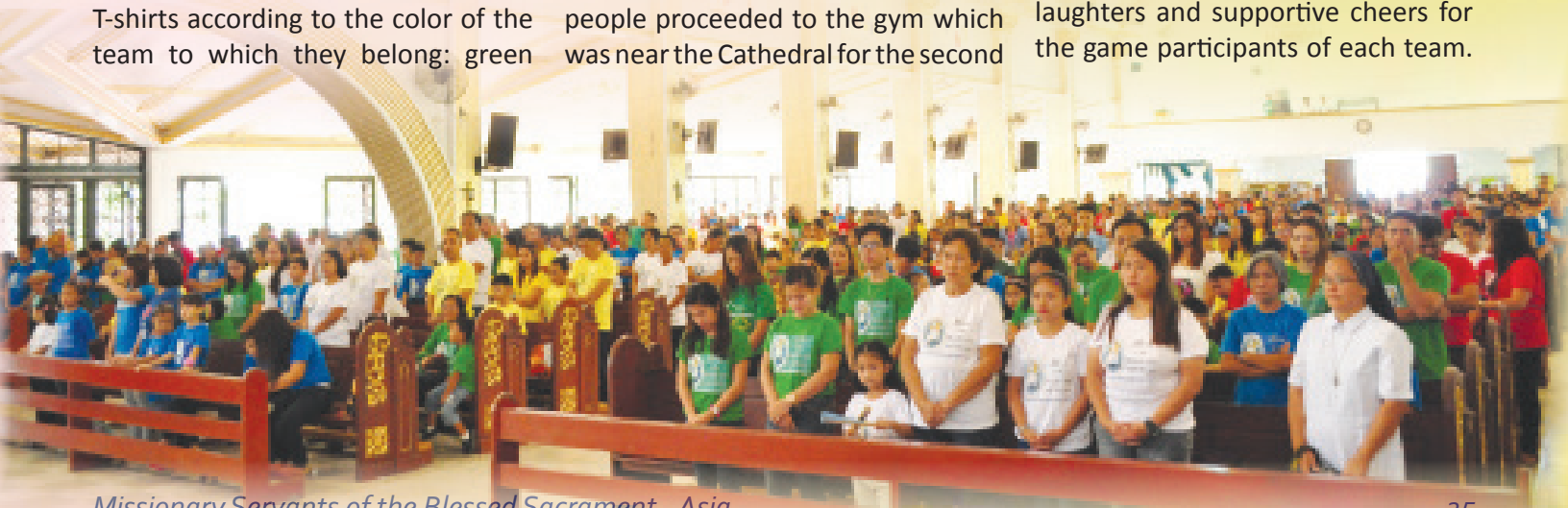
for Africa, red for America, white for Europe, blue for Oceania and yellow for Asia.

The celebration began with the Holy Mass in the morning presided by Bishop David William Antonio, D.D who was present with us despite his busy schedule. The Cathedral was filled with the pupils and their family members dressed in missionary colors. In his homily, the Bishop reminded us of the important role of the family in teaching the faith to the children. He also exhorted the children to be merciful to their parents by studying well.

During the Mass, the pupils served as lectors, psalmists, choir, offerors and collectors. Though they were still small, they were taught how to serve in the Church and it was heart-warming to see them. The Mass was very solemn because it was well-organized and the church was decorated with beautiful flower arrangements. After the Mass, the people proceeded to the gym which was near the Cathedral for the second



part of the program. The pupils and their family members sat together with their team mates. The gym was filled with the colors of mission. How beautiful it was to see how the spirit of mission can unite and bind people together in spite of geographical barriers and differences! The program began with the doxology entitled "The Mission". Games, team yells, dances and animation ensued. The gymnasium echoed with laughter and supportive cheers for the game participants of each team.







The celebration ended with the song “May Your Kingdom Come” and everyone came home with a cheerful face because of what they have experienced. On this day, they were able to collect a sum of money which was given as an additional contribution for the mission. They put them in coin banks which were forwarded to the National Office of Pontifical Mission Societies.

Mother Caterina Day was filled with joy and fun. We were very thankful to God for this meaningful and beautiful experience of being with the children and their families, of seeing their realities and witnessing how the MSBS sisters are trying to plant the seed of mission animation and cooperation in the life of the children. With the motto “children helping children,” children are invited to offer their prayers and little sacrifices

for all the missionaries and the suffering children and to participate in simple activities for the mission.

It was our prayer that this day would inspire the children and their families as well as the staff to share God’s mercy and plant the seed of mission awareness in their hearts and in their homes so that the mission may grow and bear fruits in their lives. We also prayed that God may continue to bestow upon the people the grace to bring His mercy to others.

We are blessed to have our exposure in Mindoro and we are very thankful to the community who made this happen. We are sure that Mo. Caterina is happy to see us gather in the celebration not only of her life and mission but most importantly of our being missionaries. It is her spirit and desire that keep us alive and inspire us to serve the Church and Her mission. 🙏



*Coin banks for the Mission*

## *Missionary Animation Experience in Myanmar*

*By: Sr. Pansy Fabian, MSBS*

**S**ince they are members of the Church by virtue of their Baptism, all Christians share in the responsibility for missionary activity (RM 77).

As a Missionary Servant, I took the responsibility and commitment to animate the missionary spirit among the people of God when I professed my vows in the Congregation. So, when I went to Myanmar, I brought with me the charism of Missionary Animation and Cooperation and the missionary spirit. I and my co-sisters made ourselves available to serve the mission in the local Church of Myanmar.

A few months ago, we had the chance to meet and talk about the mission to the seminarians of Loikaw at the invitation of Fr. Bernardino Ne Ne, the rector of the

seminary at that time. I believe that this was God’s plan and He made things happen in the right place and at the right time. When Fr. Ne Ne was appointed as the National Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS) in Myanmar, he invited us to help in the work of missionary animation and formation.

First, we gave formation to the mission animators and facilitators in Loikaw diocese in March. The aim was to form a more organized and effective Holy Childhood Association (HCA). Then towards the end of August, we held the very first meeting and seminar of all the PMS directors and facilitators. It was opened with the Eucharistic celebration presided by Bishop John Hsane Hgyi of Pathein diocese. The topics discussed were “Mission Ad Gentes and its





*Participants of Inter-diocesan gathering of HCA members from Loikaw Diocese and Insein Diocese - Yangon*

value for the Church today," "Mission Ad Gentes and the Local Church," "The Pontifical Mission Societies," "Mission Rosary," and "Child Protection and Laws." There was also a sharing on the Holy Childhood activities from the chosen dioceses. On the last day, we had a meeting to plan future activities. The said activities were participated in by bishops, priests, religious, lay people and children.

It was our joy to collaborate with PMS National Office in Myanmar. In the beginning, we had some insecurities and fear but convinced of our vocation and identity as Missionary Servants and inspired by the Mother Foundress who had underlined many times the need for missionary animation among Christians, we were able to transcend them. *"We have to do all that is possible for the spiritual and material good of the Catholic missions and to propagate the missionary ideal among the different groups of persons,"* she wrote. The apostolic aim of our Congregation is to pursue an intense missionary animation among the people of God.

While we were sharing our knowledge and experiences about mission work, I felt the enthusiasm and interest among the participants. Some were even saying, *"Let us*

*try to outdo each other in helping the children in our own parish grow in this awareness."* Almost all of them felt the need to nurture the children and were convinced of the important role that the children could play for the Mother Church. Some bishops realized the need to help the children and to nurture them by Christian and missionary formation so that they could become leaders one day. The majority of the participants showed their support in these missionary endeavors. On the other hand, there were many Catholics who were unfamiliar with PMS and its role in the Church. Some of them knew it by name while others have never heard about it and we were glad to hear that they have learned something from our sharing.

In reality, there were different organizations for the children in the dioceses. They were already organized as a group called Thet Htwe Tamandaw (little apostles) but with HCA, they are more encouraged to become missionary children. Now I can hear in the parishes that the children are addressed as HCA. Some parishes and dioceses that have not yet started HCA showed the effort to start. After a few weeks, we had the opportunity to meet and share with some of the members of the HCA from Loikaw and Yangon dioceses. Some of the children understood what their commitments were after knowing about HCA, the mission situation today, the call to be missionaries even as children and to pray the mission rosary for others. In one of the activities we had prepared for the children, we prayed together the mission rosary and asked them to present and offer their individual intentions. Most of them wrote a prayer for the needy and suffering children and that moved me to tears.

In this mission, the Lord was with us and surely Mother Caterina too as we stood before the people, reminding them that we are all missionaries and are responsible for the missionary work of the Church. We are one in the mission of God especially in making the Kingdom of God present in our society, in our world. 🙏







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