



# MISSIONS TODAY

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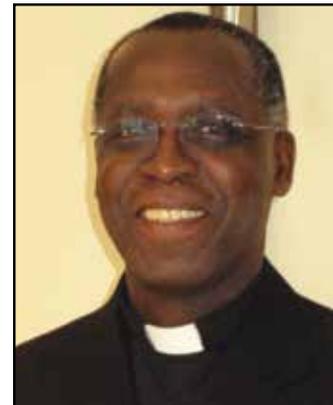
**Reports from Thailand and Ghana**

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*The Society for the Propagation of the Faith*

# National Director's Message

Missions Today Spring Issue 2023



Dear Friends,

At Easter, we celebrate Jesus risen from the dead and we sing “Alleluia.” Our faith tells us that it happened and yet do our lives truly reflect that it happened?

As we come to celebrate the 2023 Easter, there is great cause for reflection on what has been happening in our world, the war in Ukraine, Congo DRC, and South Sudan, the lasting effects of covid 19, and the damage inflicted by earthquakes and terrorism, continue to test the strength and capacity of people to respond to these devastating events. Many people ask: “where is God in all of this? It is the same question that Jesus asked in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross.

The answer to that question is discovered in our responses of faith. Jesus asks a very human question, our question and God answers it with the Resurrection. For it is in this experience that God overcomes all that would separate us from God. Everything that Jesus experienced in his suffering, we are seeing in our world today. We live in a fragmented world, a world in continual need of personal reconnection and integration. The final words of Jesus on the cross, words of forgiveness and words of entrustment, are exactly what we are called to do in our broken and disunified world.

The time is right if not overdue for the mother Church, which is all of us, the missionary disciples, to go back to the basics of our faith and focus on Jesus. We must “live him and breathe him “ every second of the day because if we truly know him, we will never be alone. Once we know him, the joy in our lives that

may have been there before will come alive again. It is the kind of Joy required in our Easter Alleluias, a joy in the Gospel that Pope Francis has powerfully written in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*. In that Exhortation, the Pope reminds us that our joy in believing is a powerful force, impelling us to want to go out and share the good news with others. So as we prepare to celebrate Jesus’ resurrection, his victory on behalf of us all, over death, let us renew that joy which lies at the heart of the Christian message with a cry that sums up the whole of the message, the whole of our lives, and that response must be “Alleluia”.

I take this opportunity to thank all our donors for your love for the Church in supporting the good works of Propagation of the Faith, Society of St. Peter the Apostle and Holy Childhood Association.

In Luke’s Gospel, when Jesus meets the disciples on that first Easter night, his words to them were words of peace: “Peace be with you” (Lk 24 :36). In these troubled times, these are the words that I pray for you. May the Peace of the risen Christ be with all those you love and all those who need God’s healing.

Fr. Alex Osei, C.S.Sp.  
National Director  
English Sector

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## The Pope’s Monthly Prayer Intentions:

Each year, the Holy Father asks for our prayers for a specific intention each month. You are invited to answer the Holy Father’s request and to join with many people worldwide in praying for this intention each month.

### **JANUARY: FOR EDUCATORS**

We pray that educators may be credible witnesses, teaching fraternity rather than competition and helping the youngest and most vulnerable above all.

### **FEBRUARY: FOR PARISHES**

We pray that parishes, placing communion at the centre, may increasingly become communities of faith, fraternity and welcome towards those most in need.

### **MARCH: FOR VICTIMS OF ABUSE**

We pray for those who have suffered harm from members of the Church; may they find within the Church herself a concrete response to their pain and suffering..

### **APRIL: FOR A CULTURE OF PEACE AND NON-VIOLENCE**

We pray for the spread of peace and non-violence, by decreasing the use of weapons by states and citizens.

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*Sr. Rosario with the children of the Parish of St. Vincent De Paul, Thailand. This and all pictures of report from Thailand provided by Sr. Rosario and used with her express permission.*

*Photo: Sr. Rosario and used with her express permission.*



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# Across the Globe

*The Pontifical Mission Societies host their own web news service called *agenzia fides*. The news service is updated daily and allows us to keep current about events around the world and within Catholic missions. Below are three articles from the website and other news can be found at [fides.org](http://fides.org).*



## **COSTA RICA – World Day of Consecrated Life: Messengers of Solidarity and Hope in Today’s World**

San José (Agenzia Fides) - “In our current context in which we experience fragility, loneliness, inequality that leads to injustice, violence, neglect, uncertainty in the face of a bleak future, consecrated life feels called to respond by becoming a companion of the Church, by responding to Pope Francis’ call to promote synodality, by becoming a companion of our society with the witness of solidarity and hope”. On the Day of Consecrated Life, celebrated every year on February 2, the Feast of the Presentation in the Temple of the Lord, Bishop Bartolomé Buigues Oller of Alajuela, in his capacity as head of the Episcopal Commission for Consecrated Life in Costa Rica, speaks in a message to the religious of the country and to all the people of God.

“We live with the Church the joy of having received the vocation of special consecration that deepens our baptism, to feel that we are the custodians of the different charisms of the Spirit to promote the following of Christ and his mission with our various apostolates,” emphasized the bishop. “Today more than ever we need to show solidarity, care for one another, get closer to one another in order to overcome loneliness,” warns Bishop Buigues Oller, quoting Pope Francis.

“The witness of our consecrated life is an expression and bearer of the solidarity and hope that our world needs today,” emphasizes

the Bishop, recalling that today’s time invites us to “a spirituality of simplicity, of smallness, of evangelical awareness to be “a little leaven in the midst of the masses of the world”. The new kind of presence that the world needs today “emphasises more the witness of life, walking with the Church as consecrated persons in the midst of a people of consecrated persons, in a mission shared with the laity in our works of apostolate, since we all participate in the common mission of the Church”. The bishop also quotes Pope John Paul II in this context and concludes: “What must be avoided at all costs is the loss of spiritual communion with the Lord and with one’s own vocation and mission”.

*According to the Church’s latest Statistical Yearbook, there are 183 religious priests, 110 religious brothers, 862 religious women and 27 members of secular institutes (1 male and 26 female) in Costa Rica. (SL) (Agenzia Fides, 2/2/2023)*

## **ASIA/INDONESIA - Indian Jesuit Father has been living in Sumatra for 50 years: a life marked by devotion to Mary and love of God**

Medan (Agenzia Fides) - On the Indonesian island of Sumatra, inhabited mainly by indigenous groups and where traditionalist Islam is widespread, there lives a missionary who has become a well-known and respected personality in Medan, the capital of

the province of North Sumatra: he is Indian Jesuit Father James Bharataputra, who is known for the construction of the Marian shrine “Graha Maria Annai Velangkanni” in Medan.

84-year-old Father James from the Indian state of Tamil Nadu has been active in Medan for 50 years. He was naturalized as an Indonesian in 1989. Ever since he entered the Jesuit order in the Indian province of Madurai, he had the desire to become a missionary. After a stopover in Hong Kong, he was sent to Yogyakarta, Indonesia, to complete his theological studies there. After his ordination in 1970, he had the opportunity to visit Medan and the then Archbishop Van den Hurk of Medan (OFMCap) asked him to provide pastoral care to a small local Tamil-speaking Catholic community.

“So in 1972 I began the pastoral work in Medan, which continues to this day,” affirms Father James. During his 50 years in Sumatra, he also served in the province of Aceh in the island’s far north (then part of the Archdiocese of Medan), which he was forced to leave due to a series of outbreaks of violence that shook the only Indonesian province that adopted parts of the “sharia” Islamic law.

In the Indonesian Church, Father James is known as the founder, initiator and still Rector of the Marian Shrine “Graha Maria Annai Velangkanni” in Medan. “I am still amazed at how God’s loving providence led me to this mission land. And I am just as amazed at the great trust placed in me by my Jesuit superiors. It was they who allowed me to serve in the local Church, the Archdiocese of Medan,” he says.

The shrine was the culmination of his missionary journey: realizing that the population of Medan lacked adequate education, the priest first started an educational project and rebuilt a primary school called “Karya Dharma” (“Works of Charity”) to give children from economically disadvantaged families a chance for education.

“People appreciated the initiative and were very cooperative,” he reports.

But there were obstacles along the way: a project designed to promote the self-sufficiency of development and subsistence for a Tamil community still living on the charity of Dutch missionaries was met with hostility from the local community. He deeply regretted this: “My actual vocation and my life as a missionary were threatened. But the Lord saved me,” he recalls.

The miracle finally came about through the intercession of the Mother of God: “I had a vision to spread the devotion of Mary here as she had shown herself in Vailankanni in Tamil Nadu for more than three centuries, attracting people from all walks of life and helping them to know her son Jesus. I reflected that a shrine would attract many pilgrims from all walks of life and help them to encounter God. At the same time, a shrine reminds pilgrims that they

are all children of the one God. It teaches them to respect and love one another as brothers and sisters because they are all children of the same Heavenly Father”.

With this idea in his heart, the missionary began the project, supported by the archdiocese, to build a Marian shrine. “The generosity of thousands of donors was impressive. In the five years it took to build (2000-2005), the cost ended up exceeding four billion rupees (about US\$500,000).”

The former Archbishop of Medan, Alfredo Gonti Pius Batubara (OFMCap), admits that “Father James brought his life and spiritual energy and work to our archdiocese. And we thank him for the erection of the Marian Shrine Graha Maria Annai Velangkanni in Medan”.

Writer and confrere Father Ignatius Jesudasan, writes: “The Marian Shrine is the culmination of Father James’ missionary work in Indonesia. The architectural design reflects the contemplation of Saint Ignatius in his Spiritual Exercises on the Mystery of the Incarnation. Here, as in medieval cathedrals, artistically represented by paintings and statues. The shrine combines pastoral use as a community hall, on the basement floor; worship and adoration on the middle floor; and artistic contemplation of historical-religious mysteries on the top floor. As the shrine attracts pilgrims of all faiths, the work contributes to Indonesia’s religious-cultural diversity and tourism. This place has become a blessing for many people.” And the Indonesian Jesuit Fr. Sindhunata writes: “The shrine is a place where heaven and earth meet, where the divine and the human embrace, where God meets His people, regardless of ethnicity, creed or language”. (PA/MH) (Agenzia Fides, 25/1/2023)

[http://www.fides.org/en/news/73323-ASIA\\_INDONESIA\\_Indian\\_Jesuit\\_Father\\_has\\_been\\_living\\_in\\_Sumatra\\_for\\_50\\_years\\_a\\_life\\_marked\\_by\\_devotion\\_to\\_Mary\\_and\\_love\\_of\\_God](http://www.fides.org/en/news/73323-ASIA_INDONESIA_Indian_Jesuit_Father_has_been_living_in_Sumatra_for_50_years_a_life_marked_by_devotion_to_Mary_and_love_of_God)



# “Hearts on fire, feet on the move”

## VATICAN CITY - Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for World Mission Day 2023

*Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - Today we publish the Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the 97th World Mission Day to be celebrated on Sunday, October 22, 2023 on the theme “Hearts on fire, feet on the move” (cf. Lk. 24:13-35).*

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Dear brothers and sisters!

For this year’s World Mission Sunday, I have chosen a theme inspired by the story of the disciples on the way to Emmaus, in the Gospel of Luke (cf. 24:13-35): “Hearts on fire, feet on the move”. Those two disciples were confused and dismayed, but their encounter with Christ in the word and in the breaking of the bread sparked in them the enthusiastic desire to set out again towards Jerusalem and proclaim that the Lord had truly risen. In the Gospel account, we perceive this change in the disciples through a few revealing images: their hearts burned within them as they heard the Scriptures explained by Jesus, their eyes were opened as they recognized him and, ultimately, their feet set out on the way. By meditating on these three images, which reflect the journey of all missionary disciples, we can renew our zeal for evangelization in today’s world.

1. Our hearts burned within us “when he explained the Scriptures to us”. In missionary activity, the word of God illumines and transforms hearts.

On the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus, the hearts of the two disciples were downcast, as shown by their dejected faces, because of the death of Jesus, in whom they had believed (cf. v. 17). Faced with the failure of the crucified Master, their hopes that he was the Messiah collapsed (cf. v. 21).

Then, “as they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them” (v. 15). As when he first called the disciples, so now, amid their bewilderment, the Lord takes the initiative; he approaches them and walks alongside them. So too, in his great mercy, he never tires of being with us, despite all our failings, doubts, weaknesses, and the dismay and pessimism that make us become “foolish and slow of heart” (v. 25), men and women of little faith.

Today, as then, the Risen Lord remains close to his missionary

disciples and walks beside them, particularly when they feel disoriented, discouraged, fearful of the mystery of iniquity that surrounds them and seeks to overwhelm them. So, “let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of hope!” (Evangelii Gaudium, 86). The

Lord is greater than all our problems, above all if we encounter them in our mission of proclaiming the Gospel to the world. For in the end, this mission is his and we are nothing more than his humble co-workers, “useless servants” (cf. Lk 17:10).

I desire to express my closeness in Christ to all the men and women missionaries in the world, especially to those enduring any kind of hardship. Dear friends, the Risen Lord is always with you. He sees your generosity and the sacrifices you are making for the mission of evangelization in distant lands. Not every day of our lives is serene and unclouded, but let us never forget the words of the Lord Jesus to his friends before his Passion: “In the world you will have tribulations, but be courageous: I have conquered the world!” (Jn 16:33).

After listening to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, the risen Jesus, “beginning with Moses and all the prophets, explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself” (Lk 24:27). The hearts of the disciples thrilled, as they later confided to each other: “Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way and opened the Scriptures to us?” (v. 32). Jesus is himself the living Word, who alone can make our hearts burn within us, as he enlightens and transforms them.

In this way, we can better understand Saint Jerome’s dictum that “ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ” (Commentary on Isaiah, Prologue). “Without the Lord to introduce us, it is impossible to understand sacred Scripture in depth; yet the opposite is equally true: without sacred Scripture, the events of Jesus’



mission and of his Church in the world remain indecipherable” (Aperuit Illis, 1). It follows that knowledge of Scripture is important for the Christian life, and even more so for the preaching of Christ and his Gospel. Otherwise, what are you passing on to others if not your own ideas and projects? A cold heart can never make other hearts burn!

So let us always be willing to let ourselves be accompanied by the Risen Lord as he explains to us the meaning of the Scriptures. May he make our hearts burn within us; may he enlighten and transform us, so that we can proclaim his mystery of salvation to the world with the power and wisdom that come from his Spirit.

2. Our eyes were “opened and recognized him” in the breaking of the bread. Jesus in the Eucharist is the source and summit of the mission.

The fact that their hearts burned for the word of God prompted the disciples of Emmaus to ask the mysterious Wayfarer to stay with them as evening drew near. When they gathered around the table, their eyes were opened and they recognized him when he broke the bread. The decisive element that opened the eyes of the disciples was the sequence of actions performed by Jesus: he took the bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to them. Those were the usual gestures of the head of a Jewish household, but, performed by Jesus Christ with the grace of the Holy Spirit, they renewed for his two table companions the sign of the multiplication of the loaves and above all that of the Eucharist, the sacrament of the sacrifice of the cross. Yet at the very moment when they recognized Jesus in the breaking of the bread, “he vanished from their sight” (Lk 24:31). Here we can recognize an essential reality of our faith: Christ, who breaks the bread, now becomes the bread broken, shared with the disciples and consumed by them. He is seen no



longer, for now he has entered the hearts of the disciples, to make them burn all the more, and this prompts them to set out immediately to share with everyone their unique experience of meeting the Risen Lord. The risen Christ, then, is both the one who breaks the bread and, at the same time, the bread itself, broken for us. It follows that every missionary disciple is called to become, like Jesus and in him, through the working of the Holy Spirit, one who breaks the bread and one who is broken bread for the world.

Here it should be remembered that breaking our material bread with the hungry in the name of Christ is already a work of Christian mission. How much more so is the breaking of the Eucharistic bread, which is Christ himself, a work of mission par excellence, since the Eucharist is the source and summit of the life and mission of the Church.

As Pope Benedict XVI pointed out: “We cannot keep to ourselves the love we celebrate in the Sacrament [of the Eucharist]. By its very nature, it asks to be communicated to everyone. What the world needs is the love of God, to encounter Christ and believe in him. For this reason the Eucharist is not only the source and summit of the life of the Church; it is also the source and summit of her mission: ‘An authentically Eucharistic Church is a missionary Church’” (Sacramentum Caritatis, 84).

In order to bear fruit we must remain united to Jesus (cf. Jn 15:4-9). This union is achieved through daily prayer, particularly in Eucharistic adoration, as we remain in silence in the presence of the Lord, who remains with us in the Blessed Sacrament. By lovingly cultivating this communion with Christ, the missionary disciple can become a mystic in action. May our hearts always yearn for the company of Jesus, echoing the ardent plea of the two disciples of Emmaus, especially in the evening hours: “Stay with us, Lord!” (cf. Lk 24:29).



*All images of Pope Francis - Courtesy of Vatican News Service.*

3. Our feet set out on the way, with the joy of telling others about the Risen Christ. The eternal youth of a Church that is always going forth.

After their eyes were opened and they recognized Jesus “in the breaking of the bread”, the disciples “set out without delay and returned to Jerusalem” (cf. Lk 24:33). This setting out in haste, to share with others the joy of meeting the Lord, demonstrates that “the joy of the Gospel fills the heart and the whole life of those who meet Jesus. Those who allow themselves to be saved by him are freed from sin, from sadness, from inner emptiness, from isolation. With Jesus Christ, joy is always born and reborn” (Evangelii Gaudium, 1). One cannot truly encounter the risen Jesus without being set on fire with enthusiasm to tell everyone about him. Therefore, the primary and principal resource of the mission are those persons who have come to know the risen Christ in the Scriptures and in the Eucharist, who carry his fire in their heart and his light in their gaze. They can bear witness to the life that never dies, even in the most difficult of situations and in the darkest of moments.

The image of “feet setting out” reminds us once more of the perennial validity of the *missio ad gentes*, the mission entrusted to the Church by the risen Lord to evangelize all individuals and peoples, even to the ends of the earth. Today more than ever, our human family, wounded by so many situations of injustice, so many divisions and wars, is in need of the Good News of peace and salvation in Christ. I take this opportunity to reiterate that “everyone has the right to receive the Gospel. Christians have the duty to announce it without excluding anyone, not as one who imposes a new obligation, but as one who shares a joy, signals a beautiful horizon, offers a desirable banquet” (Evangelii Gaudium, 14). Missionary conversion remains the principal goal that we must set for ourselves as individuals and as a community, because “missionary outreach is paradigmatic for all the Church’s activity” (ibid., 15).

As the Apostle Paul confirms, the love of Christ captivates and impels us (cf. 2 Cor 5:14). This love is two-fold: the love of Christ for us, which calls forth, inspires and arouses our love for him. A love that makes the Church, in constantly setting out anew, ever young. For all her members are entrusted with the mission of proclaiming the Gospel of Christ, in the conviction that “he died for all, so that those who live should no longer live for themselves,

but for him who died for them and was raised again” (v. 15). All of us can contribute to this missionary movement: with our prayers and activities, with material offerings and the offering of our sufferings, and with our personal witness. The Pontifical Mission Societies are the privileged means of fostering this missionary cooperation on both the spiritual and material levels. For this reason, the collection taken on World Mission Sunday is devoted to the Pontifical Society for the Propagation of the Faith.

The urgency of the Church’s missionary activity naturally calls for an ever closer missionary cooperation on the part of all her members and at every level. This is an essential goal of the synodal journey that the Church has undertaken, guided by the key words: communion, participation, mission. This journey is certainly not a turning of the Church in upon herself; nor is it a referendum about what we ought to believe and practice, nor a matter of human preferences. Rather, it is a process of setting out on the way and, like the disciples of Emmaus, listening to the risen Lord. For he always comes among us to explain the meaning of the Scriptures and to break bread for us, so that we can, by the power of the Holy Spirit, carry out his mission in the world.

Just as the two disciples of Emmaus told the others what had taken place along the way (cf. Lk 24:35), so too our proclamation will be a joyful telling of Christ the Lord, his life, his passion, his death and resurrection, and the wonders that his love has accomplished in our lives.

So let us set out once more, illuminated by our encounter with the risen Lord and prompted by his Spirit. Let us set out again with burning hearts, with our eyes open

and our feet in motion. Let us set out to make other hearts burn with the word of God, to open the eyes of others to Jesus in the Eucharist, and to invite everyone to walk together on the path of peace and salvation that God, in Christ, has bestowed upon all humanity.

Our Lady of the Way, Mother of Christ’s missionary disciples and Queen of Missions, pray for us!

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 6 January 2023, Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord.

FRANCIS

(Agenzia Fides, 25/1/2023)

*All images of Pope Francis - Courtesy of Vatican News Service.*



Before celebrating the Holy Year 2025, Pope Francis is asking Catholics around the world to dedicate time in 2023 to studying the documents of the Second Vatican Council. This was an announcement made by Archbishop Rino Fisichella where he indicated that the four documents that should be reflected on were Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (“Sacrosanctum Concilium”); Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (“Lumen Gentium”); Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (“Dei Verbum”); and Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (“Gaudium et Spes”). To help us with this sacred obligation, our reporters for Missions Today, Maria and Lori, will be examining for us these documents. For more information on this Holy Year, see <https://cruxnow.com/vatican/2022/06/pope-asks-catholics-to-study-vatican-ii-before-holy-year-2025>

## MARIA'S FAITH



By Maria Fornasier

Lumen Gentium, arguably the most important of the four constitutions resulting from discussions by the world's bishops during Vatican II (1962 - 65), has had a profound impact upon the Church's perspective and approach towards its core beliefs during the past 60 years. The evolving character and mission of the Catholic Church

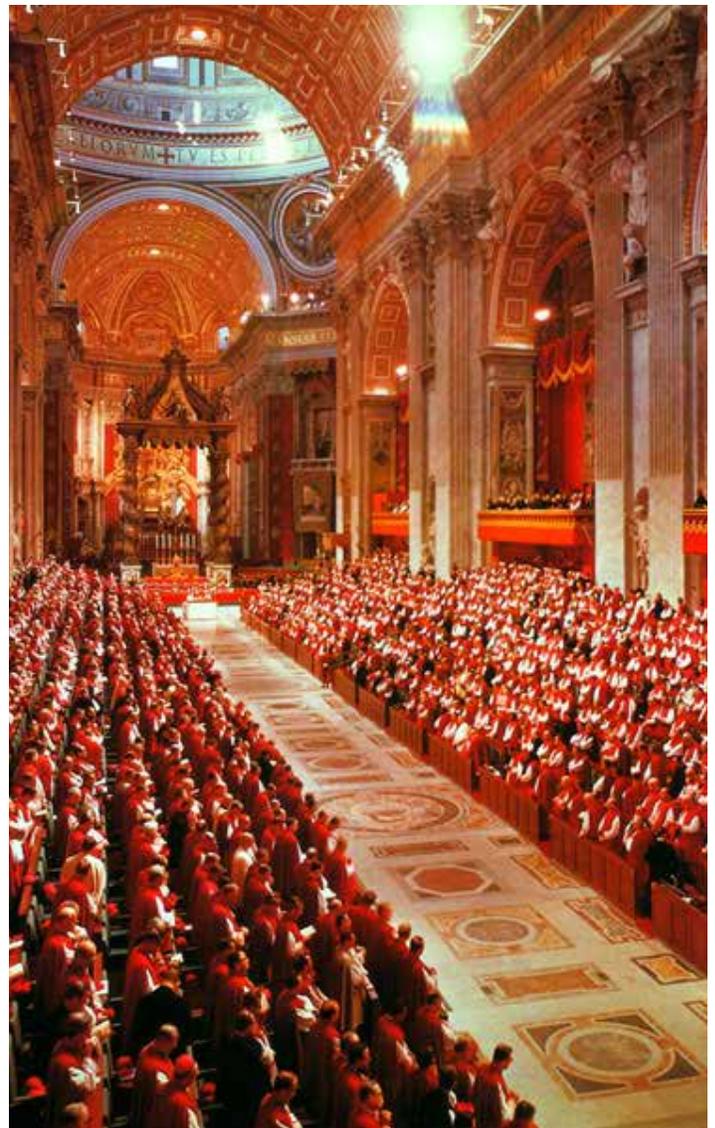
has been explored and influenced by the thoughts, writings and sermons of the popes since Vatican II, including during the papacy of Pope Francis with its emphasis on Jesus and mercy and generosity towards the poor.

The document, which was publicly proclaimed by Pope Paul VI in November 1964, derives its title from its first sentence, “Christ is the Light of nations.” Each of its eight chapters has a specific yet interconnected focus: the first two chapters are about the interrelationship among Jesus, the Trinity and the community of believers, and, because Christ's love encompasses all people, the assurance that “the Church fosters the missions with care and attention” (LG 16). Chapters Three and Four describe the various roles within the Church, including formalizing the role of deacon and explaining that congregations can support and participate by going “forth as powerful proclaimers of a faith in things to be hoped for, when they courageously join to their profession of faith a life springing from faith” (LG 35). The call to holiness for all believers, including those who choose the religious life, is further developed in Chapters Five and Six. The final two chapters discuss the importance of looking to the saints as models of faith and charity and to honouring the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Church upholds Mary as its ideal: “Imitating the mother of her Lord, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, she keeps with virginal purity an entire faith, a firm hope and a sincere charity” (LG 64).

Lumen Gentium has led to an increased participation by all Catholics in the Church's life and mission, a greater awareness that the Eucharist is the center of the Church's life, increased devotion to Mary, and a strong sense of identity among clergy,

who see themselves as servants entrusted with the ministry of stimulating their congregations to “zealously participate in the saving work of the Church” (LG 33).

*Maria Fornasier is a retired teacher who has joined our team as a regular columnist.*



### Second Vatican Council in Session

<https://catholic-resources.org/ChurchDocs/VaticanCouncil2.htm>  
Used with permission.

# Remembering Pope Benedict XVI:

*As Supreme Pontiff, Pope Benedict XVI issued his fair share of World Mission Day Messages. Below is one of Benedict's messages that is just as timely today as it was on the day that it was proclaimed. The message expresses his passion for missionary work. Enjoy reading an edited version of Pope Benedict's Message for WMS 2011:*

“As the Father has sent me, even so I send you” (Jn 20:21)

On the occasion of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, at the beginning of a new millennium of the Christian era Venerable John Paul II forcefully reaffirmed the need to renew the commitment to bear the proclamation of the Gospel to everyone, sharing “the enthusiasm of the very first Christians” (Novo Millennio Ineunte, n. 58).

It is the most precious service that the Church can render to humanity and to all individuals who are seeking the profound reasons to live their life to the full. This same invitation therefore resonates every year during the celebration of World Mission Day. Continuous proclamation of the Gospel, in fact, also invigorates the Church, her fervour and her apostolic spirit. It renews her pastoral methods so that they may be ever better suited to the new situations — even those which require a new evangelization — and enlivened by missionary zeal: “missionary activity renews the Church, revitalizes faith and Christian identity, and offers fresh enthusiasm and new incentive. Faith is strengthened when it is given to others! It is in commitment to the Church's universal mission that the new evangelization of Christian peoples will find inspiration and support” (John Paul II, Encyclical Redemptoris Missio, n. 2).

## Go and proclaim

This objective is continually revived by the celebration of the Liturgy, especially of the Eucharist which always concludes by echoing the mandate the Risen Jesus gave to the Apostles: “Go...” (Mt 28:19). The Liturgy is always a call “from the world” and a new missionary mandate “in the world” in order to witness to what has been experienced: the saving power of the word of God, the saving power of Christ's Paschal Mystery.



All those who have encountered the Risen Lord have felt the need to proclaim the news of it to others, as did the two disciples of Emmaus. After recognizing the Lord in the breaking of the bread, “they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the Eleven gathered together” and reported what had happened to them on the road (Lk 24:33-34).

Pope John Paul II urged the faithful to be “watchful, ready to recognize his face and run to our brothers and sisters with the Good News: ‘We have seen the Lord!’” (Apostolic Letter Novo Millennio Ineunte n. 59).

## To all

The proclamation of the Gospel is intended for all peoples. The Church is “by her very nature missionary since, according to the plan of the Father, she has her origin in the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit” (Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity Ad Gentes, n. 2).

This is “the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize” (Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Nuntiandi, n. 14). Consequently she can never be closed in on herself. She is rooted in specific places in order to go beyond them. Her action, in adherence to Christ's word and under the influence of his grace and his charity, is fully and currently present to all people and all peoples, to lead them to faith in Christ, (cf.

Ad Gentes, n. 5).

This task has lost none of its urgency. Indeed “The mission of Christ the Redeemer, which is entrusted to the Church, is still very far from completion... an overall view of the human race shows that this mission is still only beginning and that we must commit ourselves wholeheartedly to its service” (John Paul II, Encyclical Redemptoris Missio, n. 1). We cannot reconcile ourselves to the thought that after 2,000 years there are still people who do not know Christ and have never heard his Message of salvation.

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*Let us pray. O God, who in your wondrous providence chose your servant Benedict to preside over your Church, grant, we pray, that, having served as the Vicar of your Son on earth, he may be welcomed by him into eternal glory. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever. Amen.*

# A Friend Of The Missions

## Joseph Ratzinger's gifts to Chinese Catholics:

For the past 15 years, Catholics from all over the world have been invited to pray for their brothers and sisters in the Church in China once a year. Since then, the World Day of Prayer for Catholics in China has taken place on May 24, the feast of Mary Help of Christians, who is venerated with that title in the national Shrine of Our Lady of Sheshan, near Shanghai.

It was Pope Benedict XVI who introduced the Day of Prayer for the Church in China with his Letter to Chinese Catholics in 2007.

Joseph Ratzinger always perceived that the experiences of Catholics in China are linked in a special way to the mystery of the Church. And even before he became Bishop of Rome, he was instrumental in directing and guiding the decisions of the Holy See in the often difficult matters of Catholicism in the People's Republic of China.

[http://www.fides.org/en/news/73251-Joseph\\_Ratzinger\\_s\\_gifts\\_to\\_Chinese\\_Catholics](http://www.fides.org/en/news/73251-Joseph_Ratzinger_s_gifts_to_Chinese_Catholics)



## AFRICA - The memory of Pope Benedict XVI of some African Bishops: "A great theologian of profound humanity"

The Catholic Church in different parts of Africa remembers Benedict XVI with masses and suffrage prayers.

The Bishops of Uganda, who said they had a close relationship with Pope Benedict XVI, remembered him as a scholar and doctor of the church who helped many of them during his mandate as Pope. They described him as "an eminent theologian and conservative enforcer of the Roman Catholic Doctrines".

The Archbishop of Gulu Archdiocese, His Grace John Baptist Odama described Pope Benedict as a scholar and theologian who loved science.

Msgr. Sabino Ochan Odoki, Bishop of Arua, appointed by the late Pope, recalls that "I was sure that Ratzinger Joseph will be the next Pope and by then I was a rector in the seminary. I said we need a strong teacher and Pope Benedict has been a strong teacher".

[http://www.fides.org/en/news/73248-AFRICA\\_The\\_memory\\_of\\_Pope\\_Benedict\\_XVI\\_of\\_some\\_African\\_Bishops\\_A\\_great\\_theologian\\_of\\_profound\\_humanity](http://www.fides.org/en/news/73248-AFRICA_The_memory_of_Pope_Benedict_XVI_of_some_African_Bishops_A_great_theologian_of_profound_humanity)



## ASIA/CAMBODIA - The Apostolic Vicar of Phnom Penh: "Pope Benedict XVI encourages us to continue our mission"

"Benedict XVI was a passionate seeker of God who worked to create harmony of religions and to build a more just world, in truth and with passion. We give thanks for the fruitful life of our beloved Holy Father. He ascended to heaven on December 31, the eve of the solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, who was a model for his life as priest, theologian, Bishop and Pastor of the universal Church.

Now we entrust his soul to Our Lady of the Mekong and raise a prayer of thanksgiving for Benedict XVI, a Pope who had God only as a solid rock, an intellectual who believed in reason, a man in love with the truth", said the Vicar Apostolic of Phnom Penh, Bishop Olivier Schmitthaeusler MEP, to the faithful, in a holy requiem mass celebrated in Phnom Penh for Benedict XVI.

[http://www.fides.org/en/news/73257-ASIA\\_CAMBODIA\\_The\\_Apostolic\\_Vicar\\_of\\_Phnom\\_Penh\\_Pope\\_Benedict\\_XVI\\_encourages\\_us\\_to\\_continue\\_our\\_mission](http://www.fides.org/en/news/73257-ASIA_CAMBODIA_The_Apostolic_Vicar_of_Phnom_Penh_Pope_Benedict_XVI_encourages_us_to_continue_our_mission)

# A View from the Pew...

## Gaudium et Spes (Joy and Hope) - 'Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World'



By Lori Lisi

'Gaudium et Spes' So worthy of attention are these two words that the fourth and final document of Second Vatican Council is entitled, 'Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World - Gaudium et Spes (1965).' As in other times in the history of the world, the last three years have certainly been challenging ones for all of humanity; for the individual

person, for the family unit and, ultimately, for the economic and political arenas in the world at large. During my lifetime, never more than today (post-covid) have I been more concerned with returning to a life full of joy and hope; a joy defined by those moments that take our breath away and turn our eyes to God in gratitude for all that is true, good and beautiful in our lives and in the lives of those we love; and a hope, rooted in faith, for a future that promises goodness for all and a world filled with love and joy, realized in our relationship with God who loves us.

Such is true and resonates well with the current thinking within our existing world and that of the future age. In an era of strife, anxiety, grief and social imbalance, we seek a social order 'founded in truth, built on justice and animated with love'! We ask questions about humanity and its responsibilities to serve the common good. We wonder why so much still seems so wrong, notwithstanding the degree of social advancement over the centuries. We are confounded by the trials and tribulations that surge within families, within society, and throughout the entire world. We wonder why we can't keep up with the fast pace of the ever-changing world and why we struggle to fight the temptations of the world that contradict the moral values within our heart. Have we lost the meaning of life? After WWII, neurologist, psychologist and writer, Viktor Frankl, in his book *Man's Search for Meaning*, writes about love, hope, responsibility, freedom and beauty. All of those topics echo within the climate of the world in those times; a world post two world wars that had disturbed the universal peace and balance of the whole of humanity and that of the social order to which it had become accustomed. Will history repeat itself? Perhaps it will, if we fail to become stewards of our world, united and focused on the common good and the love for one another.

Pope Francis asks Catholics around the world to read and study the documents of Second Vatican Council, as we prepare for the celebration of the upcoming Holy Jubilee Year of 2025 themed "Pilgrims of Hope". Reading them can help to nourish us and continue to form us in our Christian faith and guide us in preventing history from repeating itself, by living our lives as true dis-

ciples of Jesus. Preparing for a Holy Year is a time for pilgrimage, prayer, repentance and acts of mercy, which is based on the Old Testament tradition of rest, forgiveness and renewal.

In reading Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*), which has been referred to as the "grand finale" of Second Vatican Council, I am reminded of the urgency of the message that still resonates with the modern world. There are certainly changes, with the passing of time, in the requirements to delivering God's message, but the centrality of the importance of protecting human dignity and knowing that the answers to the issues of all times (past, present and future) are found in Christ is of utmost importance. His message of love of God and love of neighbour will remain, undeniably, the mission of all Catholics, no matter the conditions of the world or the era in which we find ourselves, for as He tells us, "[He is] the way, and the truth, and the life." ~ John 14:6

This document speaks to the key themes of our Catholic social teachings:

**Life and Dignity of the Human Person** - the human person is sacred and people are more important than things.

**Call to Family, Community, and Participation** - the human person is social; marriage and family are the central social institution and should not be compromised; the human person has the right and the duty to participate in society for the common good and well-being of all.

**Rights and Responsibilities** - every person has the basic right to life.

**Preferential Option for the Poor** - we must put the needs of the poor and vulnerable people first.

**The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers** - the economy must serve the people and the dignity of work must be protected

**Solidarity** - we are one human family; we are our brothers' and sisters' keepers; we are called to be peacemakers in pursuit of justice and peace

Second Vatican Council asks the Church to be forthcoming in Her dialogues with the modern world, to recognize and respond to the needs of the changing times, and to find the means by which to be missionary in new ways. Missionary work will always remain at the very core of the message, for we are called to bring people to Jesus, by proclaiming the Gospel and building the faith in our world for the greater glory of God. Therefore, let us continue to evangelize in the modern world, using fresh ways that are in harmony with the ever-changing human existence.

# Society Of Saint Peter The Apostle

## Project Report : Archdiocese of Kumasi, Ghana

*The Society of St. Peter the Apostle promotes awareness in the Christian communities regarding the need to develop the local clergy and consecrated life in the recently founded missionary churches.*



*Bishop Cabill of Victoria Diocese, Texas, visits St. Hubert Seminary*

### *Brief Summary of the key elements of the report*

The report will be looking at the salient events that happened in the academic year 2021/2022. It looks at the total number of seminarians and their various levels of formation, staff members, formation programme, events of great significance as well as the role of the seminary in fulfilling its mission in the church.

### **THE SEMINARIANS**

#### *Number, level of education, origin environment*

The year under review saw a total number of one hundred and seventy-nine (179) seminarians in formation coming from the following dioceses in Ghana: Kumasi, Obuasi, Konongo iMampong, Sunyani, Goaso and Wa.

The total number was made of fifty (50) first years, sixty (60) second years, fifty-eight (58) third years as well as eleven (11) Post SHS students.

Seminarians from the first year up to the third year pursue various senior secondary education programmes in the area of General Science, General Arts and Business. The Post SHS seminarians offer courses such as Introduction to the Bible, Latin, Music, Spirituality and Church Doctrine for a one-year period.

Many of the seminarians come from practicing Catholic home background with a few of them from a mixed home. There are still a few others whose parents are not even Catholic but have found the Catholic faith appealing to them and wish to experience more with God.

### **TEAM OF FORMATORS/PROFESSORS-LAY AND CONSECRATED STAFF MEMBERS**

#### *New members, partners, collaboration in Responsibility, initiatives for common work-life-prayer and for ongoing formation:*

The year under review saw Rev. Fr. Prince Charles Ofori, one of the Seminary Staff leaving for further studies in the USA. The current resident priests' staff of the seminary is three, made up of the Rector, the Vice Rector, the Spiritual Director. There is also one non-residential priest, Rev. Fr. Kirk Siabour who assist with formation of our seminarians. Again, we also enjoy the services of some lay people whose support over the years continues to be solid: Mr. Gregory Kello who teaches English Language, Mr. Afrane Adjabeng who lecture in Ghanaian language and Culture and Mr. Dominic Darko who teaches music. We also acknowledge the inviolable contributions of the non-teaching staff in the area of security and cooking. These have been a strong pillar in the formation of our young men. Periodically, the team of formators met the seminarians to give talks and directions. The

From the desk of Felix Kwame Bonni  
(Assistant School Prefect)

Glory be to Almighty and Ever-living God for being so merciful that He renews the Church in every age by raising up priests, outstanding in Holiness to be gentle servants of the gospel.

We the seminarians of St. Hubert Minor Seminary community find it very necessary to write this letter of appreciation to you for your continual support.

Cooperating with the grace of God, the Pontifical Missionary Society has been a strong pillar in the formation of many young men to serve at the altar. We have been beneficiaries of your kind gesture in our formation and for this, we are so grateful that you are helping us in our quest to discern the voice of God in our lives.

We pray that the good Lord grant you enough strength to keep on with the good work you started many years ago to assist in priestly vocations. The entire seminary society together with the Catholic Archdiocese of Kumasi in Ghana say, a very big thank you for your philanthropic assistance. God bless you.

Yours faithfully,  
Felix Kwame Bonni  
(Assistant School Prefect)

team again, ensured that every seminarian had a Spiritual Director. Formators also made time to join the seminarians in their set prayer times to motivate and encourage them.

### **FORMATION PROGRAMME ON PASTORAL, HUMAN, COMMUNITY, SPIRITUAL AND ACADEMIC MATTERS**

*Theme of the year-accents and special initiatives in the course of the year:*

The theme for the school year was titled: The call to Holiness. Throughout the year, this theme was given much emphasis through retreats, spiritual conferences and personal interactions with the seminarians. Throughout the year, the seminarians had the opportunity of leading prayers at paraliturgical activities as well as in the Eucharistic celebrations. This was to encourage

them to develop the love for spiritual things. Various seminars in the area of Adolescent Reproductive Health, Affective Maturity, Life of the Saints, Personal Hygiene and Making Right Choices in Life were organized.

Each morning, there was exposition of the Sacrament for some minutes before morning prayer and the Eucharistic celebration. Seminarians also had the opportunity of choosing their own Spiritual Directors. Formators ensured that, the sacrament of reconciliation was well patronized by the seminarians.

In the area of academics, the Seminary participated in the National Science and Mathematics Competition organized by Prime Time in the country. It is worthy of note that our seminary made it to the quarter finals of the competition which was a great feat in the last five years.



*Students praying in the Chapel*



*A day of celebration at the seminary*



*Student Prefects of St. Hubert*

## **MAIN EVENTS AND MOMENTS OF PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE IN THE LIFE OF THE SEMINARY.**

### *Ordinations, Celebrations, Visits:*

During the year under review, the 1975-year group made a visit to the Seminary to encourage the young seminarians. The group was led by the Archbishop, Most Rev. Gabriel Justice Yaw Anokye. The seminary was also blessed with the visit of the Bishop of Victoria Diocese, Houston, Texas, in the USA, -Bishop Brendan John Cahill, who took the opportunity to encourage the seminarians as well as the staff. This was a very joyous occasion as it afforded the seminarians the opportunity of interacting with him. Furthermore, the General Manager of the Catholic Education for the country, Miss Araba Bentam also visited the seminary and the staff to understand the challenges of the school and also interacted with the students and staff.

## **GLOBAL EVALUATION OF THE RECTOR**

### *How is this Seminary fulfilling its mission in the Church?*

The seminary community continues to ensure that the mandate of ensuring the formation of the hearts and minds of the seminarians is duly executed. We continue to insist on the virtues of Sincerity, Fidelity and Perseverance for our Seminarians as well as all who pass through the four walls of the seminary.

It is worthy to note that even those who do not become priests are doing very well in the country serving in various capacities and contributing to the overall development of the country. The seminary continues to form many priests for the church.

From the desk of Rev. Fr. Henry Mensah (RECTOR)  
The Apostolic Nunciature, Accra  
The Metropolitan Archbishop of Kumasi

I write to acknowledge the reception of an amount of USD 13,500 as Ordinary Subsidy granted to our seminary for the upkeep of our seminarians for the 2021/2022 academic year.

On behalf of the Metropolitan Archbishop of Kumasi, Most Rev. Gabriel Justice Yaw Anokye, formators, Seminarians and the entire seminary community, I wish to express our deepest sentiments of gratitude to you and the society of St. Peter The Apostle, Toronto, Canada for the immense support to our seminary.

We acknowledge in a very special way the many anonymous benefactors from Canada, whose contribution has made it possible for us in Ghana to experience this kind gesture. Indeed, the Seminary community is indebted to you in gratitude. We assure you and our numerous benefactors of our constant prayers in our Tuesday Masses each week. May God bless and keep you. Amen.

With kind regards and every good wish.  
Sincerely in Christ.

Rev. Fr. Henry Mensah (RECTOR)

# Pontifical Association Of The Holy Childhood

*Pontifical Association of the Holy Childhood: This Pontifical Society exists to meet the spiritual and material needs of all children so that they can live worthily as real children of God and to raise children's awareness of their neighbour's needs and teach them the value and power of solidarity and reciprocal support.*

## Project Report : THAILAND

*The following is the report submitted by Sister Rosario J. Caminoy, a sister of the Daughters of Charity, who runs programs for children in the parish of St. Vincent De Paul, located in the province of Nakon Sri Thammarat, Thailand. Below is the story of Sr. Rosario and her children. This report covers the period from November 2021- October 2022.*

### ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT WITH THIS SUBSIDY

#### VALUE FORMATION

Group meetings with value formation are scheduled regularly 3 times a year, especially during the distribution of Educational Assistance. Fr. Renzo, the parish priest of St. Vincent de Paul parish also give time to teach the children, especially Christian values and love of God. Christmas celebration is the biggest activity within the year. Not only the recipient of the program is invited but it is a "Family Day" as well, where the whole family is invited and have fun and each one receives Christmas gifts. Before gift giving, games, meals and other activities, value formation is given to both children and their families.

#### RELIGIOUS AND SOCIO-CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

The beneficiaries are composed of children and youths from Buddhist, Islam and Catholic religions. Though they are of different faiths, they respect each other's beliefs and are united in all religious activities. Some children and youth are involved in some parish activities, like the way of the Cross within the parish compound. Some young boys help the priest during the mass as altar servers. October is the month of the Holy Rosary. The Children and Youth participated the praying of the Holy Rosary in the Church together with the parishioners every Sunday before the Mass.

Some Thai tradition, like the Loy Krathong Festival is also celebrated with much fun and learnings.

#### HOME VISITATION

Regular home visitation is implemented. It is a way to bridge the gap between the project and home for students' families, Sisters and volunteers. The purpose of the visit is to see the real situation of the child and to understand the family better. It is only then, that the child as well as the family can be assisted what is according to their needs. Family who are in need are also given financial assistance or given a capital to start a new business, e.g. selling of fruits, bread, drinks, etc. for family sustainability.

Sometimes home visitation was done by the Sisters together with the members of Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SSVP) and some parish youth volunteers. In some other special occasions, other children in the project also go with the Sisters for home visitation of their friends, especially if one is sick.



*Home Visit*

*Photo: Sr. Rosario and used with her express permission.*

#### MISSIONARY ACTIVITIES

Love and care for neighbor, especially the most abandoned are instilled in the heart of each child and youth during ongoing formation session. They are given opportunities to practice these by providing some activities like, visiting the elderly and the involvement in giving food supplement and other goods to victims of natural calamities. They are also given a chance to practice their sense of leadership and responsibility by organizing and hosting a Christmas party for the elderly patients in Phudhong Leprosarium as well as for children in Don Bosco Development Center.

#### PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED



*Students of the Don Bosco Centre.*

*Photo: Sr. Rosario and used with her express permission.*



*Children Celebrating ‘Loy Krathong Festival’, a Thai cultural tradition*  
*Photo: Sr. Rosario and used with her express permission.*

1. As a result of COVID-19 pandemic, families suffered from shortage of income; some parents lost their job and had a hard time to support their family.
2. Insufficient food and lack of basic needs of the children, especially milk for babies of poor and single mothers.
3. Lack of enthusiasm for some youth to continue their studies due to their financial and emotional problems.
4. The modern use of social media; like unguided use of cell-phone among children and youths has a negative effect on their performance in school and their relationship with others.
5. Family problems and children from dysfunctional families experienced negative effect both on their studies and their relationship with their peers and others in society.
6. Some of the children stopped studying and transferred to other provinces due to separation of parents.

## EVALUATION

### STRENGTH

1. The objectives of the Program were implemented.
2. Home Visitation is very fruitful. The parents and all the family members are very welcoming. Some parents and children also accompany the Sisters and volunteers in home visitation. That is also part of their missionary activity. The presence of the Sisters and volunteers is for them a great support and source of hope.
3. The support that the family received, especially the rice, noodles, sardines and other basic necessities are of great help to them on which they are very grateful.
4. Some families received support for family sustainability; capital for small business, like selling of food and drinks in front of their house; planting vegetables for sale and for daily consumption. Using a small cart, some parents sell local desserts and fruit juice around the village.

5. New children were visited and accepted in the program to replace those who left due to family problems.

### WEAKNESS

1. As a result of the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, the families are so much affected. Many parents lost their job and other means of living. They became even poorer than before that they cannot afford to give contribution for the activities. Some do not even have the money to pay for their transportation in coming to the center to attend to activities and get the educational assistance of their children.
2. Some students stopped their schooling even finishing their high school so that they can help their parents in looking for money to support the family.
3. Some children stopped in the program and transferred to other provinces to be with their parents.

### RECOMMENDATION/FUTURE PLANS

1. To continue the program for the development and value formation of children and youth in St. Vincent de Paul parish in Phudhong. Families should be given importance, too.
2. To give more importance on home visitation to know the children more and their families as well as to assess their needs and make ways to help and support them.
3. To enhance projects on family assistance for sustainability.
4. To visit other villages and explore the possibility of having additional children in the Program.
5. To enhance parents’ participation/involvement in all activities both in planning and implementation of plans.

hope you will feel our  
**LOVE and GRATITUDE**

wish you will discover  
 our hopes and dreams

we humbly ask you to continue  
 supporting us to make our lives  
 better, now and in the future

# Message From The Editor

*After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.*

*(Matthew 2: 9-12)*



In the Gospels, there are various passages that lay a foundation for the work of the missions, not least of which is the great commission at the end of Matthew's Gospel (Matt. 28:19-20). Another passage that should inspire us to work for the

missions concerns the Magi. Known as the feast of the Epiphany and celebrated in the Christmas season, the story of the Magi has various implications for the church's missionary activity. In Europe, at one time at least, the solemnity of the Epiphany observed on January 6 was perceived as the preeminent Christmas celebration, even above Christmas Day (December 25). The Epiphany had this pride of place because the visitation of the Magi marks the belief that Jesus came to save all of humanity, not just the Jews. Jesus came to save the whole human race and the Church that continues the mission of Jesus is commissioned to bring Jesus to the world, not just any exclusive group. The Epiphany remains all of Christ's followers that Jesus became human not just to save us individually but was sent by the Father for a universal salvation.

The visitation of the Magi can also remind us of other themes associated with the missions. The story of the Magi begins with these wise men from the east noticing the rising of a star, revealing the imminent birth of Jesus. The Magi not only observed the star

but were also able to interpret its meaning. The Magi exemplify that ordinary events may indeed be sacred moments, filled with special meaning. We too as Jesus's disciples are called to this kind of study and reflection. We too can spend time meditating and praying on the mysteries of our faith. We too can learn to interpret the daily activities of our lives as God moments and discern what God is trying to tell us in the events of our lives. In particular, we can examine the events around the world, the world that Jesus came to save, and discover where God might be calling us to contribute our time, talents, and/or treasure. Through prayer and reflection, we too can discern our place in the work of the missions.

After this initial period of study, the Magi embark on a long and arduous journey to worship Jesus. Even when they get to Jerusalem, they still do not know their way, and must ask Herod for assistance in finding Jesus. This journey of the Magi is an image for all of life, including our spiritual life, and our missionary activity as well. Life is a process. Life is a series of growth, stagnation, and regression, a cycle of various stages that continues until our death. Not only is process the rule of life, but it also applies

to our faith life. At times our faith life grows and is strong. At other times, our faith may languish and not appear to be going anywhere. But wherever our faith may be at any given time, it is important that like the Magi we continue to persevere and, with God's help, always try to move forward. Even in those difficult periods, when we do not know where we are going, be not afraid or anxious. Emmanuel, the God with us, travels with us through the highs and lows of our lives, never abandoning us. Like the

## MAY WE ALL LEARN TO FOLLOW THE STAR THAT GOD PLACED IN OUR LIVES.

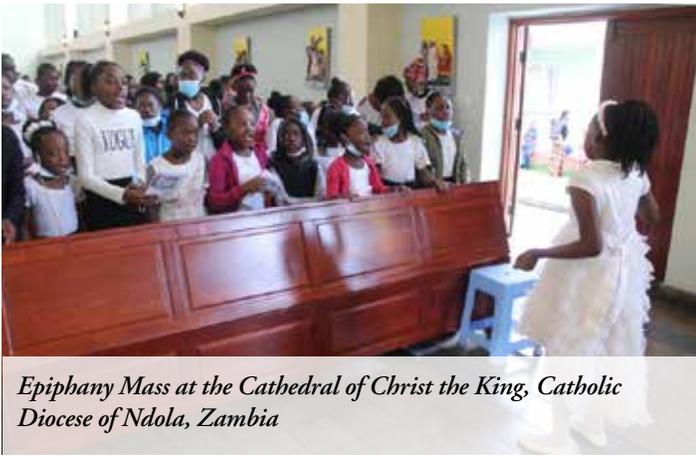
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*Epiphany Mass at the Cathedral of Christ the King, Catholic Diocese of Ndola, Zambia*

Magi, we too will arrive at our final destination, the place which God has prepared for us.

After meeting with Herod and his court, the Magi resume their journey and what do they discover as they depart for Bethlehem? The star that they observed in their country, now went before them leading them and the star came to rest at the place where Jesus was. Following your star, has become a popular image in our culture for following our dreams. The story of the Magi further suggests that come places a star in all our lives that we need to follow. All of us have dreams and ambitions. No matter our age or circumstances in life, all of us feel like we have more that we can contribute. Often, this feeling of restlessness is an indication that God is calling us to something more. Often, what we aspire to is not mere human longing, but a divine calling. As Christians, we should not be afraid to follow our own stars and our own dreams. They often are God’s voice, calling us to bring the Gospel of Jesus into the world, in a special way that only we can accomplish. In particular, we need to follow the star has it guides us into the work of the missions.

On arriving at the place where Jesus was staying, the Magi then offered Jesus gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The Magi gave the best of what they had to Jesus. The story of the Epiphany is also a reminder, then, that we too must give the best of who we are and the best of what we have to God. Every Christmas, as we recall that God gave us the best of what God had, God’s very own Son, we in turn must reply with an abundance of gratitude

and thanksgiving. We must also give our gifts and abilities back to God in recognition for all that God has done for us. We must take what we have, which are all gifts of God, and return them to the author of those gifts. We too must give what we have for the good of the missions and for the spread of the Gospel of Christ to all the world.

Finally, the journey of the Magi concludes with them taking a different route home. To avoid Herod, who they came to realize was not acting in the best interest of the child Jesus, the Magi return home, not as they arrived. This seemingly insignificant detail may in fact be quite telling. It may not only speak to the route that the Magi took to get home. It may also be a reference to their interior disposition. After meeting Jesus, they were no longer the same. After encountering Jesus, they left Judea changed in heart and mind as well. The encounter with Jesus is transformative. Every time we pray, or every time we receive the Eucharist, we are changed too. With every encounter of the risen Christ, we are made better, if only incrementally. Following the example of the Magi, let us also try to go away from Jesus with a renewed spiritual outlook and eager to serve Him all the days of our lives.



*Icon of the Three Magi*

## In Remembrance

### Our Deceased Donors

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

**Ms. Bourgeois Irene** ..... Vernon, BC  
**Mr. & Mrs. Franks Thomas W.**..... Calgary, AB

**Mr. Gillis Ronald J.**.....Sydney, NS  
**Mrs. Smieja Zofia**.....Mississauga, ON

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