

ANCELLE MISSIONARIE DEL SANTISSIMO SACRAMENTO

On the Road to Emmaus

Two disciples were on the road to Emmaus. They were talking about all that had happened in Jerusalem. They were disillusioned and confused. They had hoped that Jesus was the promised Messiah who would free Israel, but He'd died while they remained shackled. And then, there were stories circulating that He was seen alive. This had brought them confusion rather than light and hope. Perhaps, it was because they were afraid to hope and be hurt again, rendered cynical by life's cruel jokes and hard blows.

But all was not lost, for there came Jesus, who walked with them, gently coaxed them to share their disillusionment and confusion with Him, and wisely reminded them of things He taught and said and the things they have so long ago believed. And then, when they had decided to invite the "Stranger" to dine and rest with them at the road's bend, their simple gesture of trust and friendship was rewarded with joy and an astounding discovery that Jesus indeed had risen and was with them on their journey.

With hopes regained, they set in haste to Jerusalem, mindless of the night and the fatigue of the journey they had just made, driven by the urgency and joy to share the Good News with their fellow disciples. From being disillusioned and dejected admirers of Jesus, they have become zealous missionary disciples, bearers of joy and hope to others.

The story of the encounter between the two disciples and the "Stranger" on the road to Emmaus parallels many a story of Christ's disciples. Along the Road of life, we have crossed paths with Jesus in the guise of a stranger, who helped change our warped perspectives in life, enlightened us and helped us recover hope and strength to go on, and helped us become true Christian disciples and missionaries. The journey, though, would not be fruitful and meaningful if we would not risk taking the journey along with others, engaging with them in a dialogue about life and faith, disclosing ourselves, and listening to them, who, like us, are in a lifelong struggle to find out the right path to the fullness of life in God.

And so, this Christmas, as we celebrate that faithful and intimate encounter between God in the flesh and humanity, we share with you some stories of the disciples whose encounter with Jesus on the proverbial Road to Emmaus led them to the arduous yet noble path of holiness. We also share our experiences, insights, and reflections on our "synodal" journey, believing that in sharing them, we, in a way, have walked the path with you.



In 2021, the Church began the synodal process, which will culminate in the Synod of Bishops in October 2023. This synodal process does not only invite all the baptized to participate actively in the life and growth of the Church. It also underscores the very nature of the Church as the People of God who are called to communion with Him. For this reason, this year, we decided to present a simple catechesis on the nature of the Church, Her hierarchical structure, and synodality.

The Nature of the Church

The Church understands itself as the People of God: a community of people who lives among peoples and cultures.

The Church is one big WE.

- In the Church, all the faithful constitute a single people of God: the Pope and the Bishops, the Priests, Laypeople, consecrated men and women.
- They form a group in which there is equality of rights and duties.
 - 2 Groups of the faithful
- CLERGY all sacred ministers (bishops, priests, deacons) who have received the Holy Orders
- LAITY everyone else, including consecrated men and women



Pastors and the other faithful are bound to each other by mutual need and complementarity.

how does one become a member of God's People?

One becomes a member by baptism and by living according to the teachings of Jesus and his Church. It goes beyond any nation, continent, language or race.

"To be the People of God means to be missionary disciples who communicate to others the gifts they received."

The Church, however, is also a visible organization with a well-established hierarchy, with various members holding specific roles and functions. The hierarchical system allows the Church to easily delegate tasks, handle disagreements and operate in a smooth and efficient manner.



THE POPE

- the head of the Catholic Church, the supreme leader
- the Bishop of Rome and Peter's successor
- the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful.
- by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, and as pastor of the entire Church, he has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered.

THE CARDINALS

- considered the princes of the Church
- appointed by the Pope, chosen from the existing pool of bishops
- part of the College of Cardinals, a special advisory group that works with the Pope
- tasked to elect the Pope's successor
- Only cardinals under the age of 80 are eligible to vote.
- Cardinals can be identified by their red clothing and headwear.

ARCHBISHOPS/BISHOPS

- successors of the apostles.
- their mission: teach all peoples, preach the Gospel to every creature, so that all men may attain salvation through faith, baptism and the observance of the commandments (LG 24).



• The bishops, as vicars and legates of Christ, govern the particular Churches assigned to them by their counsels, exhortations and example, but over and above that also by the authority and sacred power which indeed they exercise exclusively for the spiritual development of their flock in truth and holiness, keeping in mind that he who is greater should become as the lesser, and he who is the leader as the servant (cf. Lk. 22:26-27).



PRIESTS

- Priests are united with the bishops in sacerdotal dignity and at the same time depend on them in the exercise of their pastoral functions.
- They are called to be the bishops' prudent co-workers.
- They form around their bishop the presbyterium which bears responsibility with him for the particular Church.
- They receive from the bishop the charge of a parish community or a determinate ecclesial office.

(CCC 1595)

Hierarchy of the Church continued...

DEACONS

- ordained specifically for the the ministry
- strengthened by sacramental grace, they are dedicated to the People of God, in conjunction with the bishop and priests, in the service of the liturgy, of the Gospel and of works of charity (LG 29).
- deacons may be transitional or permanent. The transitional deacons are those who would be ordained as priests after a period of time, while permanent deacons are those who will remain deacons.



The term "laity" refers to all the faithful except those in Holy Orders, that is, the faithful who by Baptism are incorporated into Christ, are placed in the People of God, and in their own way share the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ, and to the best of their ability carry on the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world (LG 31).

There do laypeople fit in the Church?

- The laypeople recognize the Pope as the highest authority or the Head of the Universal Church. The Pope is assisted by the Roman Curia in the fulfillment of His functions.
- The laypeople are also part of a Diocese, which is headed by a Bishop. As such, he/she is bound to obey not only the Pope but the bishop of his diocese.
- The lay people are also part of a parish, which is headed by the Parish Priest. The parish is under a particular diocese. So, laypeople owe their obedience and cooperation also to their parish priest.

The hierarchy of the Catholic Church has remained constant for hundreds of years. The system has built-in rules regarding who is eligible to change ranks and who shall choose a successor in the event of a vacancy at any level. This strong structure forms the backbone of the Church. The Church is a community of God's people, and priests, pastors and bishops, who have the care of souls, are at the service of the people of God.





What is a Synod?

A Synod is a gathering of the faithful in order to listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church and asking her to be and to do. This gathering can involve the faithful in different ways: pastors with lay people, bishops with the other ordained ministries, pope with bishops, etc.

Synods taken many forms in church history and they are currently practised in the Church at all levels: from parish Pastoral Council meetings to Diocesan Synods, from Provincial Councils to Plenary Councils, from the assembles to the Synod of bishops to ecumenical Councils in which the bishops from across the world gather in Rome with the Pope.

The word synod comes from the Greek synodos, which has the general meaning of "walking together". It offers an image of the Church as a pilgrim people, growing and developing on a journey of faith.

The Synodal Process

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It is a journey on which the whole Church will reflect on the theme: Towards a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission: those three pillars.

It has three phases that will end on October 2023.

This synod process seeks to "strengthen cooperation" in all areas of the Church's mission, to enhance communion, participation, and mission.

This process was conceived as an exercise in mutual listening, conducted at all levels of the Church and involving the entire People of God.

It is not about garnering opinions, not a survey, but a matter of listening to the Holy Spirit, to hear God's voice, to sense his presence, to witness his passage and his breath of life.

Synod on Synodality

That is synodality?

Synodality is a style, a culture, a way of thinking and being, that reflects the truth that the Church is led by the Holy

Spirit who enables everyone to offer their own contribution to the Church's life. "Synodality is the way of being the Church today according to the will of God, in a dynamic of discerning and listening together to the voice of the Holy Spirit."



Him of the Synod

- To foster a lived experience of discernment, participation, and co-responsibility, where a diversity of gifts is brought together for the Church's mission in the world.
- To provide an opportunity for the entire People of God to discern together how to move forward on the path towards being a more synodal Church in the long-term.

Cheme: "for a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission."

The Theme of Synod 2023

Participation:By His gracious will, God gathers us together as diverse peoples of one faith, through the covenant that He offers to his people. Together, we are inspired by listening to the Word of God, through the living Tradition of the Church, and grounded in the sensus fidei that we share. We all have a role to play in discerning and living out God's call for his people.

Communion: A call for the involvement of all who belong to the People of God to engage in the exercise of deep and respectful listening to one another. We are called together to pray, listen, analyze, dialogue, discern and offer advice on making pastoral decisions which correspond as closely as possible to God's will (ICT, Syn., 67-68).

Mission: The Church exists to evangelize. Our mission is to witness the love of God in the midst of the whole human family. Synodality is a path by which the Church can more fruitfully fulfill her mission of evangelization in the world, as a leaven at the service of the coming of God's kingdom.

Tho can participate?

WANSHANA!

All the baptized are called to take part in the Synodal Process. No one should be excluded from sharing their perspective and experiences, insofar as they want to help the Church on her synodal journey of seeking what is good and true. This is especially true of those who are most vulnerable or marginalized like women, the handicapped, refugees, migrants, the elderly, people who live in poverty, Catholics who rarely or never practice their faith, etc.



CATECHES15

Che Synodal Process

The Diocesan Phase October 2021 – April 2022 Parishes and dioceses create opportunities to encounter, experience, and live out the synodal journey together, thus discovering or developing synodal tools and pathways that are best suited for their local context, which will ultimately become the new style of the local Churches on the path of synodality.



The Continental Phase The initial Instrumentum Laboris will be the "working document" the seven for continental meetings. These international seven meetings will in turn produce seven Final Documents that will serve as the basis for the second Instrumentum Laboris, which will be used at the Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in October 2023.



The Assembly of the Synod of Bishops Bishops and auditors will gather with the Holy Father Pope Francis in the Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in Rome in October 2023 to speak and listen to one another on the basis of the Synodal Process that began at the local level. Its aim is to discern at a universal level the voice of the Holy Spirit who has been speaking throughout the entire Church.



Implementation Phase

The implementation phase will be crucial for walking forward together on the path of synodality. This implementation is intended to reach all the local Churches throughout the world, so that the Synodal Process has the entire People of God as its point of departure as well as its point of arrival (EC, 7).

Dispositions for Synod

The Synodal Process invites us to dream together and journey with one another Synods are a time to dream and "spend time with the future": We are encouraged to create a local process that inspires people, with no one excluded to create a vision of the future filled with the joy of the Gospel The following dispositions will help participants (CV):

- Humility in listening must correspond to courage in speaking
- Openness to dialogue, conversion, and change
- Inclusivity, to promote a participatory and co-responsible Church, capable of appreciating its own rich variety, embraces all those we often forget or ignore.

FEADURES...

Although already in heaven, the Saints walk with God's people by interceding on our behalf before God and by guiding us with the profound wisdom we can draw from their life and teachings.

God's Merciful Love Nov. H'Alang

"Oh! How I love Thee, Jesus! My soul aspires to Thee and yet, for one day, only this simple prayer I pray! Come reign within my heart, smile tenderly on me. Today, dear Lord, today, Today, dear Lord, today."

Each time I sing this melodious song, I ask myself what the secret to joy and the Kingdom of God is. St. Therese of the Child Jesus, one of the Patron Saints of our Congregation, gave me an answer. The secret is to become like a little child, capable of trust and selfsurrender to a loving Father - her path of Spiritual Childhood. St. Therese's path to God's Kingdom was paved not by tremendous and astonishing deeds but by little sacrifices offered with extraordinary love.

Marie-Françoise-Thérèse Martin was the youngest of nine children. She was raised in a deeply religious atmosphere under the loving guidance of her saintly parents, Louis Martin and Zelie Guerin. Her upbringing contributed to the early development of her piety. At age 15, she pleaded with Pope Leo XIII to allow her to join the Carmelite Order at Lisieux after



being refused admission a year earlier. She was later given permission and became a Carmelite nun like her two elder sisters. She died at the age of 24 due to tuberculosis, but her short life was well-lived.

St. Therese learned deeply what Jesus told his disciples: "Amen, I say to you, unless you convert and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven" (Mt. 18:2). She desired to be a child in spirit, having childlike and perfect trust in her most loving Father. She formed the novices entrusted to her in the virtues of religious life and shared with them her way of spiritual childhood. When asked by her superior what she would like to teach souls after her death, she replied: "I want to teach them the little means which have proved so perfectly successful for myself. I want to tell them that there is only one thing for us to do here below: to throw at Jesus' feet the flowers of little sacrifices, to win Him through our caresses. That is how I have taken hold of Him, and that is why I shall get such a good welcome."

St. Therese remains true to her words because until now, she continues to impart her timeless spiritual wisdom through her letters and the autobiography she wrote in obedience to her superiors. In a world where greatness is sought-after, the path she proposes is paradoxical. For her, the path to happiness is not fame and wealth but a childlike spirit that revels in the little things one can do for one's Beloved. She wasted not a single opportunity to show her love for Christ - be it picking up trash, bearing patiently with a co-sister who annoyed her, or bearing her physical pain and spiritual suffering with grace. St. Therese teaches us that the meaning of life is not in personal comfort and boundless freedom but in loving service to God and in helping others climb the stairs to heaven so that they, too, may find welcome in God's loving and open arms.

St. Francis Xavier: A Man of Dialogue and Encounter Nov. Van



FEATURES...

"If we go out to encounter other people, other cultures, other religions, we grow, and we begin that beautiful adventure called dialogue." ~ Pope Francis

The saint that comes to mind as I read this message is St. Francis Xavier, the Apostle to the East Indies, the saint who spent much of his life on that wonderful adventure that is dialogue. He was born on April 7, 1506, to an influential noble family in Navarre, Spain. As a student in a university in Paris, he had surely thrived in the free exchange of culture and ideas. When at last he decided to join St. Ignatius of Loyola's Companions of Jesus, his gift for dialogue greatly helped him bring God's good news to peoples of different cultures.

He had traveled through Asia and encountered their rich cultural heritage. It is said that he covered over 63,000 kilometers, an amazing feat considering the perils and hardships of traveling during his time. He preached in India from 1541-1545, in Moluccan Islands from 1545-1549, and then in Japan from 1549-1552. In these countries, he baptized many people and patiently taught them the faith. A European, and thus, of a very different culture and upbringing, St. Francis Xavier patiently listened to those he met. He tried to learn their language and studied their culture.

While in Japan, St. Francis Xavier tried to learn Japanese social mores and customs. When he learned that the emperor was easily repulsed by someone dressed in rags, he decided to wear the most elegant fashionable clothes and gave him gifts, winning his friendship and opening the door to the preaching of the Gospel in Japan. To communicate more effectively to the locals of Malacca, he studied Portuguese and Tamil language. Later, he was able to translate the basic prayers and the Ten Commandments into their language. He was especially keen on the way the people of different cultures worship God.

From these anecdotes, we can see that St. Francis Xavier was really a man of dialogue and encounter. His mission bore much fruit because of his openness to other people and capacity to enter into a dialogue of life and culture with them.

Being part of an international community formed by Italian, Filipinos, Vietnamese, Myanmar, and Indonesians, his example inspires me more in my commitment to cultivate dialogue and to understand and appreciate different cultures. It is beautiful to live in a culturally diverse community and yet, it is also challenging. Our differences sometimes cause misunderstanding and conflict. However, we cannot live together or do our mission properly without dialogue. Dialogue helps us discern how to carry out our apostolic works fruitfully and improve the quality of our community life. By this, we can give a more convincing witness to the Gospel.

May St. Francis Xavier continue to inspire our Church to foster the culture of dialogue and open Her ears to the voices of peoples from various cultures.



IUnless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if dies, it yields a rich harvest" (Jn 12:24).

Is this not what Jesus had told his disciples and exemplified in His life? By dying on the Cross, Christ gave us eternal life. His apostles followed His way. They risked their lives and eventually died to spread the Gospel.

The Church does not lack witnesses to this Christian way of loving. In the twentieth century, we have St. Gianna Beretta Molla, an Italian married woman who chose to die to give her child a chance to live. Gianna was born in Magenta, Italy, on October 4, 1922. As a young girl, she openly accepted her faith and lived her faith in a very concrete and generous way. At 12 years old, she became a member of the Catholic Action, a movement that helps Catholic lay people live an intense spiritual life. She also joined the St. Vincent de Paul Society, a group of Catholic lay faithful dedicated to charitable works.

St. Gianna became a medical doctor specializing in pediatric medicine. She considered her profession a vocation and a mission. Although she originally planned to be a missionary in Brazil, she later embraced the vocation to married life. She got married to Pietro Molla in 1955 and wholly dedicated herself to "forming a truly Christian family." By 1959, the couple had three children already. Her three pregnancies were extremely difficult, but despite her pain, she continued to surrender her life to God, trusting in His providence. She juggled motherhood, family life, and her mission as a doctor with grace. Like her own parents, she paid particular attention to the spiritual development of her kids.

In 1961, Gianna, who was almost two months pregnant with her fourth child, was found with a tumor in her uterus. The doctors gave her three choices: to abort the child, to have her uterus removed, which would prevent further pregnancy and kill the child, or to have her tumor removed at the risk of further complications. She was strongly advised to undergo an abortion, but she pleaded with her surgeons to choose the child's life over her own. In this challenging moment of her life, she sought comfort in her prayers and her living faith.

A few days before giving birth, Gianna prayed to the Lord to spare her child from pain. She made her wishes very clear to her family, "If you must decide between the child and me, do not hesitate. Choose the child. I insist on it. Save the baby." The baby was successfully delivered, but Gianna's condition immediately deteriorated. She died just a week after the baby was born.

St. Gianna truly embodied the Gospel teachings. Like Jesus Christ, she chose her own death so that her child may live. With this, she also teaches us the real meaning of love. "Love and sacrifice are closely linked, like the sun and the light. We cannot love without suffering, and we cannot suffer without love," she once said. Loving Christ, loving humanity, loving our family, true loving involves sacrifice and death to oneself. St. Gianna Beretta Molla is now honored in the Church as the patron saint of mothers, physicians, and preborn children.



Missionary Servants of the Blessed Sacrament - Asia 11



Jn the catechism class I attended as a young girl, my teacher told us the story of Vietnam's protomartyr, Blessed Andrew Phu Yen. Blessed Andrew was born in 1624, the youngest child of a poor family in a small coastal hamlet in the province of Phu Yen. In 1641, he was baptized together with his widowed mother and siblings by the well-known French Jesuit missionary, Alexandre de Rhodes (also known in Vietnam as Father Dac Lo).

EATURES...

One year after his baptism, Blessed Andrew joined a group of catechists founded by Father Dac Lo. He loved God and wanted to serve Christ wholeheartedly that he vowed to spend his whole life transmitting the gospel to other people. He was filled with piety and an intense desire for everyone to know the doctrine and live it. He did all he could to bring people to God, preaching, teaching the converts, cleaning, and decorating the church so that people would be drawn to it and be led to love and admire the Lord.

As time passed, the catechist's group achieved remarkable success in evangelization. This gave rise to jealousy and tension within the court of Lord Nguyen, as well as in Quang Nam (where the group's main center of missionary activity was located). Later, Blessed Andrew's fellow catechist was sentenced to death. However, on the day they went to arrest him, only Blessed Andrew was home. And so, he volunteered to take the place of Ignatius.

Before the court of the governor of Quang Nam province, Andrew made an extraordinary profession of faith. Without flinching for a moment, he said: "I wish I had a thousand lives to give everything to God to repay Him". With conviction, Andrew awaited death calmly, full of joy, only asking everyone to pray for him, so that he could "...keep his word with Jesus until the end of his life". The words he repeated as he advanced on the path of martyrdom were: "Let us return love for love to our God, let us return life for life."

Blessed Andrew Phu Yen had no other desire but God himself, to love and follow Him even at the cost of his life. He loved because he was first loved. His life inspires me to do everything with love, a love which desires only the good of others and considers other's happiness more important than my own. Love has a price. For Jesus, it was the Cross. Such love becomes renunciation, willingly becoming a gift like Jesus himself, who regarded his followers as friends, for whom He willingly laid down His life.

The world today yearns for true love. As a Christian, I

must be a witness to that love. I do not have the opportunity to die for others like Blessed Andrew did, but I always have many opportunities to live for my sisters in the community and for others. To love others is to die to myself: to die through silent daily sacrifices. Blessed Andrew also reminds each of us to live life with meaning, the meaning that we receive through the deep and enduring fidelity of God. Let us be faithful to God until death. Let nothing quench the love of Jesus Christ in our hearts.



St. Maria Goretti: A Pure and Forgiving Heart Nov. Isabella Hla Chaye Moe

Aria Goretti was born on October 16, 1890 to a poor family in Corinaldo, Italy. Her father died of malaria while she was nine. Her family later left their home to work on another farm with Giovanni Serenelli and his son Alessandro.

FEAFURES...

While her mother worked on the farm, she took care of her little sister at home and did the household chores. At an early age, Maria experienced hardships, but she always did her best. One afternoon in July 1902, Maria sat quietly mending a shirt on the front steps of her home. Alessandro arrived from the farm and commanded her to get inside the house. Finding his voice strange, she refused to obey him. So, Alessandro grabbed and pulled her into the bedroom. "No, God does not wish it. It is a sin. You would go to hell for it." She told Alessandro who had wanted to rape her. Alessandro choked her, and when she still refused, he stabbed her 14 times. Before she painfully breathed her last, Maria told her mother and the priest: "For the love of Jesus, I forgive Alessandro, and I want him to be with me one day in heaven!"

Maria Goretti's short yet meaningful life is a shining example of purity and forgiveness. Her purity teaches me to say "No" to what draws me away from loving Jesus and hinders me from becoming His effective instrument. Her unconditional forgiveness for her attacker enlightens me as I grapple with the suffering of many innocent people in my country Myanmar. How painful to see the many victims of brutal killings and grave injustices. St. Maria Goretti's example encourages me to learn to forgive those who have done us wrong. It is very hard to forgive from the depths of my heart, especially as I think of the many innocent people who suffer due to some people's greed for power. For quite some time, I have been pondering these questions. How can I forgive those who commit these evil deeds? And then, I ask myself: "What would happen if I refuse to forgive?" I only live once. Am I



going to hold my angry and unforgiving thoughts in my heart till the end of my life?

In my prayer, I am reminded of these words of Pope Francis, "How much suffering, how many lacerations, how many wars could be avoided, if forgiveness and mercy were to become the style of our life." Forgiveness must begin with me. Where there is forgiveness, there is true peace. Jesus also tells us not only to forgive seven times but seventy-seven times. All of us, at one point or another, may have been hurt and wounded by someone. Some inflict deep wounds, while others merely scratch the surface. Nevertheless, we are invited to imitate Jesus who teaches us to forgive just as St. Maria Goretti had also done. May her example inspire us to forgive without conditions. And I pray that through our witness of mercy and forgiveness, those who contradict God's will and cause war may be completely transformed.





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Apostolate



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Apostolate



"Dear young friends, never be afraid to go out of yourselves and begin the journey." ~ Pope Francis

The Little Way to Jesus Asp. Winda

A t 19 years old, I set out on a journey away from my homeland, a land so dear and familiar. I left Indonesia, my family, and friends and entered the convent of the Missionary Servants of the Blessed Sacrament in the Philippines. As an aspirant, I devote time to studying the English language, the history of the Congregation and our Mother Foundress, the Scriptures, Catechism, and the life of the saints. At the same time, I am trying to acquire the lifestyle and values of my religious community.

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In my three years of aspirancy, I learned many things. One that impressed me most is the little way of St. Therese of the Child Jesus. Her little way refers to one's commitment to do ordinary things with extraordinary love. We have time for prayer, work, study, and recreation in the convent. Our life's routine is simple and monotonous to some, but there is greatness in these little, ordinary things, as St. Therese teaches me. Cleaning, serving the community by cooking, and volunteering to help in times of need – doing these menial tasks helps us acquire the values of discipline, attentiveness and care for others, and a sense of responsibility. Whenever I fail to live these values, the Sisters in the community remind me of the little way – to do even ordinary things with great love. Gradually, I learned to find happiness in being able to help others in need and doing simple services in the community like serving as a choir, lector, or acolyte, praying daily the rosary for specific intentions, and spending an hour adoration and joining the community prayer. I also learned to offer our daily work to those in need, especially the missionaries, the victims of war and injustices, and the sick. I feel God's presence in the community. I feel and have become more convinced that I am loved and belong to a community that loves me.

My courage to risk and set out on this journey was rewarded abundantly. I found a community so beautiful because of its diversity, a community with whom I can share my ideas and opinions, with whom I can love and serve, and with whom I journey. However, I cannot deny that I also experience difficulties dealing with our differences, but St. Therese always inspires me to see everything and every circumstance in my life as opportunities to love.

As I look back at the journey I have already made, I cannot help but feel blessed and thankful to God for his love and the gift of St. Therese, who has shown me the little way to Jesus.

SHARING

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Community, Synodality පි Mission Post. Jue Jue

Does living in a convent feel like being in prison?" a classmate once asked me. I just smiled at her and said:
"I would like you to live with us even for just one day. I am sure you will find joy there." I have spent more than five years in the religious community, but I have never felt imprisoned. It is not a prison but a beautiful place to live in. I knew it then as an aspirant, and I am just more convinced of it now.

As a postulant, we undergo a process that helps us know more about ourselves in the light of our personal stories and God's vision of the human beings He has created. We attend modules or seminars that help us recognize the presence of God in our life and in our experiences. As I came to know more about myself, I also learned to appreciate more the value of every human being. Everyone is important and loved. No one deserves to be left behind.

The community is a place where we can share freely and listen to each other's stories. Here, I learned to listen, understand more, and appreciate my co-postulants and the other members of the community. Our exchange of stories, insights and reflections on our journey created a bond that help us to face together the good times and the bad. In times of sadness, we find encouragement from one another. When we commit mistakes and fail, we help each other set things right and try again. In triumphs and joys, there is a community that rejoices with us. The community is a vessel of many gifts – the gift of realizations, the gift of learning, the gift of listening, the gift of sharing, the gift of a grateful heart, the gift of a generous heart, the gift of a caring and loving heart.

In my community, I catch a glimpse of the synodal Church described by Pope Francis – the people of God walking forward together, listening to the Holy Spirit and the word of God, participating in the Church, in the communion that Christ establishes between us. Promoting synodality and communion, as we know, is not an easy task. It is a life-long mission that demands daily commitment. As our 12th General Chapter Delegates said: "Community is the first missionary space, place, and laboratory where we experience the Kingdom of heaven and the Risen One."

The building of God's Kingdom begins here, in my community. We participate in this mission by cultivating the attitudes of listening and mutual respect. This task is not only for religious communities but also for every Christian family and Christian community. We are called to listen to one another to hear God's call, to hear what He wants us to do for the Holy Spirit works in everyone. The Spirit speaks to us through other people. He journeys with us as we walk together as children of God on the way home to the Father.

A Reflection on my Apostolic Exposure Nov. Martha



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s a second-year novice, I am given an opportunity to experience the life of apostolate in our community in Mindoro. When I arrived at the community, the school had not started yet. So, I made myself available to serve the community whenever possible. Once, I accompanied one of our sisters to visit her family. I met her generous and loving family. There, as I was picking some vegetables on their farm, I felt a sense of gratitude for the gift of Providence. This renewed realization of God's Providence is significant to me mainly because I have my family and countrymen in Myanmar at the back of my mind. My country is currently embattled by civil war. Many of our brothers and sisters have fled their homes and gone to the forest or refugee camps, leaving their security and most of their belongings behind and entrusting themselves entirely to Divine Providence. Many children stopped going to school, and many of our young people have

laid down their life for the country's peace and freedom. There are times I feel like losing hope, but time and time again, I am reminded of God's loving Providence. In time, justice and truth would also prevail. And so, I keep praying and hoping that God will do marvelous things for our country.

Another thing I learned from my exposure is to be welcoming. When the father of my co-sister visited the convent to bring some vegetables, none of our sisters were around. I do not understand Tagalog, and he was not used to speaking English, so we communicated through gestures. Despite the language barrier, we had a good and funny conversation. We were happy that we understood each other. It was my first time entertaining visitors and talking with someone to whom I was not particularly close.

On August 30, classes at Mother Caterina School resumed. Each community member has a task to fulfill - teaching, doing the laundry, cooking, maintaining the house, and serving the canteen. Our day usually begins with the lauds and Eucharistic celebration. Mealtime is always fun as we talk about our day. I was assigned to help in the canteen, a task that requires attentiveness, communication skills, effectiveness, and efficiency. I enjoy this simple task. I learned so much and experienced joy and love. Hearing the greetings of the students makes me happy. Every time I bring them their snacks, I always keep in mind that I am doing it for them and those children who have no chance to go to school. Sometimes, I get to have fun with the kids, and from them, I learned how to live more simply, enjoying simple things. I spend some time with them even though it is challenging because I cannot speak Tagalog. So, I asked the help of my companions in the canteen to teach me simple Tagalog words that are handy in everyday conversations. Each day, I commit to learning a new Tagalog word.





This apostolic exposure is a blessing from God. I have had many good experiences. The difficulties and challenges I met along the way are nothing compared to the good I gained from these experiences. This helped me grow more in loving the Congregation and the mission. My experiences have proven that one does not need to be a great person to become a missionary. It is enough to be able to pray, love, sacrifice, and offer everything for the Kingdom of God. I will continue to treasure these experiences as I go forward in my journey toward becoming a true Missionary Servant of the Blessed Sacrament. In a special way, I thank Him for my religious family for nurturing my faith and vocation. I am thankful to Madre Giusy, our Superior General, and Sr. Rosanna, my formator, for giving me this opportunity to experience the apostolate of the Congregation. I am thankful to our community members in Mindoro for welcoming me and helping me to serve with and for love.

An Experience of Synodality in the Local Church of Indonesia Sr. Katharina Mogi, MSBS

In the month of November 2021, Sr. Imelda and I had the opportunity to attend the synodal meetings together with some parishioners in the diocese of Maumere. Five people represented our parish at that time. It was my first time participating in this kind of gathering. In line with the theme of the synod for a synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission, our meeting was focused on the theme "Dialogue between the Church and the Society". We focused on how cultural practices and values shape or affect the Church. For example: In our culture, we tend to prioritize the cultural elements of a celebration rather than concentrate on

the meaning of the rituals during Mass, marriage, funeral mass, and other liturgical celebrations. In this meeting, the centrality of faith in our salvation has been emphasized. Another topic we discussed was the Dialogue with Politics, on the necessity of promoting mutual collaboration and participation between the Church and Politics and of working together for justice, peace, and unity.

In the first meeting, my co-sister and I were tasked to facilitate the sharing and discussion. Working with the parishioners was very enriching.



The representatives of the different sectors in the Church actively participated in the synodal process, exchanging their ideas, opinions, and experiences. As a young religious sister, the experience nurtured my hope and dream to see people gathered together, offering their time for the Church and contributing in whichever way they could so as to strengthen our witness as a Church in today's world, to bring back people who have isolated themselves from the Church, to give voice to the voiceless and inspire other people to deepen their relationship with God.

Co-Journeyers in the Church Sr. Chloue Ann I. Encarguez, MSBS

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grew up in a village where the Holy Mass is celebrated only once a month. We only had a Sunday celebration of the Liturgy of the Word with our lay Minister. I learned the basic prayers from my mother and the Catholic faith from our catechist, who also led us to reflect on the Biblical Readings. I am grateful for the seeds they had sown in me, the seeds of faith that surely brought me to where I am now.

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I am currently assigned in Looc, Occidental Mindoro, where we have just opened a new community. Here, mainly our mission is to help in the Parish ministry. The parish is, in many ways, similar to the parish I grew up in. It covers several barangay chapels located in separate islands. In this parish, I am involved in the formation of catechists, in catechizing the youth and children every Saturday, giving formation on the importance of the Eucharist in our Catholic faith, and encouraging children to participate in the Holy Childhood Association and the propagation of the faith. On Wednesdays and Fridays, I join the youth in praying the novena and the Holy Rosary. I am also involved with young people and children, encouraging them to share their talent and time to the Church, preparing children to receive the Eucharist, and giving formation to the parents of those to be baptized and to those who will be confirmed. I also teach in the preparatory and remedial school of the parish.

All these apostolic works would not be possible and would not bear fruit without the help of the lay

faithful here and the support of our parish priest. Our parish priest, Fr. Tonton Tria, SVD, always supports these works and initiatives. He makes his suggestions, plans, and insights known to his parishioners. The Parishioners listen and participate. Many offer their time and service to the parish ministries and actively participate in the formation given to them. Each barangay has a volunteer catechist who generously offers time and resources to pass on the Catholic Faith to the children in school or their respective chapels. They help in preparing children for baptism and First Communion. They also assist in funeral masses or liturgy. The Lay Ministers preside over the celebration of the Liturgy of the Word, and the members of Mother Butler's Guild assist them. This parish is also blessed with the presence of the youth who share their talent and time in the parish's service. The children enthusiastically show their interest in learning about the Catholic Faith.

In his homilies, Fr. Tonton always addresses the parishioners as "Mga Kalakbay." Indeed, the parish community members are "magkakalakbay," or cojourneyers, journeying as a Church, living in communion, and participating in Her mission. But we all know that there is always room for growth. We need the help of the Holy Spirit to guide us, to make us open to His inspirations, make us capable of engaging in dialogue and keep aflame in us the zeal for the mission and the Church. The synod on synodality will culminate in 2023, but I hope the spirit of synodality will remain in our parish community.

I am grateful to my community and Congregation for this mission and for providing me with a good formation, for mutual prayers and assistance that enable me to contribute to this work. "The harvest is abundant, but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest" (Luke 10:2). There is still much work to be done, and the Church needs more laborers, more missionaries to fall in love with Jesus. Let us pray for more missionaries and religious to help the Church in Her Mission of making Jesus known to the ends of the world.



Listening & Missionary Apostolate Sr. Aye Aye Kyu, MSBS

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Since 2019, I have been assigned to our community in Myanmar. We have been doing our mission with some poor or orphaned girls here. The girls are staying in our Orphanage. They are provided with the basic necessities and supported in their schooling. We have been and continue to struggle and work hard to carry out this mission against all odds – the pandemic and the horrors of the continuing war.

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We walk with the poor despite our own poverty. In all these years, one of the things I realized is this. We would not have been able to move forward if we hadn't learned how to listen – to listen to God first of all, to one another, to ourselves, and to the people we serve. We would not have survived if we hadn't learned to sit down, plan, listen and work together as a community. We would not have done our mission if we hadn't taken the time to listen to the children, the elderly who stayed with us in the heat of the war, and the people who approached us in their moment of need.

As I listened to the different stories of struggles and suffering, I could hear Jesus telling me to pay attention to the suffering of His little ones. Some are too young to make sense of the suffering they experience and see around them. Some relate their experience in a funny way, but behind their smiles and innocent gazes, I could hear their cry for someone they can trust, someone who can love and guide them to the right path. It is in listening to them that we, MSBS Sisters in Myanmar, continue to find ways to educate and form them to be responsible persons with enough resources to traverse an uncertain future. It is not easy especially considering the situation of our country, but this is part of our mission as Christians and as Missionary Servants of the Blessed Sacrament.

In this challenging task, we are encouraged by the local Church that continues to support and entrust this apostolate to our Congregation. We are strengthened and guided by our Superiors, who continue to keep in touch with us, listen and discern the right step or decision with us. This is, for me, a vivid experience of the synodal Church, a Church that listens and walks with His people.

Humanity and the Community Sr. Aye Aye Mu, MSBS

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Gan a man live wholly independently from another? To many, it is a no-brainer question. "No man is an island." Isn't that what a wise proverb says? But why do we often rebel at the thought of belonging to a community and be obligated to live our lives in a way that would make living together enriching and at the very least, possible? To belong to a community, I believe, is part of God's design for humanity. Consecrated religious or not, we are bound to live in a community. In any vocation or state of life, profession, or work, we exist, work, and live with other people. The Bible, written a thousand years ago, attests to this fact as it narrates God's creation of the man and the woman. We were made for God and for one another. We are meant for communion with Him and with our brothers and sisters.

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Unfortunately, we often prefer to do the opposite of what God wants us to do. We value individualism and nurture divisions. We tend to guard our own concerns and interests and are inclined to self-gratification. We forget and disregard others in our quest for power, material wealth, and fame. In the end, we could become more and more oblivious to the suffering of our brothers and sisters and alienated from God who made us.

The religious formation has taught me this and the beautiful gift of community life. In a religious community, it does not only mean to stay under one roof but to journey through life together, building one another up and doing God's mission together. It is where others made me feel a sense of belonging and where I am called to make others feel they belong, too. Community life is a gift. Each one contributes to its growth with her presence, gifts, and talents. It is also not an easy life because of our differences, personalities, and backgrounds. However, we do not see these differences as an excuse for not being able to live together but rather as a challenge or opportunity to hone our ability to understand, respect, dialogue, listen, accept, and forgive one another.

Formation helps me see who I really am, the aspects that need improvement or change. It enables me through the help and guidance of the Community to become capable of transformation. However, this change and growth that each one in the community aims for and is responsible for are not the end. They are simply means to live our community life fruitfully. Our purpose, our mission, the journey we make together, are all directed toward God, who desires each of us to be a person of communion.

In one of the formation courses we attended, our speaker asked us what the most attractive element of religious life is. I would say that it is the community life. It is one of the reasons why I continue to live my consecration despite its challenges or demands.

SHARING



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mpty classrooms and corridors. Signages hanging the walls. on reminding all to put on their face masks and to maintain social distancing to prevent the spread of the virus. These are some things I've noticed as I set foot here in Mother Caterina School for my first assignment.

I am happy, and I feel so blessed with my new assignment. I know how important it is to educate children and youths, to guide and direct them in discovering

the world. As an educator, we shape the future of our nation, of the world, and the Church. We are tasked to help young people discover their potential and hone them, to find their dreams and reach for them. Most importantly, we play a crucial role in forming them as good citizens of the world and members of the Church. The school is not only a place where their intellect is nourished but also a nursery of human values, good morals, and spiritual growth.

In July this year, I had an opportunity to witness the Confirmation and First Holy Communion of some MCS pupils. It was such a well-prepared and meaningful celebration. I was happy to see how our sisters and staff worked together to make these celebrations memorable for the kids. After the celebration, many parents and pupils expressed their joy for having such a solemn encounter with Jesus in the Sacraments.

When classes at MCS officially began, I became part of the teaching staff. I never thought I would be a teacher. However, I am convinced that this is where God is calling me to serve Him. Although I already handled some classes online last year, face-to-face teaching is different. In online teaching, it is challenging to gauge how much pupils grasp the lessons. Then, there is the problem of poor and unstable internet connection and



an erratic and scant supply of electricity. They might have had all the knowledge at their fingertips, what with google and other social media apps, but the role of an educator and the importance of being a part of a larger community is irreplaceable. I felt the children and their parents' joy and excitement in returning to school after a long time of remaining at home, mostly in front of their mobile phones and computers.

In schools, parents find a reliable partner in supervising and guiding their kids. The teamwork among the teaching, the non-teaching staff, and the parents is crucial to the healthy development of the children. I remember hearing my teachers tell us that they are our second parents. As an educator now, I feel the weight of this responsibility and the immense possibility of effecting a change in society and our Church.

Educators can build up a person by showing appreciation for their learners' little or outstanding accomplishments. They can journey with them on the path to their goals and dreams. It is a task that does not end in classrooms or the school compound, but a task to be with the children as they go through life, not by hovering over them all the time but by instilling in them the values they need to reach their full potential.

Pope Francis says, "As a Church which "journeys

together" with men and women, sharing the travails of history, let us cherish the dream that a rediscovery of the inviolable dignity of peoples and the function of authority as service will also be able to help civil society to be built up in justice and fraternity, and thus bring about a more beautiful and humane world for coming generations." Reflecting on my experience and role as an educator and religious, I realized that we need to walk together with our learners and their parents in teaching. We walk with them by cultivating the seeds of charity, justice, and faith in them so they may truly be treasures of our Church and our world. Caring for these little ones is caring for the future of our Mother Church and our world today.



Listening as a Blessing Nov. Huong

"Humility in listening must correspond to courage in speaking," said Pope Francis. At the pre-synod meeting, he said to the young people, "If you say something I do not like, I have to listen even more because everyone has the right to be heard, just as everyone has the right to speak."

Listening is essential in community life. It enhances my communication skills and, more importantly, helps me accept others as a gift from God as I get to know others more. There are moments of sharing with my companions and formator where we clarify our issues, discern, and critique our cultural values and beliefs. We are called to engage in conversations and dialogue which is not superficial but instead sincere, honest, and straightforward. This exercise in communication and listening makes us more open to the newness of the Spirit and helps us heal our past wounds and grow as mature Christians.

It is also essential in cultivating our relationship with God. Our daily routine as novices includes prayer, meditation, contemplation, and adoration. These moments are spaces for dialogue with God, which purifies my mind and thoughts, and empowers me to live with others of different backgrounds, cultures, and histories. As I listen to Him, my relationship with Him becomes deeper.

As Jesus said in the Gospel of Luke (8:21), "my mother and brother are those who hear the word of God and act on it." Listening to God's words and living them is challenging. I need to live out His values of love, to be like Mother Mary, who listened and pondered God's word. Like Mother Mary, I am called to listen and act on God's words.



