



MISSIONS TODAY

Vol. 76, No. 3

Summer 2018

Seminary Reconstruction in Uganda

Marian Pilgrimage in Bangladesh

**White Fathers: Teaching Circular
Farming to Farmers**

**Senegal: An environmentally
conscious Easter**

The Society for the Propagation of the Faith



CONGREGATIO
PRO GENTIUM EVANGELIZATIONE

Prot. N. 4364/17

To the Eminent and Most Excellent Ordinaries

Vatican City State, 3 December 2017
Saint Francis Xavier

Dear Brothers in the Episcopacy,

In response to the personal invitation of the Holy Father in his letter dated 22 October 2017, I would like to share with you and with the Churches entrusted to your care some reflections and proposals regarding the celebration of the Extraordinary Missionary Month of October 2019.

At the heart of this initiative, which involves the Universal Church, will be prayer, testimonies, and reflections on the centrality of the *missio ad gentes* as a permanent state of being sent out for the first evangelization (Mt 28:19). The obligation of personal and communal conversion to Jesus Christ crucified, risen, and alive in the Church, will renew the fervor and the passion for giving witness to the Gospel of life and the joy of Easter, through both words and actions (Lk 24:46-49). The mission of the Church in those human, religious, and cultural contexts not yet permeated by the Gospel requires that the transmission of the faith bring about a personal way of life, a culture, and a way of living in communion that are forged by the joy of the Gospel and Christian values. The Christian faith manifests its authentic mission when it is completely dedicated to the salvation of the world. The witness of charity, commitment to justice and peace, and intercultural dialogue with Religious Traditions in mutual respect for human life and its dignity, especially that of the poorest of society, all serve to orient the mission of the Church around the proclamation of the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The *missio ad gentes*, identified in *Evangelii Gaudium* as the paradigm of the ordinary pastoral action of the Church (EG 15), represents that which Pope Francis asks us to place at the heart of the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Apostolic Letter *Maximum Illud* of his predecessor Pope Benedict XV (30 November 1919). In other words, we are “to place the mission of Jesus at the heart of the Church, making it the criterion for measuring the effectiveness of her structures, the results of her labors, the fruitfulness of her ministers and the joy they awaken. For without joy, we attract no one.”¹

The Holy Father indicated four dimensions,² or ways to prepare for and live out the Extraordinary Missionary Month of October 2019, in order to overcome divisions and opposing views between ordinary and missionary pastoral work, and between the challenges of evangelization in previously Christian areas that are now secularized and indifferent to religion and the *missio ad gentes* among cultures and religions to which the Gospel is still foreign (EG 14). These four dimensions are:

1. a personal encounter with Jesus Christ alive in His Church: Eucharist, Word of God, personal and communal prayer,
2. the witness of the Saints, the Missionary Martyrs, and the Confessors of the Faith, who are unique expressions of the Churches throughout the world,
3. biblical, catechetical, spiritual, and theological formation regarding the *missio ad gentes*,
4. missionary charity as a material support for the immense work of evangelization, especially the *missio ad gentes* and Christian formation in Churches that are most in need.

¹ POPE FRANCIS, *Meeting with the Executive Committee of CELAM*, Apostolic Nunciature in Bogotá, 7 September 2017.

² POPE FRANCIS, *Speech to the National Directors of the Pontifical Mission Societies*, gathered in General Assembly, Vatican City State, 3 June 2017.

In a way appropriate and suited to the Christians of the area, I suggest that each particular Church and each Episcopal Conference determine how to live out and be molded by these dimensions, so as to bring about a renewed conversion to the mission of Jesus. Additionally, I ask you to inform and invite, as active participants in this missionary initiative of the Holy Father, any local members of Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, as well as those of the associations and ecclesial movements present in your Dioceses.

In this time of remote preparation, I propose that each one of your particular Churches commits itself to prayerful reflection, engaging the local contemplative monastic and cloistered communities in this same spirit of prayer. In the midst of the world, these brothers and sisters of ours, thanks to the baptismal radicality of their contemplative vocation, are efficacious signs of the sonship of every man and woman of God. They live, in the ordinary, daily rhythm of their monasteries and communities, the essential elements of Christianity that represent the heart of the mission, the heart of every Gospel proclamation and witness. It is necessary to make reference to them, so that indeed all throughout the world may be transformed and conformed to the mission of Christ and of His Church, to the glory of God the Father. I am certain that every particular Church will be able to find the ways and times, properly suited to each unique context, to involve monks and cloistered Religious in this initiative of the Extraordinary Missionary Month of October 2019.

The Pontifical Missionary Societies (PMS) together with this Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples are directly involved in the work of preparing and implementing the Extraordinary Missionary Month. The national and diocesan PMS Directors, present and active in your particular Churches, are asked to work together with you so that this initiative of the Holy Father may indeed bring about renewed passion for the Gospel, greater zeal, and missionary fervor within our Churches. I have asked the International Secretariat of the Pontifical Missionary Union (PMU) to coordinate the preparation, formation, and implementation of the Extraordinary Missionary Month. Collaborative efforts are also underway with our Pontifical Urban University to organize moments of reflection and theological-missiological formation at the international and continental level.

Furthermore, in order to assist the creative action of particular Churches, some suggestions and indications will be offered by way of texts and reflections, the fruit of a wide consultation of Christians from throughout the whole world. In due time you will also be informed about the celebrations over which the Holy Father will preside, proposed as events of the Universal Church that will directly involve the Church in Rome.

Finally, I kindly ask you to identify particular examples from among the sons and daughters of your particular Churches who have witnessed to the mission, who are known for their Christian example and enjoy the recognition of holiness in your Christian communities. It would be most helpful if their biographies could be forwarded to the email address noted below. I would also be grateful if you could identify some members of your Churches who might be able to compose spiritual and missionary reflections based on Sacred Scripture. I kindly ask you to forward these and other suggestions and proposals to the International Secretariat of the PMU (october2019@ppoomm.va).

Attached you will find a copy of the Holy Father's Letter to me, dated this past October 22nd, as well as the text of his Speech given to the National Directors of the Pontifical Mission Societies on 3 June 2017.

During this season of Advent, we entrust these preparations to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of the Apostles, to St. Francis Xavier and St. Thérèse, and to Blessed Paolo Manna. I extend to you my heartfelt greetings, with hopes of abundant fruits of conversion to Christ for the benefit of the missionary work of the Church.

Fernando Cardinal Filoni
Prefect

National Director's Message

Mission Today Message Summer 2018



There is something totally awesome about summer! Life is in full swing. Vitality is abundant. This is the time to try something new. Sometimes we expect God to work miracles and solve all our problems, so we do nothing. We may fail to look carefully enough for God's presence in our everyday experience. We look for the Holy Spirit in a great mountaintop experience when we should be looking in the byways and highways, at street corners and bus stops. Those animated by God's Spirit listen intently thus, they look and they watch; and they say, "I can't do everything, but I must do something. What can I do, what will I do? Why am not disturbed as Jesus was, and how can I be more aware and thereby help change and transform the world?"

Pope Francis on October 2017, World Mission Sunday, noted the upcoming centenary of the apostolic letter *Maximum Illud*, with which Pope Benedict XV sought to give new impetus to the missionary task of proclaiming the Good News. The Holy Father sent a letter to Cardinal Fernando Filoni, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, noting "what Pope Benedict so greatly desired almost a century ago." In that light, Pope Francis called for an "Extraordinary Missionary Month to be celebrated in October 2019, with the aim of fostering an increase awareness of the *missio ad gentes* and taking up again with renewed fervor the missionary transformation of the Church's life and Pastoral activities." This initiative can enable us

the faithful to take to heart the proclamation of the Gospel and to help the communities grow in missionary and evangelizing zeal.

Pope Benedict XV recognized the need for a more evangelical approach to missionary work in the world, so that it would be purified of any colonial overtones said Pope Francis; and kept far from the nationalistic aims that has proved so disastrous. "The Church of God is universal; she is not alien to any people." He wrote strongly calling for the rejection of any form of particular interest, inasmuch as the proclamation and the love of Jesus, spread by holiness of one's life and good works, are the sole purpose of missionary activity. Pope Benedict XV laid specific emphasis on the mission *ad gentes*, employing the concepts and language of the time, in an effort to renew among the clergy, a sense of duty towards the missions, which responds to Jesus' command to "go into the whole world and proclaim the Good News to every creature." Adhering to this mandate is not an option for the church: in the words of the second Vatican council, it is her "essential task," for the church is missionary by nature.

To correspond to this missionary identity, Pope Francis wrote, citing the words of Vatican II, "it is necessary for the church, prompted by the Holy Spirit, to work the same path Christ walked: a path of poverty and obedience, of service and self – sacrifice."

This summer edition will engage your minds and hearts with the effect of your donations in the reconstruction of a Seminary building in Uganda, Missionary Childhood activities in Bangladesh, our veteran diocesan director Sister Catherine Paul in action and many interesting things you deserve to hear and read about.

Rev. Fr. Alexander Osei, C.S.Sp
National Director.

The Pope's Monthly Prayer Intentions:

JUNE 2018: Social Networks:

That social networks may work towards that inclusiveness which respects others for their differences.

JULY 2018: Priests and their Pastoral Ministry:

That priests, who experience fatigue and loneliness in their pastoral work, may find help and comfort in their intimacy with the Lord and in their friendship with their priest brothers.

AUGUST 2018: The Treasure of Families:

That any far-reaching decisions of economists and politicians may protect the family as one of the treasures of humanity.

In This Issue...

Vol.75, No. 3 Summer 2018

Pope Francis's Message to all Bishops re: World Mission Sunday	2
National Director's Message	4
Across the Globe	6
Senegal: Environmentally Conscious Easter	8
Special Report: Bangladesh – Honouring Our Lady	9
The Pontifical Association of the Holy Childhood in Canada: Bangladesh Projects Part 2	12
Malawi: White Fathers teach modern agricultural techniques to farmers	15
Propagation of the Faith National Conference 2018 Summary Report	16
Society of Saint Peter the Apostle: Seminary Building in Uganda	17
The Editor's Point of View	18
In Remembrance	19



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Across the Globe



VIETNAM: Vietnam Church to Mark Canonization of Martyrs

The Catholic Church in Vietnam is holding a jubilee year to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the canonization of 117 Vietnamese martyrs on June 19. Nov. 24 is the feast day of Vietnamese martyrs. St. Pope John Paul II canonized 117 Vietnam martyrs — 96 Vietnamese, 11 Spanish and 10 French — at St. Peter's square in Rome on June 19, 1988.

Archbishop Joseph Nguyen Chi Linh, president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Vietnam asked Catholics to "live out the spirit of martyrdom" in their daily lives to bear witness to God and the Good News. He encouraged them to visit the destitute, sick, disabled, prisoners and elderly people without relatives as ways to encounter Jesus. He also said they "should reduce unnecessary expenses to support people in need, donate to construction of religious and public works, and work for the common good." In the 18th and 19th centuries, Vietnam's feudal authorities massacred Catholics and Western missionaries, often accusing them of collaborating with the French, who were vying with other colonial powers for regional influence.

Intermittent periods of persecution occurred after the introduction of Christianity in the mid-16th century, but repression escalated after 1798 when the Nguyen Dynasty banned Catholicism. More than 130,000 Vietnamese Catholics died during these persecutions before the French conquered the country in 1886.

An edited version, taken from ucanews.com 05/04/2018.

INDONESIA: Newly Consecrated Church to Promote Religious Tolerance

Apostolic Nuncio to Indonesia Archbishop Piero Pioppo consecrated a new parish church on March 11 next to a mosque in Pontianak Archdiocese.

Many hope the presence of the church will promote religious tolerance among local people.

Three bishops and thousands of parishioners attended the consecration of Our Lady Queen of Peace Church.

In his homily, Archbishop Pioppo emphasized that Catholics must remain united in their faith but also respect other religious people. "My presence in Pontianak also gives the message and the spirit to always keep the peace," he said.

Karolin Margret Natasa, chairperson of the church building committee, said the location of the church, so close to Nursalim Mosque, one of the larger mosques in Pontianak, is a symbol of interfaith harmony.

"When we are at Mass, we can also hear the call to prayer from the mosque. And we accept this as something beautiful. This is proof that the spirit of togetherness in difference is well preserved in this area," she said.

This is an edited version of the original article by UCAN reporter, Ryan Dagur which appeared in ucanews.com 03/13/2018

TAIWAN - The Camillians in Asia: "The life of the Spirit walks in the mission"

Loudong — Father Luigi Galvani summarized the work of the Camillian order in Asia by stating that, "The Camillian missionaries in Asia today have the same joy and enthusiasm as (in) their first years of mission. They are engaged in teaching catechism, in pastoral work in the most remote areas, (and) in many charitable works such as kindergartens, hospitals, centers for the elderly and disabled; they are present in formation centers and in seminars for the preparation of future priests and missionaries of the Gospel". Father Galvani, Camillian missionary in Flores, Indonesia, was attending a conference of Camillian missionaries in Taiwan, where they reflected on the theme of: "Charisma of St. Camillus and mission".

The Camillian presence in Asia, which began in 1943 in China, has spread to ten other Asian countries. In Taiwan, the order runs the 700 bed St. Mary's Hospital, as well as a center for the mentally disabled with 230 beds, a new home for the elderly with 150 beds, a nursing school with more than three thousand students and a cultural center with hundreds of students.

In the Philippines, three small missionary hospitals have been established in three different islands. The order also runs four polyclinics, a nursing home for the elderly and disabled, a school with more than a thousand students as well as delivering pastoral care in two parishes and in some hospitals in big cities, like Manila, Davao and Baguio.

In Indonesia, the main focus is vocational promotion and the formation of young people. There are already two formation homes with about sixty young people who constitute the hopes for the future of the mission. "To these - he continues - two social centers in two different islands, Flores and West Timor will soon be added, for the reception and training of particularly needy young students".

This is an edited version, taken from the original report in Agenzia Fides, 04/10/2018.

PAKISTAN - "Every baptized person is a missionary: this is our vocation"

Sahiwal - Young, Pakistani Catholics emerged from a recent seminar by the Archdiocese of Karachi, with feelings of hope and satisfaction. They had gathered to reflect on the theme of the upcoming Papal Synod on Youth: "Youth, faith and vocational discernment".

More than 50 young delegates from various parishes, movements and associations of the Archdiocese of Karachi took part in the Seminar. Ashiknaz Khokhar, coordinator of a youth group, tells Agenzia Fides: "We are happy to hear that cardinals, bishops, priests, nuns and lay people are working to make the Synod of Bishops a truly participatory event that takes into consideration

the various areas of the world. We in Pakistan are full of hope". Sister Saima Arthur, a Dominican religious, stressed that "young people are called to discern their vocation: all are called to serve the Church, walking towards holiness", urging young people to "focus on the life of prayer to play an active role in the Church and in society". Sister Sumera Inayat then spoke about the challenges they face in everyday life and in society. The nun told Fides: "We want our young people to work for a better future for their families and for the Church: when our young people will be able to have a good education and a good job they can serve the Church in a better way".

Ayyaz Gulzar, coordinator of "Jesus Youth Pakistan", told Fides "The Pope urges young people to discern their vocation: this is our vocation: every baptized person is a missionary, and as missionaries we must proclaim our faith and bear witness to our Lord Jesus Christ". *This is an edited version of the original story which appeared in Agenzia Fides, 03/27/2018.*

TURKMENISTAN - The Catholic community on the way between new baptisms and catechumenate

Ashgabat - "Thousands of candles can be lit from a single candle. This inspires us: let us pray so that our candle does not blow out. We are a small Church, but we thank God because we have the opportunity to evangelize in this Central Asian country, announcing that the Risen Jesus Christ is the savior of humanity. The presence here offers us a unique opportunity to witness faith". This is what Fr. Andrzej Madej, Polish priest of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and Superior of the Missio sui iuris of Turkmenistan, told Agenzia Fides

F. Madej says: "During the celebration of the Resurrection of Christ, there were some new baptized and others who renewed this sacrament: many of them received it when they were a child, but over the years they had moved away from the Church. We propose(d) the catechumenate to them in order to understand what baptism means and what (belief) means. In this way we help many people to return to the Church and be a living member of the mystical body of Jesus".

In Turkmenistan, which has 5 million inhabitants and is 90% Muslims, the Catholic Church was reborn with the Missio sui iuris established by John Paul II in 1997. For thirteen years, the presence of the Oblates was admitted only as a representative of the Vatican Embassy: at the beginning we met in private houses and the Mass was celebrated in the diplomatic territory of the Apostolic Nunciature of Ashgabat. In 2010 the Turkmen government officially recognized the Catholic presence. The Turkmen Catholic community, consisting of about two hundred faithful, meets in the chapel of the Transfiguration of the Lord, in the capital Ashgabat, and is led by two Oblate priests of Mary Immaculate. *An edited version, taken from Agenzia Fides, 05/03/2018.*

Use Scarves Instead of Palm Branches, Dakar Archbishop tells Catholics

Raising worshippers’ awareness of threats to the ecology, in accordance with Pope Francis’ encyclical Laudato si’

By Charles Senghor
Dakar, Senegal

March 27, 2018

Dear Readers: While not technically a mission story, I thought it may be of interest to many of you who have followed Pope Francis’s work on the environment, especially “Laudato si”

This is an edited version of the original article which appeared in, “La Croix International” (<https://international.la-croix.com/news>)

In the interests of protecting the environment, the Archbishop of Dakar has asked Catholics in his archdiocese to use scarves instead of palm branches for the Palm Sunday Procession and the Lord’s Passion.

“As we begin Holy Week, we don’t need to contribute to the decimation of palm trees, nor to aggravate the worrying desertification of our environment,” Archbishop Benjamin Ndiaye said on March 18.

In a country threatened by desertification, Archbishop Ndiaye intends the church to be a shield of protection for the life of plants. It is simply a matter of replacing the traditional palm branches with scarves to acclaim Jesus Christ, as the crowds in Jerusalem did (Jn 12:12-16).

By means of this change, the archbishop is hoping to raise worshippers’ awareness of threats to the ecology, in accordance with the Christian doctrine conveyed in Pope Francis’ 2015 encyclical Laudato si’ on the protection of our “common home.”



Archbishop Ndiaye Photo courtesy Freedom Radio Gambia

The archbishop appealed to priests and parish administrators, to leaders of Catholic action movements, to all worshippers and all people of goodwill to calmly “raise awareness” of this issue, and to also accept this change, “which does not undermine liturgical doctrine.” According to the archbishop, the key is to celebrate Palm Sunday “without further degrading an already fragile ecosystem.”

The archbishop’s idea is not a novel one in his archdiocese. In some parishes, the use of scarves instead of palm branches has been in place for almost ten years.

“We’ve been using scarves instead of palm branches for about seven years in the Parish of Mary Immaculate in Parcelles Assainies,” said Charles Gaïky Diène.

Young members of this parish used to go to Mboro to gather palm branches that they would sell for between 200 to 300 CFA francs (about 0.30 to 0.45). Now, Diène and other parishioners are proud to be “fighting” to protect the natural environment.

The same thing has been happening in the parish of Saint-Jean Bosco in La Foire, where scarves have also been used for more than three years.

However, in almost all the other parishes in Dakar, the archbishop’s message hasn’t hit home. This is true of the Parish of Notre-Dame-des-Anges in Ouakam. Here, scouts sell palm branches to be used for the commemoration of Christ’s entry into Jerusalem.

“We think that using scarves is a great idea,” said Julie Diatta, one of the parishioners, “but the archbishop could have spread the message earlier and more widely.”

In the Parish of Saint-Pierre-de-Baobab in Karack, both scarves and palm branches were used to mark the beginning of Holy Week.

“People who wanted to use palm branches had already gathered them,” said Pierre Bassène, a member of the parish. He believes that the archbishop’s directive will be better followed next year.

“As the archbishop said, the environment suffers as a result of the cutting of palm branches every year. And, unfortunately, there is no culture of re-forestation or re-planting in Senegal.”



Dakar Cathedral Photo by Lamine Niang, Wikimedia.org [cc-sa-by-3.0]

Special Report: BANGLADESH

2018 to be the “Year of the Mission” in Chittagong

Chittagong - The Catholic community of Chittagong Archdiocese in Southeast Bangladesh, will live a special “Year of the Mission” in 2018 to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the arrival of the Gospel in the country and to celebrate the Jubilee year. As reported to Agenzia Fides, by the local Church, the Year of the Mission involves the 11 parishes of the diocese, where initiatives of prayer, catechesis, and charity are organized “to celebrate faith and bring a joyous proclamation to those who do not know Christ”.

Chittagong played a significant role in the blossoming of Christianity in Bangladesh. Here in 1517 Portuguese Christian traders and the first evangelizers of the Bay of Bengal landed. In 1845 the first Vicariate of East Bengal was created in Chittagong, while the diocese of Chittagong was created in 1950 and elevated to Archdiocese in 2017.

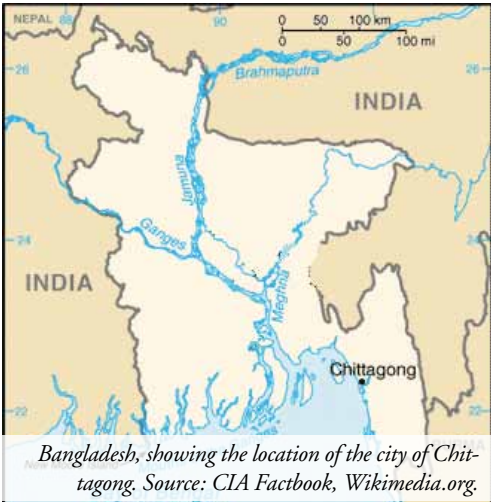
The faithful remember the contribution of the first missionaries, Fr. Francisco Fernandez and Fr. Dominic D’Souza, who settled in the area of Chittagong in the late 1500s. In the five centuries since their arrival, “our Church has been blessed with the service of 18 Bishops, hundreds of men and women of 27 religious orders and many lay missionaries and catechists”, states Archbishop Moses Costa. In the history of the local Church there were “over 600 Christians martyred in the seventeenth century” and today the faithful recall their experience, recognizing themselves “sons of that sacrifice”. For the occasion Archbishop Costa wrote a pastoral letter to all the parishes, inviting the faithful “to renew their faith during the Year of the Mission” and outlined seven pastoral priorities: catechism and confirmation of faith, education and culture, organizational development, economic sustainability, health services and evangelization. “Our faith in Christ is God’s precious gift that reached us through the missionaries. We must welcome this legacy so that we can celebrate our wealth of faith

and become a living, participatory and new Church”, writes Archbishop Costa.

In contemporary times, the local Church remembers catechist Robi Christopher D’Costa as a brilliant example of missionary commitment, who died last January. D’Costa served as a catechist in Chittagong, dedicating himself to evangelization for 33 years. He was especially focused on the catechetical and biblical formation of the clergy, religious and laity, often going to isolated villages and remote areas to deliver his message.

Today, out of a population of 19.5 million, 30 thousand are Catholics, served by 22 priests, both diocesan and religious. This is an edited version, taken from Agenzia Fides, 02/27/2018.

Each year, the Archdiocese of Chittagong holds a Marian Pilgrimage. This is one of the liturgical highlights of the year in the diocese and is attended by thousands of devoted followers of Mary. The Photo Gallery which follows features the 2018 Pilgrimage which was held in Diang, Chittagong. All photos courtesy of Chittagong Archdiocese. If you would like more information on the growth of the faith in Bangladesh, visit the Chittagong Archdiocese website at: <http://www.ctgdiocese.com/>





The Pontifical Association of the Holy Childhood: Project Report: BANGLADESH – PART 2

In our spring issue, we brought you the story of the Holy Childhood program in St. John Mary Vianney Church, Mundumala parish, in the Diocese of Rajshahi. In this issue, we continue our journey to Bangladesh and the Diocese of Rajshahi by visiting two other centres of faith: **Gopalpur Catholic Church and Fatima Convent at Nobai Bottola.**

Sister Swapna Toppo, PIME writes us of the work being done at Gopalpur while Sister Nirmola Gomes SC writes us from Fatima convent.

Gopalpur Parish:
Gopalpur is one of the oldest Catholic communities in Bangladesh, dating back to 1907 when the first missionaries arrived from Europe. The earliest converts to Catholicism were primarily emigrants to the area, coming from a variety of neighbouring countries to take up menial jobs involving hard labour. PIME* missionaries like Sister Swapna Toppo have been working with the people of Bangladesh for several decades. At present, Gopalpur has one diocesan priest, four PIME sisters and one seminarian. Sister Swapna's mission is working with the children of the parish under the umbrella of the Holy Childhood Association. Along with a small group of lay animators, Sister provides the children with a variety of programs which vary from cat-

echism classes and sacramental instruction to games and crafts activities to provide motivation and stimulation. Another important part of their HCA program is to encourage the children to pursue education and to remain in school. Thanks to Canada's participating HCA members, Sister Swapna has been able to provide for the neediest children, supplying them with books, clothing, food, medicine when needed as well as school uniforms and tuition fee payments. The children actively participate in daily prayers and liturgies, while also enjoying organized singing and dancing. Many participate in sports. Without this program, these children would have nothing since their parents have very little income. Sister Swapna is encouraged by the growing number of children who are succeeding at school, with some even qualifying for secondary education. She says that, "In the near future among them some will be government employees, some will be working in the NGO's and other institutions and some will be leaders of Christian society and volunteers to help the local church. The priests, sisters, all the children and their parents, animators of Holy Childhood of Gopalpur parish are very grateful for your generous assistance and support. Please continue to support the children of Gopalpur parish".



The children participate in their Holy Childhood mass. Note their parents in the background.



Learning about Jesus in the great outdoors.

*PIME stands for the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions. For more information on this mission society visit their website at: <https://www.pimeusa.org/about-pime>

Fatima Convent – Nobai Bottola – Rajshahi Diocese – Rajshahi, Bangladesh:

Nobai Bottola is a quasi parish that was once part of the larger Andharkota parish in Rajshahi. It was established in 2014 and is the focal mission project for the Sisters of Charity (Maria Bambina Sisters). Their primary work is with the tribal people of the region and their children. The sisters provide boarding facilities for some of the children. They also do outreach programs in the small villages scattered throughout the region. The boarding school is located in the convent, and provides support for the poorest and neediest children of the area. Thanks to HCA Canada, the sisters are able to provide textbooks, food school uniforms (dresses) school kits, medicines, tuition fees and other educational materials. There are 18 villages in the quasi parish and a total of 460 children served by the sisters.

Fridays are special days reserved for Holy Childhood activities. Arranged in groups according to age, the children are taught hymns, poems and stories from the Bible. They then act out these stories and others which support their moral instruction. The children especially enjoy hearing stories about the lives of the saints.

Each Saturday evening the children meet to pray the rosary. On Mondays, the children go to mass. Sunday evenings they participate in benediction and Thursdays they experience Eucharistic adoration.

Every year on the 21st of February, the community celebrates Holy Childhood Day. Sister Nirmola describes the event in this way: "On this day the children come to the parish center from different villages and in the evening there is a prayer service for them. The next day, mass is celebrated for them and they also participate in art

competitions, cultural functions. They are very happy to be gathered together and to observe the day in a festive mode".

During the months of May and October, the children pray the rosary while going house to house.

They were given a small plot of land by the parish priest and the children use it to grow flowers for the church. They also help to keep the church clean, pray for the sick, the dying, and the dead. All of these activities are seen as ways to teach the children about the importance of Christian charity.

As for the future, Sister Nirmola says, "We are looking after them carefully so that they may grow up in sound mind and health. We hope that we will carry on all the programs and activities to support them to be exemplary future leaders for our local church. We thank you for your co-operation in the formation of our children. Please kindly continue your help to our children".



It's time to eat! Food provided partially through the support of HCA Canada.



Learning to sing.



Learning a new dance in their new costumes.

A special day: the children proudly line up in their new uniforms thanks to funding from HCA Canada.



Two catechists work with the children on liturgical dance.



Holy Childhood Day Mass at Gopalpur.



Holy Childhood Association members dressed up for Holy Childhood Association Day.

Sister Catherine Paul – 60+ Years of Service as a Member of the Sisters of Saint Joseph

In the early fall of 2017, Sister Catherine Paul celebrated her 60th year as a card-carrying member of the Sisters of Saint Joseph. Her life as a sister took her into many parts of northern Ontario, as both an educator and a pastoral minister. I got to know her about 10 years ago in my capacity as editor of this magazine. Sister and I would share ideas regarding the Holy Childhood Association, a particularly pet project of hers for many years. I particularly enjoyed encountering her at the Annual General Meetings of the Pontifical Mission Societies that she would attend “religiously” (pun intended) with her chauffeur, Father Luigi of Thunder Bay. Sister contributed to the liturgical aspects of our meetings by providing the musical accompaniment. I also appreciate her keen sense of humour and quick wit, often used at my expense!

Born in Sudbury, Ontario and raised in Val d’Or, Quebec, Catherine Paul entered the Sisters of Saint Joseph in Sault Ste. Marie in 1957. She attended North Bay Teachers’ College prior to her Novitiate Canonical year. Sister went on to study at the University of Ottawa (B.A. and M.Ed. Administration), Queen’s University and finally the University of St. Mary’s on the Lake at Mindelein, Illinois, (Ministry development). She went on to teach in both Sudbury and Sault Ste. Marie before accepting administrative po-

sitions (teaching principal) in Blind River, Thunder Bay and Sault Ste. Marie. During her time as principal, Sister Catherine Paul also taught grade 8 Religion Music. She retired from her formal educational career in 1994.

While education was her first calling, Sister never lost the desire to work in a pastoral setting with adults. Two of her favourite parish ministries were in the small communities of Searchmont and Heyden, located north of Sault Ste. Marie. It was here that she had the opportunity to work in adult faith development, liturgy, and music and sacrament preparation. At one point she was working in three different communities at the same time. (Early multi-tasking)

Sister’s most recent ministries involve providing the music for masses and communion services at two nursing homes, leading her community associates in faith sharing and orientation, while leading a small Christian community. She also found the time to do community outreach on behalf of the Holy Childhood Association.

It is her work for the HCA that brought us together. Sister Catherine Paul has quietly gone about her school and parish visits on behalf of the organization without fanfare or any expectations of recognition. She is an ardent supporter of the rights of children both home and abroad and continues to advocate for them to this day.

Sister celebrated her Jubilee on September 28 in Sault Ste. Marie, where she resides. Another celebration was held at the Motherhouse in North Bay on October 8 where she was joined in the celebrations by eight of her classmates. Her chosen motto is taken from Psalm 118 and reads: “The Lord is my strength and my song”

Keep hitting those ivories, Sister! Congratulations on a wonderful career of service to others.



Sister Catherine Paul speaks to a group of rapt future missionaries somewhere in northern Ontario.

MALAWI

The White Fathers in Malawi: Teaching Circular economy in the Formation of Farmers

Kafulama - The White Fathers of Kafulama have started a project for the production of methane, applying the concept of “circular economy”, i.e. a system designed to regenerate itself, exploiting all available resources, in full respect of the environment. The pipes bring the methane produced to a public kitchen where meals are served to the thousand young people who attend the local school along with the local villagers.

The project is based on a simple principle: animal excrement produces carbon dioxide, hydrogen and methane. . At the same time the manure is abundant because the inhabitants are breeders. Families collect the manure and take it to a square which was specially created in the village. Not all the manure collected will be used for the methane plant: a part is used to fertilize the fields around Kafulama.



A Farmer Working His Fields in southern Malawi.
Photo by Sarah Tan, Wikimedia.org [cc-sa-by-4.0]

The cistern was built thanks to the contributions collected by “Friends of the White Fathers”, the Italian non-profit organization that supports the White Fathers’ projects in Africa. The pipes and the gas cistern were financed by the Malawian State.



Groundnuts for sale at a roadside market.
Photo by Swathi Sridharan, Wikimedia.org. [cc-sa-by-2.0]

The government in Lilongwe is in fact trying to diversify its energy sources, focusing on clean and renewable ones. This process reduces deforestation because it avoids the use of wood to light the fire.

85% of the population of 12 million in Malawi live in villages. The economy in Malawi, a country among the poorest nations in the world, is based on agriculture, which represents about 40% of the country’s GDP and provides over 80% of employment.

The Missionaries of Africa (also called the White Fathers) are a Society of apostolic life, born in Africa and for Africa, composed of consecrated priests and lay brothers. Faithful to their vocation, the missionaries explain that contributing to the work of agriculture in Malawi means first of all understanding and sharing the difficulties of the vast majority of the population, with a spirit of evangelical proximity. Helping them to improve the use of land, supporting them in their professional training leads to improvement in their daily livelihood. This is seen as part of their mission.

In 2018 the Missionaries of Africa celebrate their 150th anniversary. On 18 October 1868 the first novitiate of the Society of the Missionaries of Our Lady of Africa opened in Algiers, with about ten aspirants. According to the founder’s guidelines, the future missionaries had to speak Arabic, adopt the white dress of the region (hence the name “White Fathers”), have frequent contacts with the locals, and alternate study and prayer with manual labor. This is an edited version, taken from the original article which appeared in Agenzia Fides, 04/14/2018.

For more information on the White Fathers Missionary Order, visit them at: <https://mafrome.org/home/>



Tea Harvest near Mulanje Plateau
Photo by Papphase, Wikimedia.org

Annual General Meeting of Diocesan Directors

May, 2018

The Annual General Meeting of Diocesan Directors of Pontifical Mission Societies, English Sector, was held on May 7-9, 2018 at the Queen of the Apostles Retreat Centre in Mississauga, Ontario. Twenty-five directors from across Canada gathered to strategize best practices to animate parishes to support the goals of World Mission Sunday. The conference incorporated the WMS theme: “With Youth, we proclaim the Gospel to all” in these discussions. The keynote speaker for this year’s conference was Most Reverend Luigi Bonazzi, the Apostolic Nuncio to Canada. The theme of his talk was, “Renewing the Mission of the Gospel”. Most Rev. Bonazzi spoke of a Church that is only truly alive when it is missionary, going out to meet others in their personal situations. The Propagation of Faith is the first duty of the Christian community, a task that requires steadfastness and courage. Evangelization is a time of courage with no guarantee of success. Nevertheless, it is the all-consuming priority of the modern Church.

In addition, conference attendees attended presentations on “Youth and Evangelization” delivered by five speakers, two from the Diocese of Victoria and three from the Archdiocese of Regina. Their stirring and most stimulating testimonials were a highlight of the conference, bringing hope that the future of the church in Canada is in good hands.

Auxiliary Bishop Vincent Nguyen of Toronto (Bishop Ponenes) attended the final day of the conference and celebrated the closing mass.



From the left, Braden Kuntz, Tashia Toupin and recently ordained Rev. Fr. Arpee, youth representatives from Regina.



Diocesan Directors listen attentively to the youth presentations.



Most Reverend Luigi Bonazzi, Apostolic Nuncio



Glen Palabicky Diocesan Director for Victoria, introduces Sarah Kopriva and Abbra Kaufmann of Victoria, B.C.



Bishop Nguyen, centre, gathers with the Diocesan Directors following the closing mass.

The Society of Saint Peter the Apostle

Project Report: St. John Bosco Seminary –Catholic Diocese of Hoima, Uganda



One of our sponsored projects in 2017 was St. John Bosco Seminary in Uganda. This facility was badly in need of renovations, particularly to its dormitory buildings which housed a growing number of seminarians. Father John Mujule, former Rector of the seminary, writes in his blogspot, “ In 1967, Bishop Cyprian Kihangire began St John Bosco Seminary as

a High School Seminary for Hoima Catholic Diocese. The seminary began humbly with only 13 boys joining year one of high school after having finished 7 years of elementary education. In 1978, Hoima Diocese witnessed the ordinations of the first priests who had passed through that seminary”. The financial support provided by donors like you allowed us to fund these renovations. The photo gallery which follows outlines the work that was done.



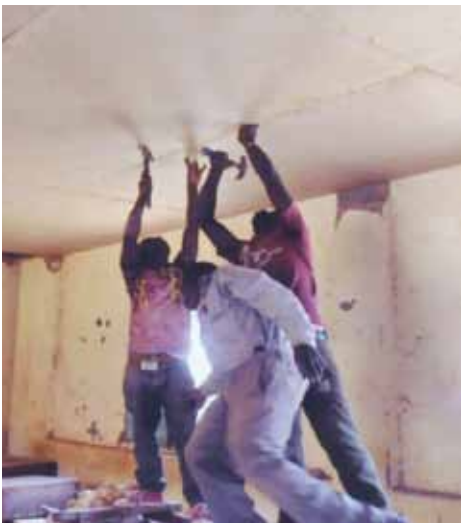
Be careful on those ladders!



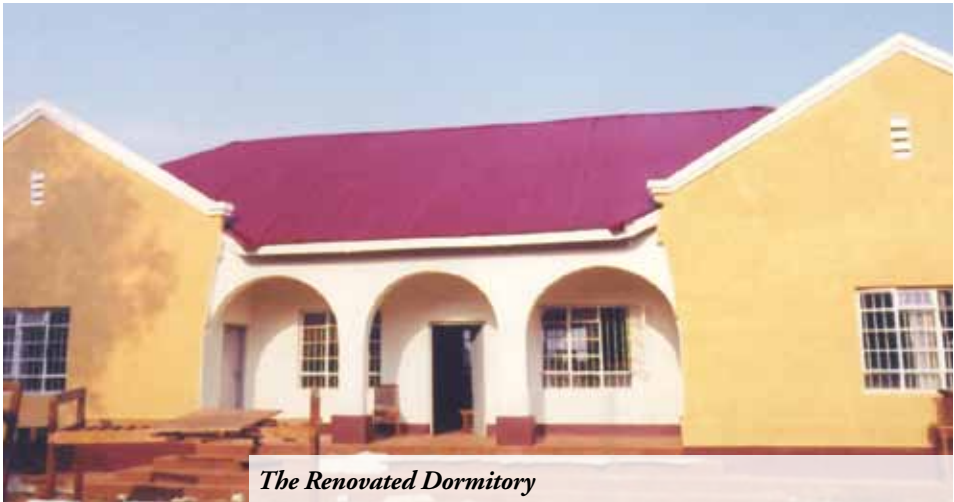
Working on the exterior walls.



The renovations begin to come together.

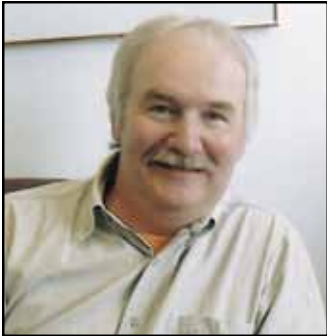


Finishing the ceiling installation.



The Renovated Dormitory

The Editor's Point of View...



Loneliness is one of the great malaises of modern times. It is of such growing concern that the British Parliament recently approved the appointment of a Minister of Loneliness, whose purpose is to devise strategies to assist the general population in dealing with and overcoming this problem. How can such a situation exist in this era of instant communication? Modern society has tools such as Facebook, Snap chat, Twitter, texting, and I-phones to help us engage with the world around us. We can instantly visually connect with others via Skype and other platforms of a similar nature. We can collect “likes” and “friend” people who share common interests. But we are not any further along in the battle against loneliness.

Globe and Mail columnist Elizabeth Renzetti writes: “In the West, we live faster, higher in the air, farther from our workplaces, and more singly than at any time in the past. Social scientists will be struggling to understand the consequences of these transformations for decades to come, but one thing is clear: Loneliness is our baggage, a huge and largely unacknowledged cultural failing”. (*Life of solitude: A loneliness crisis is looming*, 03/25/2017, *Globe and Mail.com*)

Loneliness is not a condition unique to contemporary times. In Psalm 25, King David expresses his desperate need for God’s intervention in his life. He points out his failings and articulates his complete dependence on God to help him overturn his miserable existence: “turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted”. Unlike David, we live in a world that does not



“We have a wrong idea that only hunger for bread is hunger. There is much greater hunger: hunger for love, for the feeling of being wanted, to be somebody to somebody”.

–St.Teresa of Kolkata.

recognize the role to be played in our lives by God. In choosing the secular path, we have lost connection with God and in so doing, with each other. Many young people that I encounter express feeling lonely on a regular basis, despite the many communication tools available today. It seems that modern modes of communication have made the situation worse. Instead of fostering a greater tolerance and understanding of one another, they have brought about greater competitiveness and insecurity.

Modern existence, at times, is a conundrum without an apparent solution. St. Teresa of Kolkata felt terrible bouts of loneliness and doubt; periods of darkness, that often lasted for weeks and months. Despite such dark feelings, she turned to prayer and service to see her through. She looked to the most destitute for inspiration. In turn, she discovered the presence of God in the most desperate situations. It was in the service of others that Sister Teresa found solace and purpose, aiding her in the battle with depression and loneliness.

There is much we can learn from Sister Teresa’s example. Perhaps we need a time out from our I-phones and Snapchats and Facebooks (sic) and use that time to look at those around us. Engage with others at whatever level they happen to be. Assist others as best we can. Listen to others without judgment or opinion.

We can start within our families and communities

and work outwards. Perhaps then we might find that the number of “friends” we collect far exceeds the number of superficial friends we previously collected on-line. God knows it’s worth a try.

Paul Coady
Editor

In Remembrance

Our Deceased Donors

Please remember in your prayers the recently deceased members of the Pontifical Mission Societies

Josefina Acena.....	ON	John Nordholt.....	ON
Oliver Campbell	MB	Erwin Preiditsch.....	ON
Philip Collier.....	NL	Petronilla Schlosser	SK
Father Richard Dales	ON	Theo Van Wissen.....	ON
Rose Marie Deans.....	ON	Frans Vanneste	ON
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Contact the Editor via email at: editor@missionsocieties.ca
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St. Anselm of Canterbury

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