May Youk Kingdom Come! Missionary Servants of the Blessed Sacrament in Asia



Mission News 2019

And He Dwelt Among Us

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

(Jn 1:1)

Raptized and Sent

hat difference would faith in Jesus make in our lives? It is a no-brainer question to some, but more and more people, even the baptized, are grappling for an answer to this. It is good to recall then these words from the Scriptures: "Behold, I make things new" (Rev. 21:5; Is. 43:19). Like the first drop of rain after a long dry spell, faith in Jesus Christ ushers in a new perspective, a rebirth of hope, a revolution of love.

Who would not want that rejuvenating experience? More importantly, who would be willing instruments to usher in this newness? The world today needs more than ever the freshness of the Gospel. The mission remains as urgent as before. Hence, it is on a happy note that we remember the significant event which took place in the Church last October, the celebration of the Extraordinary Mission Month which aimed to reinvigorate the missionary spirit among all the baptized. The meaningful celebration was not lost on us and so, this annual issue of our newsletter centers on this theme: Baptized and Sent.

Stories and reflections shared herein manifest the richness of missionary life and the different dimensions of mission. In addition, we also wish to present to you a montage of challenges in mission works.

May the Kingdom of God come!

Dear Brothers and Sisters.

Our filial relationship with God is not something simply private, but always in relation to the Church. Through our communion with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we, together with so many of our other brothers and sisters, are born to new life. This divine life is not a product for sale but a treasure to be given, communicated and proclaimed: that is the meaning of mission. We received this gift freely and we share it freely (cf. Mt 10:8), without excluding anyone. God wills that all people be saved by coming to know the truth and experiencing his mercy through the ministry of the Church, the universal sacrament of salvation (cf. 1 Tim 2:4; Lumen Gentium, 48).

The Church is on mission in the world. Faith in Jesus Christ enables us to see all things in their proper perspective, as we view the world with God's own eyes and heart. Hope opens us up to the eternal horizons of the divine life that we share.

Charity, of which we have a foretaste in the sacraments and in fraternal love, impels us to go forth to the ends of the earth (cf. Mic 5:4; Mt 28:19; Acts 1:8; Rom 10:18). [...]

To men and women missionaries, and to all those who, by virtue of their baptism, share in any way in the mission of the Church, I send my heartfelt blessing.

Excerpts from the Message of Pope Francis - World Mission Sunday 2019

CATECHESIS ON MISSION



October this year, we celebrated the Extraordinary Mission Month, a celebration proposed by Pope Francis to the whole Church to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the publication of the document Maximum Illud and to reignite the awareness of the People of God on the mission of the Church. In line with this, we offer you this simple catechesis on the mission of the Church for a renewed awareness and appreciation of our missionary vocation.

What do we mean by mission? • •

- It is the proclamation of faith in the crucified and risen Christ.
- It is to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the "peripheries in need of the light of the Gospel" (EG, 20).

Where does this mission come from?

The mission to evangelize is rooted in the mission of the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world who said:

- "I have come to light a fire on earth. How I wish the blaze were ignited!" (Lk 12:49)
- "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations." (Mt. 28:19)



Who will carry out this mission?

In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (cf. Mt 28:19). All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization.

How can we do the mission?

We carry out this mission through:

- Witness of holiness: In order to draw others to Christ, we need to show in our lives how Christ has transformed us by His grace.
- Making disciples: Imitating the example of Christ and His apostles, we need to go forth and seek out those who are not fully united to Christ and invite them to a personal, saving encounter with Christ. Once a person has heard the Good News announced, we need to invite them to respond to the call of Christ. This call includes the invitation to conversion from sin and the life of discipleship.
- Sacramental initiation: When there is a positive response on the part of the persons being evangelized, it is vital that their openness to Christ

be nurtured and strengthened by their proper incorporation into the life of the Church.

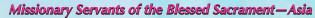
stable process of evangelization, by which we continually reach out in a missionary way.

Transformation of culture: Evangelization not only seeks to bring individuals to Christ but also involves the effort to transform the culture of the community in which we live in order to bring it into harmony with the Gospel.











The fundamental content of the proclamation of the Gospel in evangelization is referred to as the "kerygma". It contains the essential truths of salvation as they were proclaimed by Christ.

These are the key elements of kerygma:

- witness to the Holy Trinity and God's salvific love for all;
- salvation is offered to all in Jesus Christ, the Son of God who died and rose for us, and made us adopted children of the Father;
- Christ founded the Church to draw all to Himself and extend to all the means of salvation as the seed and beginning of the kingdom of God;
- all have a vocation to true freedom and a destiny which transcends time/life on earth

Can we accomplish the mission on our own?

Of course, Jesus entrusts this work to human beings: to the apostles, to the Church. Nevertheless, in and through them the Holy Spirit remains the transcendent and principal agent for the accomplishment of this work in the human spirit and in the history of the world.



What are the four fields of Mission?

- Pastoral Mission which is the ongoing work to build up the members of the Church.
- *Mission to the Ends of the Earth (Ad Gentes):* proclamation of the Gospel to those who do not know or believe in Christ and planting of Churches.
- Transformation of the World (Inter Gentes) which means contributing toward bringing about God's kingdom in our time.
- New Evangelization. This is the attempt to reach out to those who may have faded from the Church or become separated for any reason.

Beneficiaries of the Mission

- Non-believers: those who do not know Christ (including members of non-Christian religions), those who have not heard effectively the proclamation of the Gospel. This is what the Church calls *missio ad gentes*. In our world that has become more and more secular, increasing numbers of our contemporaries have truly no real knowledge of religion, of Christ or the Gospel He proclaimed.
- Non-practicing Christians: those who have lapsed in the practice of their faith due to various causes of dechristianization so prevalent today, and thus have lost a living sense of the faith.
- *Practicing Christians:* it is also necessary to continually call all Christians to conversion and to the fullness of the faith. We evangelize Catholics in order to deepen, consolidate, nourish, and make ever more mature their active faith. We strive for unity with our fellow Christians through various efforts of ecumenism.

Characteristics of a missionary community

Is your house, your neighborhood, your parish, your community missionary? Check out these characteristics of a missionary community:

• A community of disciples who take the first step, who are involved and supportive, who bear fruit and rejoice.

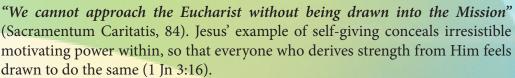
 A community who knows that the Lord has loved us first and so, we go out to others, seek those who have fallen away, stand at the crossroads and welcome the outcast.

• A community which bridges distances, willing to abase itself if necessary, and embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others.

 A community filled with joy and knows how to rejoice always, celebrates every small victory, every step forward in the work of evangelization



The Eucharist and Mission



Equips one for the mission: The "GO" at the end of the Eucharist is not mere ceremonial dismissal, it is a mission-laden mandate. It echoes the parting

message of Jesus: "Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them My disciples... and teach them" (Mt 28:19-20), after which He adds an assurance, "I will be with you."

Gives life, supplies energy: One remembers how Christian communities, under totalitarian regimes in recent times, not only survived but grew and flourished, strengthened by the Eucharist. Jesus says: "If anyone eats this bread, he will live forever" (Jn 6:51). It gives life to the world (Jn 6:32-33) – and life in all its fullness (Jn 10:10). It offers the word of life (1 Jn 1:1; Jn 6:68).

"The mission of the Christian in the world is a mission for all, a mission of service, which excludes no one; it requires great generosity and in particular, a gaze and heart turned heavenward to invoke the Lord's help."

Pope Francis

DOCUMENTS OF THE CATHO

Probe Nostis

Gregory XVI September 18, 1840 This encyclical reminds bishops that the propagation of the faith should not be limited to their own diocese but extended to the whole world. Gregory XVI invites bishops to be active in missions and to encourage the laity to be involved.

Maximum Illud

Benedict XV November 30, 1919 It deals with Catholic missions after World War I. It underlines the following: the need to train local clergy, the spiritual goal of mission, and the necessity of proper preparation for the work in foreign cultures. It also affirms that the mission is not only for missionaries. All Catholics must participate, through their Apostolate of Prayer, by supporting vocations, and by helping financially.

Rerum Ecclesiae

Pius XI February 28, 1926 Its main passages deal with the founding, solidification, and independence of the new churches.

Evangelii Praecones

Pius XII June 2, 1951 The letter emphasizes the importance of education, especially at a time when communism was spreading rapidly. An important command contained in the encyclical was that missionaries should respect the culture and customs of the people.

Fidei Donum

Pius XII April 21, 1957 This letter focuses its attention on the situation of Africa. In 1957, many countries in Africa gained independence from their colonial masters. It expresses joy at the establishment of hierarchies in many countries.

Princeps Pastorum
John XXIII

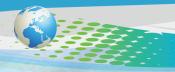
November 28, 1959

It provides directives for the local clergy and the missionaries who remain in the emerging young churches.

Ecclesiam Suam

Paul VI August 6, 1964 It deals with the Church's approach to the modern world and articulates a vision for dialogue with other religions and the world at large. It exhorts Christians to develop a strong understanding of their own faith before they move into dialogue with the wider world.

UC CHURCH ON MISSION



Lumen Gentium

Vatican II November 21, 1964 It affirms that the entirety of the people of God constitute the structural Church and lifts up the laity as full co-participants with clergy and religious in carrying out the mission of the Church.

Nostra Aetate

Vatican II October 28, 1965 It calls Catholics to recognize the value of non-Christian religions and of the fellowship among followers of different faiths.

Ad Gentes

Vatican II December 7, 1965 It announces the Church's commitment to bring the Gospel to all peoples. It establishes evangelization as one of the fundamental missions of the Catholic Church and reaffirms its connection to works of charity. It lays out guidelines for the training and actions of the missionaries.

Evangelii Nuntiandi

Paul VI December 8, 1975 It speaks about evangelization or proclamation of the message of the gospel in the present situation of the society and of the world.

Redemptoris Missio

John Paul II December 7, 1990 It expounds on the urgency and necessity for missionary activities and endeavors in the world. Through this document, the Pope attempts to revive the missionary vitality of the Christian community.

Ecclesia in Asia

John Paul II November 6, 1999 It serves as the blueprint for the expansion of the Roman Catholic faith in Asia. It summarizes ideas and conclusions of the Special Asian Synod held in Rome from April 18 to May 14, 1998.

Verbum Domini

Benedict XVI September 30, 2010 This calls the People of God to renewal through the Word of the Lord, and it is eminently practical in the encouragement it offers for laity and pastors.

Evangelii Gaudium

Francis

November 24, 2013

The document calls on the Church to choose the missionary option, which refers to that missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today's world.

As the yeast transforms the dough so do the missionaries transform the society and the world. They might seem insignificant. Yet, each, in their own ways, works towards the transformation of the world according to God's loving design. In this section, we share with you stories of some of these missionaries and the lessons their life imparts to us.

Suffering as Mission: The Testimony of Servant of God Darwin Ramos

Sr. Melanie S. Reyes, MSBS

f you walk on the streets of Metro Manila, you will surely find the dreary reality of poverty, street urchins acting like daredevils as they cross highways running or hitching a ride on jeepneys. It is hard to find even the faintest genuine smile on their faces. At a young age, they have known and experienced struggles we, who have been more privileged than they are, could never fully fathom. It seems that hope, joy and life itself have turned their backs on them.

Their future seemed so bleak until the story of Darwin Ramos breaks in the media. Darwin Ramos, an erstwhile unknown child, was a poor boy whose process of beatification is ongoing. Born on December 17, 1994 in Pasay City to a poor family, he had no option but

to work at a very tender age for the family. He was the eldest among eight children. To help the big family, he scavenged plastic waste from trash piles, which he later sold.

As if this suffering was not enough, he was later diagnosed with Duchenne muscular dystrophy. At the age of 7, he could no longer stand, and his muscles weakened. Due to poverty, his family was forced to live on the street, and to continue helping his family, Darwin begged for alms at the Libertad station.

In July 2006, he entered the center run by ANAK-Tnk Foundation (Tulay ng Kabataan), a group of street educators who commit themselves to helping street children. Discovering the Catholic faith, he expressed his desire to be baptized and so, on December 23, 2006,



he was baptized and on December 22, 2007, he received First Communion and Sacrament of Confirmation. Meanwhile, his physical condition deteriorated progressively whereas his spiritual life gradually matured and inspired people around him.

He inspired his companions and educators with his conduct. He was caring and supportive of the other children. Despite his pain, his heart was full of love and gratitude. "Thank you" and "I love you" were the words he often repeated. He often spent time praying, entrusting himself to Jesus. He often talked to Jesus, a presence he could not see but could strongly feel. He was often seen alone inside the chapel, his hands clasped together, his eyes closed while praying. His simple faith was astounding. Once, he asked a priest to pray for his healing because he wanted to be able to move again like the other children, but he also said that it was alright even if that would not happen.

In this deep relationship, Darwin soon learned the meaning of his suffering. He considered his suffering from his illness as a mission and he once said that he understood that Jesus was asking him to persevere to the end. Fr. Matthieu Dauchez, TnK executive director, shared how Darwin was convinced that through his suffering, Jesus is bearing beautiful fruit somewhere in the world.

Aside from physical suffering, Darwin also experienced spiritual struggles. A priest once saw Darwin looking tormented and terrified in the hospital. At the time, Darwin told them to pray for him because he was fighting against the devil. After this, the priest noted how Darwin looked so calm and filled with inner





peace, one which he considers a sign of a battle won.

After ten years of suffering, on September 23, 2012, he died at the Philippine Children's Medical Center in Quezon City at the age of 17. March of this year, the Vatican declared him as a Servant of God, the first step in the process of canonization.

Darwin's story is like a dawn breaking in the gloomy darkness of the night. He breaks the typical narrative of the poor dying poor or of a rags-to-riches story. His is the triumph of faith over the slavery of poverty and suffering. His is a true success story, not in the standard of the world, but in the light of faith and eternity.

His life carried a message of hope, a good news. He showed the poor, the suffering, the young people, that they are precious in God's eyes. In fact, they could be His partners in the mission. In their misery, they could be channels of grace, of hope, of joy to others. Their weakness is their greatest strengths if they will only learn to hold fast to Christ, and his abounding grace.

A Valiant Witness of Faith

Sr. Benedetta Day Day, MSBS

n May 24, 2014, the Church of Myanmar rejoiced at the beatification of Isidoro Ngei Ko Lat, the first Blessed from the native land of Myanmar. He was a catechist, murdered by rebels along with Fr. Mario Vergara, a PIME (Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions) missionary.

Blessed Isidoro came from a family of peasants in the village of Ahtet Tawpin, converts to Catholicism. He was baptized in 1918. Unfortunately, his parents died when he was young. He and his younger brother were left to the care of their aunt and uncle. As a child, he was known to follow missionaries around town. As he grew up, he expressed the desire to serve God. Later, he entered the minor seminary of Saint Teresa. Due to poor health, he was unable to finish his studies and fulfill his dream of being ordained a priest, but this did not stop him from spending the rest of his life serving God.

Returning to his village, Isidoro opened a free private school so that children could learn Burmese and English, music, liturgical hymns, and receive catechism lessons. He treated everyone he met with love and respect, regardless of their beliefs, and because of this,

people loved and respected him. In 1948, he met Fr. Mario Vergara, who was looking for catechists. Isidoro immediately jumped at the chance to become a catechist in Shadaw, (now part of Loikaw Diocese). At that time, the population of Shadaw was composed of illiterate crop farmers. Most of these farmers were evangelized by Baptists, who were hostile to Catholics. During that time, the Catholic missionaries were also serving the people in many ways: evangelizing, providing education and medical assistance, etc. Despite these, not everyone welcomed them. Some treated them with indifference. And their works were not always appreciated. Blessed Isidoro worked closely with Fr. Vergara in the mission, serving as an interpreter and helping him understand the cultural, social and religious sensibilities of the local people.

That time was not favorable for missionaries particularly in Shadaw. Catholic missionaries were threatened and intimidated by a rebel faction supported by Protestant Baptists. The rebels were headed at a military level by a certain Commander Richmond and at the political-religious level, by the local district



chief Tiré. Catechists, who worked closely with the missionaries were targeted as well. The arrest of one of these catechists, James Còlei, led to the martyrdom of Isidoro and Fr. Vergara.

Fearing for Còlei's life, on May 24, 1950, they bravely decided to risk going to the center of Shadaw to convince Tire, the district chief, to release the prisoner. Instead, the rebel leader Richmond was lying in wait for them. After subjecting the men to a harsh interrogation, he ordered their arrest. They dragged them through the forest at night.

Both Isidoro and Fr. Vergara were killed at dawn of May 25, 1950. They were shot on the banks of the Salween River, with gunfire heard in the nearby village. Their bodies were sealed in bags, thrown into the river and never to be found.

The martyrdom of Isidoro formed part of the cornerstone of faith for the Local Church in Myanmar. Highlighting how his sacrifice had a prodigious missionary effect, Cardinal Amato said in his homily during his beatification that his witness led to the flowering of Catholicism in Myanmar.

His story is told and integrated in our faith formation classes since the past decades. In my catechumenate period, as we were preparing ourselves for baptism, our catechist challenged us; "to be a Catholic is to witness the Gospel, to be persecuted, to be ready to bear witness to our faith even unto martyrdom, just like our model missionary (referring to Isidoro) who was tortured, sealed in a sack, dragged on the stony route, killed and was thrown into the river." This story has remained imprinted in my mind and inspired me to be like Bl. Isidoro, proud of my Christian identity, going out to witness for Christ with courage. Undeniably, Blessed Isidoro contributed to our growth, instilling in the baptized pride in our Christian identity and giving us



renewed apostolic energy and witness.

The persecution of Christians: imprisonment, torture, killing, are still happening in different parts of our world today. A glimpse at the life of Blessed Isidoro teaches us to walk on the footsteps of Christ; ready to carry the crosses they may lay upon us, to live out our missionary call even unto death.

"To be a Catholic is to witness the Gospel, to be persecuted, to be ready to bear witness to our faith even unto martyrdom."

A Tale of Two Missionaries

Post. Anisia Yunita Wea, MSBS

In the 17th century, two young missionaries sailed to a distant land, armed with the zeal to spread the Gospel and the courage to face death, to which this holy venture could lead them. They were Blessed Dionysius of the Nativity and Redemptus of the Cross.

Blessed Dionysius of the Nativity, Peter Berthelot before his baptism, was a handsome young sailor from France, of inquisitive and sturdy mind, blond and fair skinned, adventurous and high-spirited. He was the cosmographer and first pilot of the kings of France and Portugal. At a young age, he had already sailed to Spain, England and America. In 1619, he sailed to India and there met the Carmelites. In 1635, at the counsel of his spiritual director, he joined the discalced Carmelite order in Goa and was ordained a priest on August 24, 1638.

He was an example of virtue to all the religious, both in the novitiate and after profession. He was graced with the gift of contemplation and more than once during prayer, he seemed surrounded by heavenly splendors. From the beginning, he expressed an interest in using his talents and knowledge of geography and native languages to spread the Gospel. He had all the making of a zealous missionary to the people of Asia. But another plan intervened before he could realize that dream.

He was asked by his superior to join the new mission in Sumatra (Indonesia). Because he was a maritime expert and versed in Malayan language, the ambassador, the sultan of Achen, Sumatra wanted him as a spiritual guide and companion. Dionysius accepted the invitation and brought with him Thomas Rodriguez (religious name: Redemptus of the Cross), a Portuguese who joined the Carmelites as a lay brother.

Redemptus of the Cross was a soldier who had travelled to the East Indies. As a young man, he was a member of the governor's guard at Mylapore where he rose to the rank of captain and commander. He was stationed at the Carmelite missions at Thatta and Diu in the kingdom of the Grand Mogul, and then again at Goa where he served as porter and sacristan. Redemptus was an extremely likable person, friendly and jovial.

The two highly talented and gallant missionaries left Goa on September 25, 1638 and arrived in Achen on



October 25. They were soon arrested and imprisoned. Forced to embrace Islam and renounce their Catholic faith, Blessed Dionysius and Redemptus were tortured more than others. Both were condemned to death. Blessed Redemptus were killed first while Blessed Dionysius was martyred later since he himself preferred to live a little longer to strengthen others. He deprived himself, during the period of captivity, even of the necessities in order to encourage others through his words, his help and his example. Blessed Dionysius and Redemptus belonged to the earliest martyrs of the early wave of heroes who labored to spread the gospel to the people of Far East.

How great was the cost of the Christian faith! Many of the present generation are not aware of this. Many of us take our faith for granted and sometimes prefer our comfort and convenience rather than take a stand for the faith. I am indeed privileged to know these missionary martyrs, because through them, I have come to know the beauty of the Christian faith.

Thank you, Lord, for these two missionaries who planted the seed of faith in our hearts through their own blood. Thank you for the witness of their life. Thank you for the missionary vocations, which they have awakened in Indonesia, my dear homeland. May the sacrifice of the two missionaries Blessed Dionysius of the Nativity and Redemptus of the Cross bring in a more bountiful harvest in the vineyard of the Lord.

Love Unto Death

Asp. Vu Thi Hang, MSBS

ow far can you go for love?

A 32-year-old young priest, imitating his Beloved's incalculable love, resolutely chose death and suffering for love. Tortured mercilessly, he refused to betray his love. "No! I preach faith in Jesus Christ and I will remain faithful to Him even if it would cost me my life. You want me to renounce Jesus? That will not happen."

This young man was Saint Theophane Venard, an eloquent witness of love for Christ. He was born on November 21, 1829 in Loup-Sur-Thouet, a village in France, to a devoted French Catholic family. At a very young age, Theophane embraced the dream of becoming a missionary. He was greatly inspired by the French missionaries especially by Father Cornay Tan, a missionary who stood for the faith in Vietnam in 1837.

In August 1847, he entered the Minor Seminary in Matrillon and then Major Seminary of Paris Foreign Missions Society in Poitiers, France. On June 5, 1851, he was ordained priest at the age of 22 in the big church of Our Lady of Victories. One year into the priesthood,

Theophane's dream of becoming a missionary came true.

In September 1852, he celebrated his last Mass in France and departed for China. He arrived in Hongkong on March 19, 1853. He was so zealous in fulfilling his mission, expressing his love for the place and for its people. However, he had also difficulties due to the hot climate and his poor health. Amid all the challenges, God, his Beloved was his only source of strength, inspiration and consolation.

Then, in 1854, he received with so much joy the news of his new mission – in Vietnam. The Catholic Church in Vietnam was being persecuted at that time. Several missionaries and Christians were cruelly tortured and killed because of their faith. On May 26, 1854, he arrived at Vinh Tri, the center of the Vicariate of Tay Dang Ngoai. Father Theophane tried to adapt himself to the culture of Vietnam and to its climate and zealously preached the Gospel. He suffered bouts of asthma and tuberculosis, and yet his enthusiasm and love for the mission did not wane.



Instead, he took his suffering as an offering for those who did not know God yet. He said "Suffering is the best and only gift for redemption of the souls as well as offering of one's self to God". He strengthened the faith of the people, who are experiencing difficulties and severe persecution. He encouraged them to trust in Mother Mary's care.

In 1859, under Emperor Tu Duc, the persecution worsened. Missionaries were killed but Theophane did not flee. On November 30, 1860, he was captured. He prayed and prepared himself for death. They detained him in a cage and insulted him. He was accused and judged for crimes he did not commit. He courageously declared "I was called here to preach the Good News and I did not do anything except share Christ with you". Nothing, not even death, could force him to turn his back on Jesus, whom he loved much.

On February 2, 1861, he paid the ultimate price for loving Christ. He was beheaded. The smile on his face manifested his total surrender to God. How far can you go for love? St. Theophane Venard says, "until death". Indeed, true love does not know how to count what it receives but only what it gives. Saint Theophane was willing to give his whole life and love until death. In a world intoxicated by the idea of love, his life gives an astounding example of what it really means to love.



THE MSBS CONGREGATION CELEBRATED ITS 12th GENERAL CHAPTER

he MSBS Congregation celebrated its 12th General Chapter in Nemi, Rome on July 22-August 9, 2019. With the theme "Disciples and Missionaries", the Chapter delegates evaluated the journey made by the Congregation in the last six years and discerned the path for the future of the mission.

Mo. Giusy Sozza, the newly elected General Superior of the Congregation, described the Chapter as "a time of grace, a favorable time for a new creation, to be missionary Disciples in the Church and in today's world!"

The Chapter Delegates considered the days of the Chapter as "a laboratory among cultures and generations, marked by moments of profound prayer, reflection, sharing and even sorrow for the death of Sr.

Natalia Favro [one of the MSBS sisters who died at the wake of the Chapter)."

In their message at the closing of the Chapter, they called on all MSBS to be a voice in the Church, to be the voice of those who are voiceless in the world!



Discepole e Missionarie

"Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light for my path" (Ps. 119:105). The Word brings light to life. Like a light on a lampstand, the missionary Church does not fail to exhaust all Her resources to announce God's words with the conviction that it shall vanquish the darkness that obscures our vision of the beauty of life in God. This section features different mission realities and how the Church strives to faithfully carry out the mission Christ has entrusted to Her.

Towards Communion in the Family

Sr. Maureen Martinez, MSBS

Why do you want to win this competition?" To this oft-repeated question in kiddie tilts on Philippine television, the common answer even of very young contenders is this: "To help my family" or "To have a better life for my family" or others of this sort. This goes to show how important family is to the Filipinos. Ironically, this quest for a better life has led to more dramatic consequences which had and will jeopardize the Filipino family's well-being.

In search for a better life, many Filipinos go abroad to work. How many parents in our country are working abroad? How many of them are planning to leave their families for a greener pasture? Most Filipinos today see the opportunity to work abroad as their ticket out of poverty, at the expense of living away from the other members of the family.

This has become a trend, especially to those parents who dream of a good life for their children, but what are its consequences? Are they really enjoying a good life while a family member is away working in other country? What will happen to their relationship as a family? How about their children? Do they understand their situation?

The separation and the lack of parental presence and guidance have terrible repercussions on marriage and family life. In lieu of communication and actual bonding moments, children focus on their gadgets and on the virtual world which teach and form their minds and hearts.

As a result of their absence, some parents are afraid to correct the errors of their children and grant them false freedom so that formation in the Gospel or Christian values have become more and more difficult. The weak value structures or in some cases, the absence of Christian values to guide family decisions and activities can cause members to lose sight of what is truly worthwhile.

Christian values are often replaced with worldly values of comfort and pleasure. Individualism, instant gratification, and consumerism are prevalent. The rising incidence of early sexual involvement and teenage pregnancies are just some of its results. The young people of today are vulnerable in terms of decision-making; they are often blinded by the pleasure and wrong sense of freedom aggravated by a media that is saturated with these worldly values.

One of the disastrous effects of this lack of formation in Christian values is the sense of meaninglessness and loneliness in many. While social media provides a gateway for boundless connection, it can ironically



destroy real and authentic communication and communion. Many feel the gnawing sense of loneliness.

If their relationship in the family is healthy surely, they will not feel isolated. Instead, they will develop a sense of trust and security within the family. It is saddening to know the reality that families are no longer functioning according to its purpose and its effects are very evident among the youth.

Sometimes, as I walk on the streets, while out commuting or walking around the campus, I hear young people uttering nasty words, as if it was the normal thing. Many young people are moving away from the Church because they do not feel they belong to it.

The family always remains a concern for the Church. Christian families are called to renew their faith in order to strengthen their relationship within the family. Parents are called to be evangelizers of their own children so they too, may become evangelizers and play

their important role in the Church. All the members of the family are called to live as a domestic Church, a community of love.

The challenge of mission to families today is to build communion amidst the many countervalues and realities, to function according to God's design and to remain faithful to their mission of bringing Christ into the world.

The Church, on the other hand, is called to be a bridge of communion, a link that will allow families to pass over the darkness of meaninglessness and superficiality and discover the light of the Gospel, the light of faith.

To do so, she is called to feel the pain of the festering wounds of the family, to be acquainted with the evils hounding the families so that, in line with Pope Francis' call, she may be a field hospital for those wounded in this battle for the good of the family. •

The Face of Jesus in the Poor

Rev. Fr. Simone Plareh

the needy, we can see God. This is my experience in my ministry in the diocese of Loikaw, Myanmar.

I was posted in a poor rural area, underdeveloped in many aspects such as education, health care, infrastructure and many more. There is no electricity, no transportation. For pastoral visit to my parishioners,



I go around with my own bicycle – my two legs – climbing up and down the curved or straight paths, carrying our own things for at least three to four hours to reach the village. At summertime, I walk under the sun on a dusty road while on a rainy season, on muddy roads under rain showers.

Come what may, I am determined to reach people who, though they are poor, are simple, loving and joyful. The sight of them automatically eases away my tiredness.

Many of the people rely on agriculture and farming. They have no monthly income. Their annual income is their harvest, yet they are not starving. God provides for their daily bread. Though poor financially, they are very innocent, pure and rich in spirituality. They do not discriminate neither do they have biases. They are industrious and honest. They give testimony to what Jesus taught his disciples on the mountain. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God" (Mt 5:3-12). They are the faces of Jesus. They are the portraits of Jesus.

Light on a Lampstand



His manifestations through them make my heart burn with love for the mission of caring for the needy and the marginalized. Encountering these people enriched me spiritually, physically as well as psychologically. It teaches me to be more loving, caring and compassionate with the least of these brothers and sisters in Christ.

Discovering the face of Jesus Christ involves experiencing His heart. Jesus says, "Amen I say to you, whatever you did to one of these least brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40). Jesus said that his mission is to the poor, the prisoners, the blind, the oppressed, and the marginalized. Just as Christ's mission of Redemption unfolded in the contexts of

poverty and persecution, so we, the local missionaries, must follow the same path. We are to be beacons of hope amidst widespread despair.

Pope Francis himself has this vision: "I want a church which is poor and for the poor" (EG 198). The Lord Jesus wants his community of disciples to follow his way of life, a way of poverty and simplicity, a way of humility. In many ways, in words, attitudes, and action, he expressed his preferential love for the poor. He was in solidarity with them. He walked with them, ennobled them, and called them to his side.

If we are to stand beside the poor, we must, in our way of life, share something of their poverty. We are called to concretely be the voice of the poor. We are "to live the Eucharist" in the people and be "Eucharistic" by loving, sharing and serving especially the poor and the needy. We are to be the Church of the poor on a mission of mercy.

The Church of the poor is in solidarity with the poor and strives to defend their rights and dignity, to promote social justice for them. St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta is a model of serving the poor for the local missionaries in the diocese of Loikaw, Myanmar. We can learn from her and we can serve the poor wholeheartedly. We are called to be missionaries for the poor, the oppressed and the marginalized because they are the faces of Jesus.



The Church in Diaspora

Fr. Agustinus Giman

iaspora refers to the Israelite when they were in exile. They were far away from their homeland and lived amidst other cultures and religions. In the modern times, specifically in Indonesia, there is one group whom I consider as the Church in "diaspora". It is the group of Catholics in South Sumatra, who are migrants, a scattered small community living amid different cultures and religions.

The majority of the Catholics in South Sumatra are not indigenous. They are local migrants from other ethnic groups such as Javanese, Balinese, Maduranese, Sumatera Utara (Bataknese), Nusa Tenggara Timur (Flores), and Timorese. They settled in South Sumatra after the government move them there as part of the resettlement program in the 1950s. Some of them migrated there to work in palm plantation.

The number of Catholics in South Sumatra, according to the 2010 survey is around 42,436, the 4th biggest population compared to those of the six official religions recognized by the government. It is as follows: Islam (96.89%), Christian Sects (0.97%), Buddhism (0.80%), Catholicism (0.57%), Hinduism (0.53%), and Kong Hu Chu [Confucianism] (0.01%).

The majority of Catholics form small communities in rural areas. One community is composed of three to fifteen families. Usually, it is far from the parish center. The distance can be 30 to 320 km. Furthermore, in many communities, members live about 500 meters to 15 kilometers far from each other. Thus, Catholics in

South Sumatra are indeed a scattered small flock.

This situation challenges the ministry of the priest. The priest spends much time just to reach the communities and administer the sacraments, especially Eucharist, to the faithful. The priest has a limited time to talk with and to know the burdens, the problems, or the struggles of the parishioners. With this, the faith of the Catholics is likewise weakened. There have been many cases, where Catholics convert mostly to Islam. Most young people do so because of marriage, and sometimes, their parents would also follow them. Another reason for this is that they are the only Catholics living in that place.

The flock in diaspora needs priests to strengthen their faith and not just to administer the sacraments. For this reason, the second diocesan synod of the Archdiocese of Palembang focused on the empowerment of lay volunteers. Volunteers are chosen from the community itself or from other nearby community. An important figure in the community, their task is to be a pastoral presence in the community, that is, to accompany, encourage, strengthen, and listen to the community members. These volunteers will then share the experiences and struggles of the community with the parish priest.

To strengthen the faith of the young people, the diocese implemented some programs. These programs are run by the youth commission of Archdiocese of Palembang, of the vicariate, and of the parish. The youth



has a camp gathering for 3 to 4 days. At the parish level, the gathering is once or twice a year; at the vicarial level, the gathering is at least once a year. In the diocesan level, the gathering is biennial. The aims of this activity is also to encourage the youth to be proud of their faith, to deepen their knowledge of the faith, and give them a chance to find a fellow Catholic partner.

Part of the challenge of being in diaspora is exposure to different religious traditions. The Catholics in South Sumatra live with and among other religions. Usually, Catholics can live harmoniously with other religious groups, even with Muslims.

In fact, Catholics used to have a good relationship with the Muslims. For instance, during Eid Al-Fitr, the feast of Islam, Catholics visit the house of Muslims and greet them. On the other hand, when the Catholics celebrate Christmas, the Muslims visit and greet the Catholics.

With the emergence of radical Muslim movements, *Majelis Ulama Indonesia* (Indonesian Ulema Council) issued a law prohibiting Muslims from greeting the Christians and visiting them during Christmas. Moreover, radical Muslims use mosques and mass media to spread Islam, claiming that it is the true religion. As a result, division between Muslims and Catholics happen in some places.

In view of this, the Archdiocese of Palembang encourages Catholics to do inter-religious dialogue. The diocese is actively involved in *Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama* [Religious Harmony Forum] (FKUB).

FKUB is a forum in which the leaders of different religions come together to dialogue. This forum was established by the government. At the grass-root level,



Missionary Servants of the Blessed Sacrament—Asia



the diocese encourages Catholics to do dialogue of life. Dialogue of life means to collaborate with the believers of other religions in a social activity such as to alleviate poverty through credit union groups; to bear witness through good deeds and being good citizens, to live and interact with others and participate in activities which they can do together.

The Church has still a lot to do in this regard. On my part as a priest, I will do my best to contribute to the evangelizing mission of the Church, in collaboration with religious and the other lay people.

I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must lead them also. They will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd.

In 10:16

Mission in Vietnam

Fr. Jerome Nguyen Dinh Cong

Fr. Jerome of the diocesan clergy of Xuan Loc was appointed by Cardinal Fernando Filoni, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples on 6 June 2017 as the National Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS) in Vietnam for a five-year term (2017-2022).

ietnam is a country with diverse ethnicity, culture and religion. At the same time, it is one of the existing communist countries in the world. The work of evangelization in Vietnam is facing many internal and external challenges. Externally, it faces cultural, political, social, and religious challenges and a practical atheistic lifestyle which is strongly affecting people's life and decreasing the faith in the life of Christ's faithful. Internally, most of clergy and consecrated men and women in Vietnam have not fully grasped and understood the spirit of the Second Vatican Council. Furthermore, they have not yet been able to keep themselves up-to-date with the post-conciliar theological reflections.

These challenges are manifested in situation of biased mindset and habit of loving exterior celebrations. On the one hand, collaboration between the clergy and the religious is poor. Most of them prefer short-term issues (stone constructions and imposing celebrations) rather than long-term (ongoing formation, etc.). On the other hand, patriarchal mindset and clericalism remain prevalent. These are obstacles for the mission in Vietnam.

In such a context, the local church, particularly the





Pontifical Mission Societies in Vietnam (PMS-VN) try its best to focus on ongoing formation. First of all, we do this by helping priests and young consecrated men and women of different religious congregations to update their theological knowledge, in particular, on missiology and at the same time, to encourage them to devote themselves to the service of the evangelization.

Second, we are helping and offering diocesan priests and consecrated men and women working in different dioceses the opportunity to cooperate and harmonize their ministries and charisms at the service of the Gospel. In this regard, the PMS-VN is looking for venues for collaboration among priests, and religious men and women, and to empower the laity and help them gain access to the Magisterium, particularly the teachings on mission.

Considering the above-mentioned reality, I regard formation as essential to doing mission in Vietnam. Instead of big stone constructions and imposing celebrations, the Church needs to invest more of their energies on formation, biblical reflection, Lectio divina and humble service.

Of Church and Empty Pews

(The author prefers to remain anonymous.)



n 2008-2010, I was sent to a poor town, northwest of China. There were few Catholics, most of whom were already old. As I entered the church in my new mission assignment, I was shocked to see ten people attending the Sunday Mass. I was born and raised in a traditional Catholic family. When I was young, my parents taught me that we should go to Mass on Sundays and in my parish, the church is full. The pews are fully occupied. And so, to see a church on a Sunday, with almost empty pews was unimaginable.

In my two years of service in that place, I met many challenges. Foremost of these is on how to attract people to participate in the Church's activities, especially the Holy Mass. Every Saturday afternoon, I would spend more than two hours making phone calls to each and every Catholic in the area, reminding them to go to the parish for the Mass. Some would say yes but would not really come. Some would give excuses for not coming. There were still a few people attending the Sunday Mass.

I thought of visiting them in their homes, but I

phoned them before going to their house. Some would tell me they are at home and I am free to come. When I went to their house and knocked on the door, nobody answered and so I had to go back.

Why this situation? I think this is because the faith is not deeply rooted in them. As I said before, this is a poor town. For more than twenty years, they had no priest. Nobody took care of the spiritual growth of the Catholics. The old people know that they were baptized but their family do not believe in God because when they were growing up, churches were destroyed. The priests and bishops were imprisoned and so, they were like sheep without a shepherd. In addition to this, most of the young people leave the place for work in the big and modern cities.

China is a big country with large population, but Catholics comprise only one percent. Thus, it is like a vast field with a few workers. I continue to believe that the Holy Spirit will lead us to do something for the Chinese because they too, despite their unbelief, are part of the saving plan of God. \$\display\$

As a missionary Congregation, mission is our lifeblood and so, we strive to see and read our experiences in the light of the mission. It is our joy then to share with you some of our experiences and insights on the life of mission, which we are living in the different stages of formative journey towards a life dedicated to the mission.

MY LITTLE OFFERING

Asp. Maria Nguyen Thi Thuan, MSBS

oing home to Vietnam for a family visit last March, I had the opportunity to visit, with my co-aspirants Hang and Van, the mountainous place of Thi Tran Sa Thay in Kon Tum.

Fr. JB Sang, a Franciscan priest, is assigned there. On his motorcycle, he regularly visits a place, where there is no church yet. At present, Father is raising funds to build one. In the meantime, he celebrates Mass in the houses of the villagers. Every week, he organizes feeding programs for the elderly, pregnant women and children.

He brought us with him to those places. There, we met some indigenous people who warmly welcomed us with their smiles and hospitality. Despite their poverty, they treated us well with delicious meals and gave us comfortable accommodations. They gave us whatever

they had: bananas, bamboo shoots, etc. I was captivated by their generosity. They did not have much material wealth. Yet, they still had something to share.

In my littleness, I can share something. This was the lesson I learned from those simple people. In my doubts about my capacity to do something for the mission, they taught me that no one and nothing is too little when given by a cheerful and generous heart.

As I look back on my experiences in these past years in the MSBS formation house, I realized how I am constantly taught to offer the little things that one has. In union with God's missionaries and those who are suffering with Jesus, our community always offers the daily Mass. Daily, we have time for adoration, simple spiritual acts, works and sacrifices, which we offer as



precious gifts for the mission and the missionaries.

I remember our special commitment last Lenten season. We took a dry branch of a tree and placed it in front of Mother Mary's statue near our bedroom. Our formators, Sr. Jury and Sr. Lin, helped us draw up a list of commitments: to be patient and show kindness to everyone for those who are undergoing a crisis in life, to pray the chaplet of Divine Mercy for the conversion of sinners, to pray the litany for the sanctification of the Church, to pray the rosary for the perseverance of those who are in formation, to pray the litany for the sanctification of priests, to conserve water in solidarity with those who suffer from drought, etc.

Every night before going to sleep, we would pick one of those commitments and each time we were able to fulfill one, we attached a leaf or a flower to the branches. Each day, I felt joy knowing I could do something to soothe the Lord's pain and the people around me. Thus,

I hope to have contributed little by little to life. Towards the end of the Lenten Season, the tree was full of green leaves and flowers.

This wonderful spiritual act convinced me that together, our little offering can make life flourish. It allowed me to grasp the beauty and greatness of the mission that I am about to embrace together with others in this community. With my own weaknesses and limitations, I can still share his redemption and love. In this journey of being a missionary servant, Jesus does not demand me to offer him perfect gifts but my generous heart.

I can hear the words of Mother Caterina whispered in my heart: "Are you ready to become an apostle of Jesus, a kind and generous sister of the poor missionaries, an angel of salvation of your brothers and sisters who do not yet know and love Jesus?" I willingly and wholeheartedly say "Yes."

Filipino Youth: Walking with Jesus

ith this theme, the 6th Philippine Conference on New Evangelization kicked off on July 19, 2019. More than 5,000 people attended the said conference.

The discussion on the conference centered on the strengthening and enriching of the faith and spiritual life of Filipino youth. In view of this, Bishop Rex Andrew Alarcon of Daet urged the elders to help young people to find answers to their questions as well as role models who act as moral witnesses to the young.

Conferences, forums and testimonies from several personalities filled the program and inspired the participants to live their faith and mission.

PCNE 6 introduced youth pathways and spaces. These are composed of various activities such as labyrinths, prayer walls, and providing counselling and opportunity for confessions.

The gathering concluded with a Mass and the commissioning of missionary disciples led by Cardinal Tagle. •



A Journey of Discovery and Learning

Post. Maria Ronna V. Villas, MSBS



t my sister's wedding, two sisters came to our house. I was then ten years old. That first encounter awakened in me then the desire to enter the convent and inspired me to study well specially the subject of religion.

I was awarded Best in Religion and Best in Conduct when I graduated in elementary. In our island, people know me as a timid and silent person. Others said, "She will follow the footsteps of her father, a lay minister." We are not rich, but my family did not fail to provide our basic needs.

My parents taught us good attitudes and values that I keep until now. After high school, I decided to get a vocational course in Don Bosco-Tondo, which is bookkeeping - NC III. When I completed the course, I again received Best in Conduct and Perfect Attendance Award. I was very glad and proud to show these awards to my parents because the seed they planted in me continues to grow.

After my studies, I applied for work as a secretary in a construction firm. Though I was already earning, I felt something was lacking, until I met my townmates who are under religious formation. They encouraged me to join the MSBS Congregation. This reawakened my interest in religious life.

I followed the facebook page of different

Congregations, read their stories and even the comment section about God's call to religious life. Some sisters also encouraged me to join them, but I told them I have many plans in life.

I tried to escape and ignore His call, but He was persistent. Finally, on May 17, 2019, I decided to enter the MSBS Congregation after a year of occasional visits to their convent.

I am now in Postulancy, the second stage of our initial formation. With my co-postulants, I am attending

modular classes in order to deepen my knowledge about myself and about God. Each module molds me and helps me mature. The journey of postulancy makes me realize that God is calling me not only to serve Him but also his disciples and missionaries. This journey teaches me to be generous in helping those in need, to love one another despite our differences. The challenges I encounter in the journey prepare me for the mission.

Day by day, I notice the changes in me. I can do things I have not done before. I learned how to socialize and mingle with others, to cooperate in some activities either inside or outside the convent, to share tears and laughter with my co-postulants and the community. I see the little difficulties that I experience as part of my mission to offer myself and my time to others. I am grateful to Him for giving me this kind of vocation and I treasure it. God created me because He has a purpose for me, this is to do the mission He has entrusted to me.

"You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you."

(Jn 15:16)

Formed for His Mission

Nov. Agnes, MSBS

As a missionary, we should possess a big heart, full of hope." These words of Sr. Rosanna are etched in my memory. Truly, to be missionaries, the most important quality is the readiness and generosity to give of oneself, to do whatever is needed for God's mission. In this stage of my journey to become a religious missionary, it is my task to allow myself to be formed for the mission. The community and the life of our Foundress nurtures these missionary attitudes of availability and generosity in me.

Nothing extraordinary is asked of me in my daily life but like St. Therese, who is our Patroness, I strive to do ordinary things with sincere love, making little sacrifices and offering them for the mission and missionaries all over the world. "Prayers, Eucharistic adoration, sacrifices, apostolate, are offered to the Lord and for the benefit of the great work of Catholic Missions," Mo. Caterina once wrote to a young lady. The same invitation is given to me as a novice of this Congregation.

Thanks to the study of the Charism of the Congregation of the "Missionary Servants of

the Blessed Sacrament", my appreciation for our charism and mission grows day by day. I marvel at the richness and beauty of living together, consecrated and gathered Eucharist, around the animated by the Eucharistic and missionary spirituality. The special attention we give to the Eucharistic celebration and our daily communion with Him give me inner peace and leads me to a deeper encounter with Him.

This stage, however, is not without challenges but by the grace of God and the support of my community, my heart for the mission gradually expands and finds much joy in serving God with zeal through the people around me. I am grateful that God continues to allow me to experience beautiful encounter with Jesus Christ and find the meaning of life as his disciple. In my weakness and littleness, I am learning the best way to offer my life to Jesus Christ. I am happy and ready to contribute my gifts for the kingdom of God and for His mission.

Amid fear, joy, sadness and challenges, I believe that God never leaves me alone; as He promised with this passage, "And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age." (Mt. 28:20)

"The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest" (Mt 9: 37-38). There is plenty of work to be done in His mission. I may have nothing extraordinary to offer but I willingly lay down at His feet all my ordinary and simple gifts and talents, so that He can do with them as He pleases. With courage and trust in God, I hope for that day when I can confidently and willingly say: "Here I am Lord; I come to do your will."



Knocking on Doors for Jesus

Sr. Maria Lam Bieng Kim Hien, MSBS

he Catechism Class is supposed to begin. I and my fellow sisters were ready and eager to teach, bringing all our materials to make learning about faith interesting to the children in Looc, a town in Occidental Mindoro. To my dismay, I could count with my fingers our pupils. Determined to pass on the faith to more children, we went from house to house, knocking on doors to remind them to come for catechesis.

The experience would have caused me to run out of patience if it were not for this thought: I have a mission and at this moment, fulfilling it means I have to knock on doors, humbly calling on God's beloved children to receive a gift they will forever treasure.

Our mission on the island started just this year. Yet, doors of opportunity for greater mission works were flung open for us; the formation of catechists, faith formation of the

children and youth, liturgical animation, bible sharing.
We started the formation for Catechists in Looc and Lubang last July, training the children's choir and promoting the Holy Childhood Association. We also joined Bible sharing sessions with the lay faithful.

At the initiative of our parish priest, Fr. Tonton





Tria, SVD, and much to our delight as MSBS, who are called to live a Eucharistic spirituality, we started the Holy Hour devotion. Fr. Tonton entrusted to us the orientation of the people about this devotion. Again, we went knocking on doors of houses and even schools to invite more people. This allowed me to meet people, who behind those closed doors, have stories

to tell - children who have to work to help support the family, families burdened by poverty, people who feel estranged from the Church due to past wounds, but also people who willingly and lovingly volunteer their time for the Church, children and young people still attracted to the faith and ecclesial life. Opening those doors, they have allowed us to see a deeper reality, a reality that needs ever more urgently the presence of Christ, the One who shares our life, our struggles and the only One who can give us joy.

Fired up with the desire to lead people to the Church, we continue inviting people, young and old alike to attend Mass on Sundays, to participate in the activities of the parish, aimed to deepen their faith and participation in the mission of the Church. God continues to nourish the seed of hope in our

hearts and cultivate our trust in Him. We likewise find consolation in the simplicity, generosity, friendliness and kindness of well-meaning people in this place.

Thanks be to God, by His grace, I could see from Sunday to Sunday the increasing number of people who

come to Church, children and youth choir becoming more active and alive. I am so grateful for the courage to knock on doors on behalf of Christ, who wants to enter our lives. This has allowed us to marvel at the wondrous things, He does for each one of us.

The Ministry of Presence

Sr. Melanie S. Reyes, MSBS

ast July, I was at a gathering of the Canon Law Society of Malaysia and Singapore to speak about three topics related to canonical discipline. After my first sharing, which was about the Consecrated Persons in the

Church, one of the priests approached me as we were walking toward the refectory for the snacks. We continued discussing some issues related to what I just shared. In the middle of the conversation, he asked me: "What particular characteristic of Jesus do you strive to manifest?"

but I continued to ponder
on his question.

In my six years as a
professed sister, nothing else
than these words could sum up the

best answer I can give to that question.

I did give him an answer,

"Behold I am always with you, till the end of the age," (Mt. 28:20). This was the promise of Christ to His disciples.

In my journey as a religious missionary, this is the face of Christ, whom I strive to manifest – the Christ who faithfully accompanies and walks with his people, the Christ who walks with the two disheartened disciples on the road to Emmaus, the Christ who makes himself present in the Eucharist, waiting for our visit. For me, this is accomplished through the ministry of presence.

I realized it more deeply in my short stay in a parish in Malaysia, where my former classmate, Fr. Dominic Santhiyagu, now serves as a parish priest. He invited me to share about my vocation and mission as a religious sister and about marriage in its canonical perspective with his parishioners. During my stay there, I joined the spiritually enriching activities he organized – the 13 km pilgrimage walk and

the mission send-off ceremony. In the pilgrimage walk, I journeyed in prayer along with the other parishioners. In the mission send-off ceremony, we

were sent two by two, just like the 72 disciples, to do random acts of kindness after the Holy Mass. We went back to the church in the afternoon and gathered for the sharing that was so moving.

Staying in the parish and joining these activities gave me the opportunity to meet and talk with some of his parishioners. Many of them expressed the joy of seeing a religious sister

in their midst (there are no religious sisters in their parish). Not a few invited me to their homes for a meal with them. In those moments I spent with the people, I felt that not much words were needed to be said. They bring their stories to me – stories of trials and challenges, but for me, they are stories of faithfulness to the Lord, of courage, of constancy in seeking the will of God. I listened and kept them in my heart as a treasure. I have not said much words, but I felt that was enough to make them happy. Flawed and sinful that I am, the grace of God who chose me to be His missionary makes me fit for this ministry of presence. As one wise man puts it: "God did not call those who are qualified. He qualifies those who were called."

Sharing

And so, as I continue my journey as a missionary, I strive to manifest the face of Christ through the ministry of presence, stopping by to lend an ear and a comforting presence to those I meet and work with, to the young people who are struggling to find the beauty of life, to those who need someone to listen to them, to those who need to feel that they matter. As Jesus in the Eucharist listens to all our prayers, our dreams, our thanksgiving and praises, so do I strive, through the ministry of presence to manifest the love and fidelity of Christ to His people.



"We want to be Apostles of Your love." Sr. Christina Myint Mu, MSBS

We want to be the Apostles of Your love." These words of the Foundress form part of the song "May Your Kingdom Come," which is often sung in our community. This line does not fail to evoke in my heart the fire of love for the mission, excitement, and joy, the same emotions I felt when, after 12 years in the Philippines, I was sent back to Myanmar

for my new assignment.

Living in the transition period, Myanmar has seen many changes and development as well as new challenges. One of these is the many changes in terms of the young people's way of thinking, lifestyle, and values which are different from what I have grown up with. This is what I've noticed when I had a chance to meet



with them when I did vocation promotion or simply conversed with them. Many of the youth are no longer interested in the priesthood and the consecrated life. Financial success and their family or personal well-

being has become their priority.

It is in this context that our Congregation has opened a new community in January this year. With six sisters, our mission began in my home country. First among these endeavors is the house for the underprivileged or orphaned children. We take care of their education, supporting them financially through the help of generous benefactors and assisting them in their other needs.

With patience and love, our
Sisters who are assigned in the orphanage help and guide them every night in their studies. They try to teach them to be good, happy and responsible children, showing them how to do chores properly, to live, play and relate

Moreover, they teach them how to pray and encourage them to participate in parish activities like singing in the choir, reading and leading the prayer and the rosary. Every Saturday, the Sisters teach them the

with one another, respecting each other's differences.

songs for the Mass.

Some of us are engaged in other services such as teaching preschoolers, cooperating in parish ministries, animating the Holy Childhood Association, and taking charge of the community's plan and projects. I guide our young candidates, teach English to children in the neighborhood, most of whom are Buddhists, and at the same time, impart catechesis to the students from different boarding houses on Sundays.

In carrying out these mission works, we have encountered difficulties especially at the beginning. When we opened the preschool, the Sisters who are assigned to teach there had to learn how to speak the dialect of the children. In the beginning, some of the pupils could not understand Myanmar language. We also encountered challenges in calling the parents for

the meeting. Not all of them came. Those who attend the meetings are usually the same persons.

Despite the challenges, the community finds strength and inspiration from the daily

Eucharistic celebration, community life, prayer as well as from the support of the other communities. We experience the joy of witnessing to the love of God in our works, living and working together and serving God's mission with joy, enthusiasm, simplicity and love for the mission of God and for the local Church in Myanmar.

We are also glad that many people

have come to know our Congregation. They were happy that there are sisters in their midst, sharing their joy and poverty as well. And so, we continue to live together and share responsibility for the mission, carrying in our heart the hopes and dreams for the mission, for our Congregation and the local church in Loikaw.

As our newly elected General Superior told us in her first Circular Letter: "We are called to live and proclaim the mission each day, to be always and everywhere disciples and missionaries, with the only one ardent desire to run until there is a heart yet to fall in love with Him, to be women who know how to see, listen and speak."

In our hearts, this desire to be apostles of God's love continue to burn, consoled by the conviction that everything we do are for the good of the people and for the local Church. Above all, we find joy in doing everything so that God may be known and loved by people from the rising of the sun to its setting.

"We are called to live and proclaim the mission each day, to be always and everywhere disciples and missionaries."

"I am a Mission on this Earth."

Sr. Ma Thuon, MSBS

eclaring October 2019 as the Extraordinary Month of Mission, Pope Francis reminded the Church that each and every one is the realization of mission on this earth. The community of believers around the world celebrated this month each in their own way, revitalizing faith, encouraging active participation in the Church, and renewing commitment to evangelization.

Our community responded to this invitation with creative initiatives, involving those people whom we serve. "I am a mission on this earth." This short yet profoundly meaningful sentence invites us to revisit our relationship with God, without which we can never understand that we are indeed a mission on this earth. Without this relationship, we are like lifeless branch cut off from the tree, and so, our first priority is to deepen our relationship with Jesus through mission adoration, to spend more time in personal prayer and to participate more fervently in the celebration of the Eucharist. To be a "mission", we draw our strength and inspiration from our encounter with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

Aside from this personal dimension of our celebration, we came up with a series of activities. On the first day of October, the Feast of St. Therese of Lisieux, Patroness of mission, we reread her story and had a moment of sharing about her life. We did this

with the young girls in Angels' Home and it was nice to hear how they were also inspired by her life of prayer, works and sacrifices, lived fully for the mission. After the sharing, we gathered for adoration.

For the whole month, we prayed for missionary intentions specified in the mission calendar, prepared in view of this celebration. We also reflected on the Guide for the celebration of the Extraordinary Mission Month. The Guide contains the testimony of the saints, martyrs and confessors and some thoughts on mission.

To awaken the missionary spirit among our pupils and their parents, our faculty and staff in Mother Caterina School, we put up along the corridors of the school the flag with the colors symbolizing the five continents of the world: green for Africa, red for America, yellow for Asia, white for Europe, and blue for Oceania. We also displayed outside the classrooms inspiring thoughts and quotes on mission from different saints. Sr. Denden also shared her thoughts about the mission with the pupils, with the aim of inculcating in them their vocation as missionaries.

The visit of Msgr. Esteban Lo, the National Director of Pontifical Mission Societies, on October 8 in Mother Caterina School was also enriching for us and the MCS community. Msgr. Esteban spoke on how much the world needs us. Our little offering, as he said, means a lot to those who are in need. Likewise, he encouraged





us to offer not only material things, but also our time, prayer, and little sacrifices.

On October 17, the school also celebrated Mother Caterina Day. With gratitude for her, we joined the MCS students, teachers, staff, and parents in thanksgiving Mass. In the evening, we gathered again for the talent show featuring MCS students and some parents. This was done to encourage the children to share whatever they have with others.

The highlight of the celebration was October 20 or the World Mission Sunday. On this special day, we united ourselves with all the missionaries in the whole world, and prayed for the needs of the mission,

remembering especially all the people who are experiencing persecution and other forms of suffering and challenges.

October 2019, the extraordinary month of mission will always be in my memory. It was a time of revitalizing missionary activities, shared with the people whom we serve. All these activities filled me with joy and gratitude. They deepened the meaning of my vocation as MSBS, whose primary aim is to animate people to cooperate in the mission of the Church.

I am a "mission" on this earth and so, every encounter, every activity, every single detail of my life will be dedicated to the missionary cause.

Missio: Yes, Youth Can!

Sr. Juliet P. Mejia, MSBS

advertisement. It is a question that shows appreciation for the quality of the person, which inspires awe and desire to imitate or follow. But what is the real focus of this advertisement? Physical beauty. Fame. Etc. The world is ever evolving, and these changes that are taking place come with disturbing realities and situations.

We are living in a broken world damaged by consumerism, individualism aggravated by the exponential growth in technology among many other factors. A supposedly peaceful world has become a place of abuse, exploitation, crisis, conflicts and disasters. Everyone sees and experiences it, and we cannot but

look to the most vulnerable to these realities - our young people.

Exposed to different ideologies and mentality, young people slowly lose their interest in kneeling down and raising their gaze towards the One who created them. The Christian values, particularly, the aspiration for holiness and righteousness gradually lose their appeal to them.

This is one of the situations in the world that I always offer to God in prayer. I believe that in His own time and ways, he can make all things beautiful and great. He once said; "In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world" (Jn. 16:33).

I was consoled and my hope was strengthened when

Sharing

I attended the convention of the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP) in Iloilo last September 25-27, thanks to my religious community. The theme of the convention was "Missio: Yes, YOUth can!". In line with this, the participants reflected on the role of Catholic educators in accompanying and empowering the youth in their journey of life.

convention featured The concurrent sessions with topics: Exclusion these and marginalization, Body affectivity, Educating the 21st century learners, Migrants as a paradigm of our time, Newness

of the digital environment, Commitment and social engagement, Legal issues in education, family and intergenerational relations, Spirituality and religiosity, and Cultural colonization.

I am grateful and amazed to see thousands of souls who showed interest and deep concern with regard to the life of the youth of today. Each one is willing to listen to the youth's words of plea for understanding, and so find pathways of accompanying, empowering, and helping them discern their vocation and mission in life.

Moreover, the small seed of hope in my heart began to sprout as we went deeper into the programs of the convention. I witnessed how the youth involved themselves in the different liturgical celebrations with great interest. They showcased their gifts in singing, dancing and acting.

They expressed their gratitude to their family, educators, Catholic alma mater and the Church for making them feel their being "Beloved, Gifted, and Empowered" children of God. Some young people shared their little and simple ways of living out the values of discipleship and service. They are those who dedicate themselves in "Teach Peace" Build Peace Movement, Engaged Citizenship Movement, Christian Family Movement and the Social Media Influencer who work in mental healthcare.

I believe that like the other young people, they have different stories to tell about experiences of struggles and frustrations, and different ways of responding to



the demands of life. But behind these shadows are the faces of joy and new life expressed through the varieties of apostolate and missions they carry out, in the name of God, who made them who they are.

Their hearts remain a breeding ground for goodness, thirsting and pleading for opportunities to reach out to everyone amidst their own brokenness. Surely, these hearts will remain restless unless the great love in their hearts are shared with others. Great is their eagerness to be a leaven for others, to the Church and to the world.

Listening to their sharing filled my heart with gratitude to God for His unending presence and guiding hands. I was thankful to the Lord for touching the hearts of everyone especially the youth, whom He loved most. Thanks to these experiences, I am inspired to become a more enthusiastic missionary, carrying out the present mission entrusted to me by God so that through witness of life, I too will contribute in spreading God's Kingdom of love here on earth.

Trusting in God's help, I continuously pray that the number of youth with Christ-like qualities will increase and that they may entice others to value the things that are essential in life. May their interest to focus and gaze at the face of Jesus veer their attention away from the false promises of this world.

May their prayer be "Lord, how to be you po, as a child of God? Help me to be like you". And may they find the assurance that regarding mission, they can confidently say, "Yes, Youth Can!"

Prayer for the Mission

Mr. John G. Mendez

am John G. Mendez. I used to serve as a volunteer catechist and an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion (EMHC) in the Parish of Mary, Immaculate Conception (PMIC).

In some programs and activities in the parish, I collaborated with the MSBS sisters. This has somehow paved the way for us to become members of "Family for the Mission".

Although our whole family regularly prays the Holy Rosary, we welcomed the commitment of the Family for the Mission. As days passed, however, it felt like a routine, an obligation to fulfill at the appointed time. Yes, we take time to dispose ourselves to prayer but there were times it has lost its meaning.

We were living then in a house built in an open space of the subdivision. We have been living there since 1983 and five of our eight children were born there. So, the place is very dear to us. The school for our children was within walking distance. The parish church is nearby, and so it was easy for us to respond to calls for activities or meetings. We lived well, simply and joyfully.

Last April, we were forced to vacate the land because the city government is planning to build a Multi-purpose hall there. Although we did know of the plan a long time ago, I still felt unexplainable feelings at that moment. A big question came to my mind: "Why did God allow this thing to happen?" I felt resentment but didn't know for whom I am feeling that way. To

the people who drove us away? Some of them are also serving in the parish or attending Mass every day. These were the thoughts that I had in mind and heart when I bade goodbye to our parish priest. I almost cried as he spoke to me. He asked me, "Are you still going to serve?" "No," I told him with a heavy heart. I know that he was also moved to tears as I left. True, I knew that day would come but it was hard to give up the work that was so dear to me. If I only had enough money to buy a house within the parish area.

The place where we were relocated is nice but the space is cramped for a big family like ours and it is far from our workplace. We have to travel two to four hours especially with a heavy traffic. We have a difficult time adjusting to our new home. Days passed and I felt even more sad. I was asking God why this has happened even though I am serving him faithfully and in fact, turned my back on my vices.

This situation, however, made me realize more the importance of prayer of the Family for the Mission. Indeed, praying is very important especially in the family, who despite the hardships and troubles, pains and heartaches, are still able to get in touch with what other people are going through, to pray for other families and nations, and for the intentions of the Holy Father.

Through perseverance in prayer, I deeply understood what had happened. Truly, no one is exempted from trials of life. Life is full of trials and sometimes we stumble and fall, but what's important is that we continue to stand up. Prayer has become my shield and strength to rise up again.

At the moment, we continue to receive the prayer guide prepared by the MSBS sisters. I thought of sharing it with other acquaintances and friends on facebook, and so far, there are 29 people who pledged to pray for the mission. With God's grace, may this work prosper. Blessed be the Lord!



THE GRAND REAWAKENING OF MISSIONARY SPIRIT

n October this year, the Universal Church celebrated the Extraordinary Month of Mission, in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the publication of Maximum Illud, the Motu Proprio of Pope Benedict XV.

With the theme "Baptized and Sent", Catholics in the world were enriched by the different activities initiated by their respective local Churches. The guide prepared by the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples provided a treasury of insights and reflections on mission, and witnesses of mission which bred creative initiatives in local Churches and Catholic communities.

In some countries like Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei, the celebration was extended from a month to a year-long celebration which began in the first month of the year.

The four dimensions of the celebration are:

- 1. Personal encounter with Jesus Christ living in His Church through the Eucharist, the Word of God, personal and communal prayer
- 2. Testimonies of missionary saints, martyrs, confessors of the faith, as an expression of the Church scattered throughout the world,
- 3. Missionary charity as a commitment to support the Church's missionary activity and communities too poor to support themselves,
- 4. Missionary Formation on biblical, catechetical, spiritual and theological aspects.

Activities done in the context of the celebration has indeed reawakened the awareness and love for missio ad gentes. §



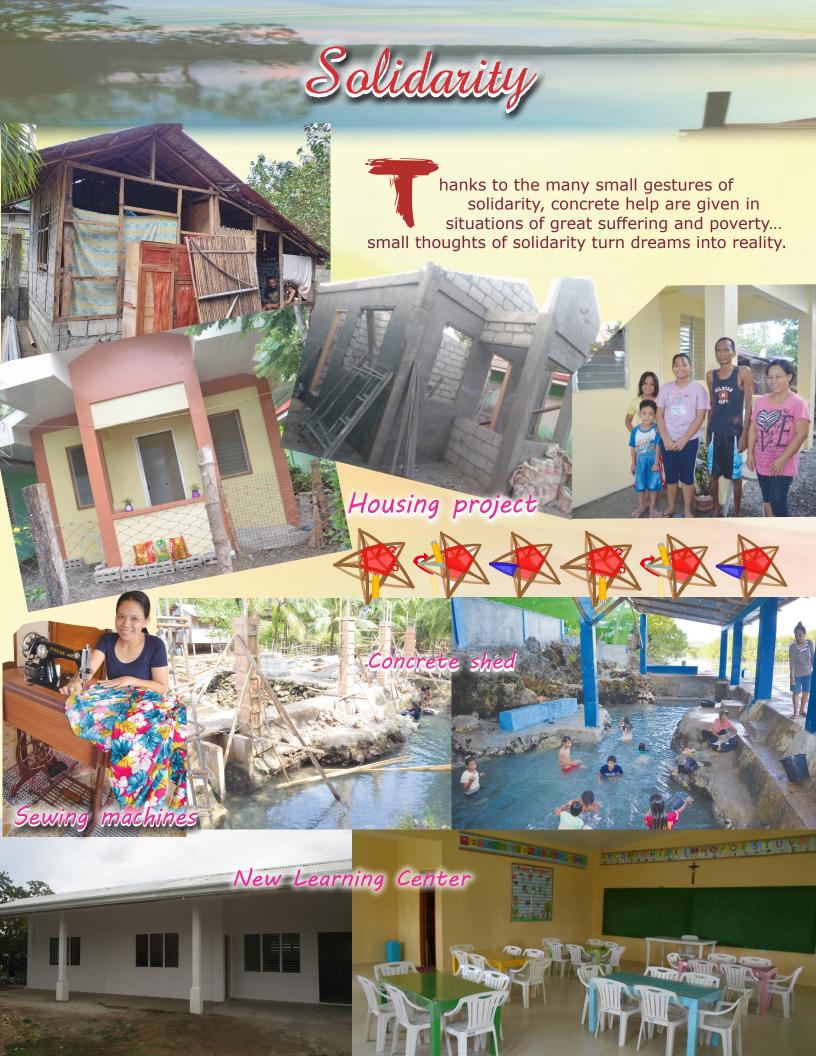


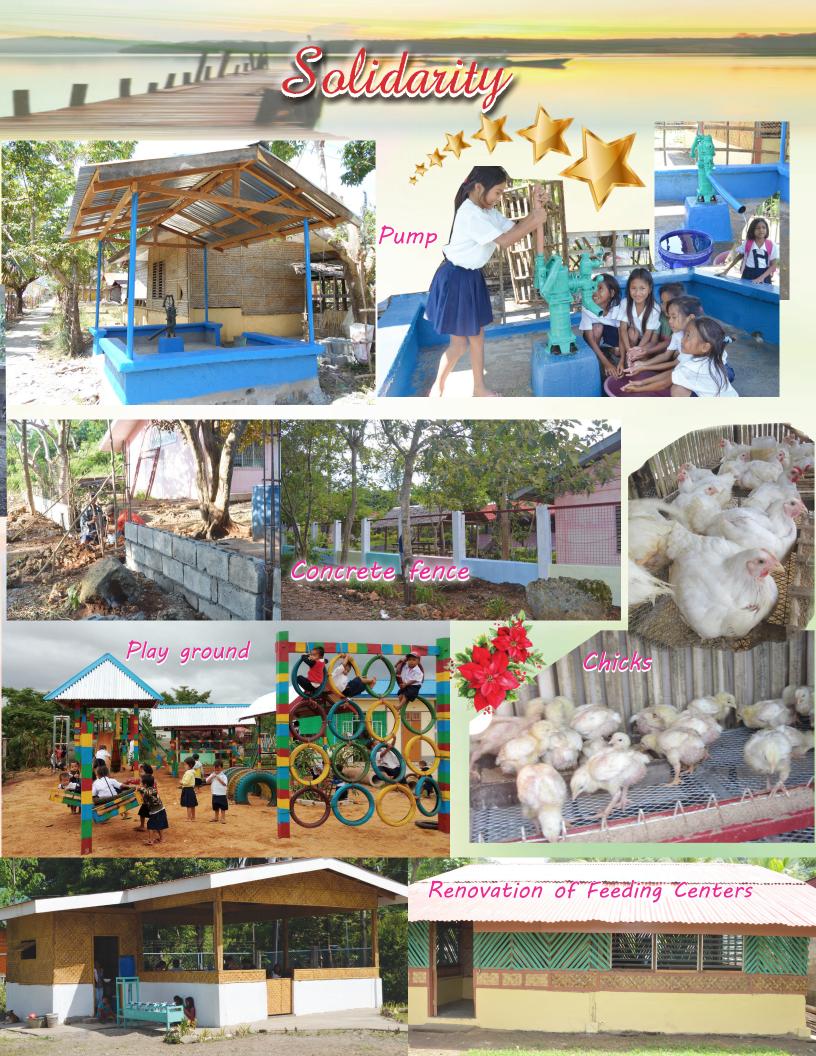
















Medical Assistance







nurses and medical personnel, we organize regular medical mission for the sick from

villages in remote areas or in Ilin Island.



Missionary Servants of the Bl





MISSIONARY SERVANTS OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

25 Jaime St., Carmel 1 Subd., Bahay Toro, Project 6, Quezon City Tel No.: (02) 453-8900

Mabini Ext., San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, Tel No.: (043) 491-5542 #158, 8th Street, Naung Yah (A), Loikaw, Kayah State, Myanmar Tel No.: (0095) 83- 22-22804

