



MISSIONS TODAY

VOL 81, NO. 3

Summer 2023

In this Issue:

**Celebrating the Tenth Anniversary of the
Pontificate of Pope Francis**

Report from St. John 23 Minor Seminary, Ghana.

Pilgrimage Walk in Hamilton, Ontario

The Society for the Propagation of the Faith

National Director's Message

Missions Today Summer Issue 2023

Dear Friends,

In 1926, Pope Pius XI instituted Mission Sunday for the whole church with the first worldwide Mission Sunday collection taking place in October 1927. World Mission Sunday organized by the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, is a day set aside for Catholics worldwide to reflect on their own baptism, when they received the gift of faith, and is a day to recommit themselves to the church's missionary activity through prayer and sacrifice.

A wounded humanity needs the Good News! This year the World Mission Sunday event will be on October 22, 2023. In his message titled "Hearts on fire, feet on the move," the Pope tells missionaries, who are experiencing a tough time at present, that "the Risen Lord is always with you." His message encourages people around the world to renew their commitment to spreading the Gospel and to support missionary work in the young dioceses.

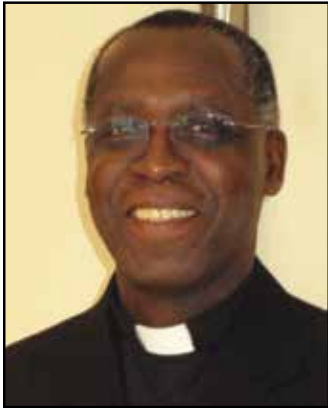
This new issue of Missions Today reflects on the tenth anniversary of the election of Pope Francis. During his pontificate, Pope Francis has committed himself to the work of the missions that every missionary demonstrates in their work and in their lives. In this edition, you will read about the impact of grassroot projects, such as education at St John 23 Seminary in Ghana and a pilgrimage fund-raiser in our own backyard, in the Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District School Board. You will also discover the work of catechists in Myanmar and the missionary activity of Franciscan Sisters in Indonesia.

Through the stories shared in this issue, we invite you to journey with us and explore the ways in which, together in mission, we can be effective and build a community of love and peace.

I pray you enjoy reading this edition of Missions Today and join

us in our Mission to make a positive change in the world and share the Gospel message to the world.

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



PRAYER OF BLESSED PAULINE JARICOT

God our Father, we give thanks for your servant,

Blessed Pauline Jaricot, who, through her commitment to the Gospel and passion for mission, began the work of Missio.

Despite carrying many crosses, she never closed her heart to the needs of the poor.

Following the example of your Son, fortified by a life of prayer and nourished by the Eucharist, she helped to build your Kingdom of justice and mercy.

May we, like Blessed Pauline, share our faith humbly and charitably, and through prayer and action, work together to make your love known to all of creation.

Grant through her intercession the favour I now ask of you...

(here make your petition). Amen.

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.

MAY: FOR CHURCH MOVEMENTS AND GROUPS

We pray that Church movements and groups may rediscover their mission of evangelization each day, placing their own charisms at the service of needs in the world.

JUNE: FOR THE ABOLITION OF TORTURE

We pray that the international community may commit in a concrete way to ensuring the abolition of torture and guarantee support to victims and their families.

JULY: FOR A EUCHARISTIC LIFE

We pray that Catholics may place the celebration of the Eucharist at the heart of their lives, transforming human relationships in a very deep way and opening to the encounter with God and all their brothers and sisters.

AUGUST: FOR WORLD YOUTH DAY

We pray the World Youth Day in Lisbon will help young people to live and witness the Gospel in their own lives.

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Palm Sunday Celebration at St. John 23 Seminary, Ghana.

Photo: Rev. Dr. Marcellus Gorleku and used with his expressed 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.*



■ **ASIA/INDONESIA - The Franciscan Sisters of Sukabumi were born from the mission of a Dutch religious congregation**

Sukabumi (Agenzia Fides) - The missionary history of the Franciscan Sisters in the city of Bergen op Zoom (Boz), in the Netherlands, fully expresses the authentic spirit and apostolic dedication of many people and congregations who, in their missionary work, they have detached themselves from any colonialist approach and have fully immersed themselves in the local context. To the point of becoming an integral part of it, eventually dissolving and giving rise to a local religious congregation. This whole historical process was remembered in Indonesia - a land where the Portuguese settlers arrived first and then the Dutch- in a celebration organized these days by the Congregation of the Franciscan Sisters of Sukabumi (SFS), a city in West Java, who celebrated the 90th anniversary of its presence in Indonesia, recalling its foundation in 1933. Although, at that time, the institute did not have that name and was only made up of European missionaries.

It must be said that, at that time, the islands of Southeast Asia were still the “Dutch East Indies”, colonial possessions of the Netherlands in Asia,

which began in the 16th century. The Dutch presence lasted until the middle of the 20th century, when, in 1949, the government in Amsterdam granted independence to the Dutch East Indies, which were renamed Indonesia.

A Dutch Franciscan nun, Sister Rosa de Bie, was the first to go on a mission there and opened the door of the first convent 90 years ago. “I’ll probably be the last one, the one to close the door,” says Sister Marie-Cecile Herder, one of the three Franciscan Sisters



from Bergen op Zoom still alive. Sister Marie-Cecile Herder, who came from Holland, joyfully participated in the celebration, recalling how what today is for all intents and purposes a local religious congregation, recognized by the Indonesian bishops, emerged. The religious congregation of Sukabumi is, in fact, the “Indonesian version” of the Dutch religious institute of the Franciscan Sisters of Bergen op Zoom. It assumed and adopted the Franciscan spirituality, recognizing itself as “a branch of that plant” and recognizing it as its inspiration and root.

Addressing the Indonesian sisters, Sr. Marie-Cecile was very happy to see that the charism of the Dutch Franciscan sisters has flourished again in Indonesia, in its specificity and creativity, a true example of “inculturation”: “There are still three Boz sisters in Holland. One -she says- is 96 years old and the youngest is 80 and is sick. I am the one who is still the most active and was able to travel to Indonesia. I did not want to miss it. I carry in my heart the joy of such an intense and festive celebration here in Sukabumi. The sisters and the people experience community unity, they are rooted in the Eucharist. Here there is a flowering of vocations to the consecrated life that gives us so much hope. The sisters of Sukabumi are like a new sprout born from an ancient trunk”.

Sister Marie-Cecil recalled the missionary adventure of the six sisters who, in 1933, set sail from Marseilles to Jakarta, then called Batavia. First they dedicated themselves to caring for the sick in the hospitals of Semarang and Muntilan. They then moved to Sukabumi, where they continued to work in healthcare, sheltered in a home by the locals. Later they obtained a permanent residence, which is still today the Motherhouse of the Sisters of Sukabumi.

Sister Vincentia, Indonesian, who is the current mother superior of the SFS, says that today the institute has 109 religious, present in various Indonesian dioceses, such as Bogor, Semarang, Palangka Raya (in Borneo) and, in the near future, in Samarinda (also in Borneo). In 1996, the SFS congregation was recognized as an autonomous religious congregation in the Bogor diocese, as the number of Dutch sisters in Boz was declining due to a lack of religious vocations.

Sister Rosa de Bie was the founder of the Dutch congregation of the Sisters of Boz, and Sister Marie-Cecile will probably be the last of the sisters to visit the former mission in Indonesia. The missionary returns to Holland with a certainty and a consolation: the work of the Holy Spirit continues and the spiritual legacy and apostolic zeal of the Dutch religious live on in the life and pastoral work of so many Indonesian religious today. (MH/PA) (Agenzia Fides, 17/5/2023).

http://www.fides.org/en/news/73787-ASIA_INDONESIA_The_Franciscan_Sisters_of_Sukabumi_were_born_from_the_mission_of_a_Dutch_religious_congregation

■ **AMERICA/COLOMBIA - Educating young people for peace, a sign of hope in the midst of the Colombian conflict**

Bogota (Agenzia Fides) - Education is essential to prevent children and adolescents from repeating the violence that plagues the region. This was stated by Juan Casas, director of the Jesuit Refugee Service Colombia (JRS).

The international Catholic organization is closely following the alarming situation of children and young people in the border areas between Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela, areas that do not have adequate infrastructure or services and suffer from the persistent conflict in Colombia that particularly affects children and young people.

“The presence of the army frightens the civilian population because moments of confrontation between the guerrillas and the military generate violence and the latter, in turn, cause displacement”, Casas continues after his recent visit to Serranía de San Lucas, a highly inaccessible area, where armed conflict is a constant threat. “Children play at being soldiers or guerrillas. With a broomstick they pretend to have a rifle in their hands. Or they hood up with a sweater. They reproduce what they see. But sadly, those games can become reality”.

For JRS, it is urgent to build spaces for peaceful coexistence. The organization has been involved for years, together with teachers and families involved in the education of children and young people at risk. “The school, with its structures, the football and basketball fields, becomes a protective space and that is how we work with the civilian population to guarantee a safe space that cannot be touched”, explains Casas, who adds how the guerrillas have respected that space and “nothing has ever happened in there”.

The country’s poverty, and especially in these more inaccessible regions, sometimes makes intervention processes difficult. But, for Casas, it is essential to work there “to tell the world that there is hope in these corners of Colombia in the midst of hopelessness and conflict.”

JRS Colombia began its activities in the country in 1994 in response to the humanitarian crisis caused by the intensification of armed actions throughout the country. These brought with them numerous forced displacements, which continue to occur today with the same intensity. (AP) (Agenzia Fides, 16/5/2023)

http://www.fides.org/en/news/73783-AMERICA_COLOMBIA_Educating_young_people_for_peace_a_sign_of_hope_in_the_midst_of_the_Colombian_conflict

REFLECTING ON THE MISSIONARY ACTIVITY OF POPE FRANCIS

Ten years ago, then-Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Buenos Aires, Argentina, became Pope Francis. When a young Bergoglio discerned his vocation to the priesthood, he dreamed of being a missionary in Asia: China or Japan were the two nations he had in mind. However, God had other plans for this young Jesuit, and poor health kept him in Argentina. Until March 13, 2013, when his brother cardinals, moved by the Holy Spirit, elected him as the successor of Peter. Yet he still dreams of a missionary Church, and he has entrusted The Pontifical Mission Societies to be the spiritual and economic support of those spreading the Gospel in places where Christ is still unknown or has been forgotten, persecuted, ignored, or shunned. Below is an article that discusses the importance of the missions in the ten year pontificate of Pope Francis.

Pope Francis, 10 years of Pontificate with “missionary restlessness

by Gianni Valente

Rome (Agenzia Fides) - There is a revealing detail that marks the tenth anniversary of the beginning of the Pontificate of Pope Francis, elected Bishop of Rome on March 13, ten years ago. Last January 11, as the threshold of his first ten years as the Successor of Peter was in sight, at the Wednesday General Audiences Pope Francis launched a new cycle of catechesis, dedicated to the “passion for evangelization, that is, apostolic zeal”, which he himself defined as “an urgent and decisive theme for Christian life” (see Fides, 11/1/2023).

Paradoxically, the abundant (and sometimes overflowing) media coverage fueled around the current Successor of Peter ends up (and sometimes serves) to conceal the gist of what he is suggesting to everyone every day. Starting from the apostolic and missionary restlessness that runs through his preaching and his ordinary magisterium like a powerful and living red thread. What continues to also be highly expressed in his homilies, Wednesday catechesis and Sunday Angelus.

From the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, a “programmatic” text published in November 2013 and dedicated to the “proclamation of the Gospel in today’s world”, to the current cycle of catecheses dedicated to “apostolic zeal”, the Pope has repeated thousand and thousand times that the apostolic mission is not a human strategy, but the work of God. That it is not an effort, it is not an obligation, but a gratuitous and free effect of a gift of grace, of the attraction that arises from the encounter with Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit.



He reiterated with pounding insistence that proclaiming the Gospel is not “proselytism”, because one does not start walking on the path of Jesus by pounding propaganda or by one’s own application. In the Christian life, the first step and also every real subsequent step is taken through “attraction”. Because Christ himself attracts hearts of all times, He consoles them and transforms them with His mercy, He heals them and embraces them with His forgiveness.

In the ten years of his Pontificate, Pope Francis has given those who listen to him a ‘constellation’ of words all aimed at indicating what is the dynamism proper to every apostolic work, and what can be its source: not the burden of a further effort, to be added to the labours of life, but a reverberation of gratitude.

For the joy of having encountered Christ and having foretasted His salvation as the days go by.

For this reason - Pope Francis has repeated on countless occasions - doing mission with authentically apostolic zeal means not imposing burdens, but “facilitating, making it easy, not putting ourselves in the way of Jesus’ desire to embrace all, to heal all, to save all”. For this reason, when he was Archbishop in Buenos Aires, Archbishop Bergoglio supported the parish priests and communities that in that metropolis had put in place

so many initiatives to make the celebration of baptisms “easier”, after realizing that the number of those who, for many reasons, including sociological reasons, were not baptized. Within the same horizon, as Bishop of Rome, Pope Francis in the first years

of his Pontificate wanted to celebrate morning mass almost every day in the chapel of the Domus Sanctae, Marthae first for the employees of the Holy See and then for groups from the parishes of Rome. When the COVID-19 pandemic arrived, the Masses at Santa Marta, also broadcast through television and social networks, comforted from Rome to Beijing, from Toronto to Nairobi multitudes of people grappling with the bewilderment and helplessness experienced by all before the pandemic contagion. On that occasion, Pope Francis, in order to “facilitate” the experience of Christ’s consolation, did what is the simplest and most important thing a priest in the care of souls can do: he celebrated Holy Mass in a bare manner, without a choir, simply reading and explaining the scriptures of the day’s liturgy. Thus, with such a simple gesture, without inventing anything, the Successor of Peter also showed that the proper horizon of the Christian experience is not exceptional “events” or great ecclesial Assemblies, but the everyday ordinariness of life, with its problems, expectations, joys and failures. On a journey in which among the suggestions offered by the Pope there are those, easy and elementary, of carrying a pocket Gospel to read a page every day, or of remembering the date of one’s baptism.

In his “missionary magisterium”, the current Successor of Peter has also reminded everyone that the formulas so dear to him on the “Church that goes out of herself” to proclaim the Gospel of Christ cannot be reduced to the dissatisfied and presumptuous activism of “competent” elites and handfuls of bold people, and that the testimony of Jesus given to the world flourishes in the “infallible” faith of the people of God. A missionary people in everyday gestures, even when they are frail and distracted, poor and battered.

The current Bishop of Rome has also repeated in countless ways that the mission of proclaiming and bearing witness to the liberation of Jesus takes place in humanity and in the world as they are, in life as it is encountered, in “body to body” with the given



conditions, without “taming” and narcotizing reality in the laboratories of moralism and abstraction. This is why the mission of salvation entrusted to the Church does not and cannot ignore the environmental catastrophe or the migrants who die in shipwrecks, the trafficking of arms and drugs or the new forms of slavery and brain manipulation. Because if the Church were not in the world, and self-conceived as a “world apart”, it would no longer encounter the men and women of the present time as they are, where they are. And on that path, structures and dynamics of “ecclesial introversion” would end up becoming allies of the devil.

Instead, Christ’s salvation - the Bishop of Rome suggested with his magisterium - descends and resounds in the underworld of the world’s pain. The one that digs hearts in wars, that crashes them in earthquakes and pandemics, that makes parents who have lost their jobs weep, but only when it is night and the children are asleep.

For this reason - Pope Francis recalled - the evangelizing community immerses itself “in the daily lives of others, shortens distances, lowers itself to the point of humiliation if necessary”. It “accompanies humanity in all its processes, no matter how difficult or lengthy this may prove to be. It is familiar with patient expectation and apostolic endurance. It cares for the grain and does not grow impatient at the weeds”. (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 24). (Agenzia Fides, 11/3/2023)



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

“Antiquum ministerium”, fruit of the Second Vatican Council

by Stefano Lodigiani

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - Although the figure of the catechist appears already after the First Vatican Council (1870), with the emergence of a great catechetical movement, the driving impulse for the establishment of ministries entrusted to the laity (including, in order of time, that of the catechist is for now the last one) comes from the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), with its profound reflection on the reality of the Church (“All men are called to form the people of God”, *Lumen gentium* 2; “The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very “, *Ad Gentes* 2) and on the role that the laity have in it.

The image of the Church that emerged from the Council is profoundly marked by ministeriality, that is, by the articulation into ‘ministries’, services that are permanently provided for the community and are not reserved for a few members, but are varied and widely distributed. The faithful are called to participate actively in the life and mission of the Church, in the richness and diversity of the gifts bestowed by the Holy Spirit. In addition to the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood, the general priesthood of the faithful is rediscovered and valued, according to the first letter of Peter (1 Peter 2:9).

With the Apostolic Letter “*Ministeria quaedam*” of August 15, 1972, Pope Paul VI set out, in the spirit of the Council, to reorganise what had hitherto been called ‘minor orders’: functions or ministries of very ancient origin, called ‘minor’ in that they were conferred without the sacrament of order but had ended up being reserved almost exclusively to those preparing for the priesthood. This is explained at the beginning of the Apostolic Letter: “From the earliest times certain ministries were instituted by the Church to duly worship to God and to render service to God’s people as needed. With them offices of a liturgical and charitable nature have been entrusted to the faithful, so that they might exercise them according to the various circumstances. The conferment of these offices often took place by means of a special rite, with which the faithful, having received the blessing of God, were elevated to a special class or rank to fulfill a specific ecclesiastical function”.

Paul VI established that what until then had been called minor orders should in future be called “ministries”. These ministries can also be entrusted to lay people, so that they are no longer considered reserved for candidates for the Sacrament of Holy Orders. With the abolition of some of the old “minor orders”, two ministries were maintained throughout the Latin Church, adapted to current needs: that of Lector and that of what is known as Acolyte. The Lector, responsible for the office of proclaiming the Word of God in the liturgical assembly, the Acolyte for taking care of the altar service. The Apostolic Letter “*Ministeria quaedam*” recalls that “according to the venerable tradition of the Church, the offices Lector and Acolyte, is reserved for men” (n.7). The ministries

are conferred by the local Ordinary or by the major superior in religious institutes, with a specific liturgical rite.

In the Letter to the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith dated January 10, 2021, Pope Francis recalls: “In some cases a ministry has its origin in a specific sacrament, the Sacred Order: it pertains to the “ordained” ministries, of the bishop, the priest, the deacon. In other cases the ministry is entrusted, with a liturgical act of the bishop, to a person who has received Baptism and Confirmation and in whom specific charisms are recognized, after an appropriate journey of preparation: we then speak of “instituted” ministries. Many other ecclesial services or offices are in fact exercised by many members of the community, for the good of the Church, often for a long period and with great efficacy, without the expectation of a particular rite for the bestowal of the role”.

In the same Letter, the Bishop of Rome underlines that, in the line of renewal indicated by the Second Vatican Council, “one feels ever greater today the urgency to rediscover the co-responsibility of all the baptized in the Church, and particularly the mission of the laity”. The Final Document of the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon region (October 6-27, 2019), pointed to the need to find “new paths for ecclesial ministeriality”, “not only for the Church in the Amazon region, but for the whole Church, in the diversity of situations... It is the Church of baptized men and women that we must consolidate, promoting ministeriality and especially the awareness of baptismal dignity” (n. 95). After explaining the reasons why these ministries were previously reserved for men, Pope Francis expressly states that “not only men but also women can be used as Lectors or Acolytes”.

A few months later, on May 10, 2021, the Apostolic Letter “*Antiquum ministerium*” was published, officially establishing the lay ministry of the catechist in the Church. “From the beginning, the Christian community was characterized by many different forms of ministry carried out by men and women who, obedient to the working of the Holy Spirit, devoted their lives to the building up of the Church” (n.2).

“The history of evangelization over the past two millennia clearly shows the effectiveness of the mission of catechists” (n.3). “It is fitting that those called to the instituted ministry of Catechist be men and women of deep faith and human maturity, active participants in the life of the Christian community, capable of welcoming others, being generous and living a life of fraternal communion. They should also receive suitable biblical, theological, pastoral and pedagogical formation to be competent communicators of the truth of the faith and they should have some prior experience of catechesis” (n.8). (Agenzia Fides, 13/5/2023)

HOLY CHILDHOOD ASSOCIATION REPORT

The Holy Childhood Association 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 neighbor’s needs and teach them the value and power of solidarity and reciprocal support

THE PILGRIMAGE WALK WITH CHRIST, JUSTICE FOR THE POOR

As part of the annual Catholic Education Week celebration, April 30 to May 5, 2023, the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board organized their 2023 Pilgrimage walk that took place on April 30, 2023, with the theme: “WALK WITH CHRIST, JUSTICE FOR THE POOR.”



Sr. Juliana and staff of Canadian Pontifical Missions, along with poster winner of Catholic Education Week

The Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board in Ontario, Canada, has a custom of organizing a pilgrimage walk every year to raise funds for the Pontifical Association of the Holy Childhood to support mission countries. A team from the national office of the HCA had the privilege to join over 1,600 students and their teachers in this important exercise of Faith and Mission.

The celebration of the Holy Eucharist that preceded the walk took place in the Auditorium of Cathedral high school, and His Excellency Most Rev. Douglas Crosby, Bishop of Hamilton Diocese presided. In his homily, Bishop Douglas said to the young



Students from Hamilton Wentworth CDSB participating in the Pilgrimage Walk.

people that in life there are difficulties, and one can even feel very lonely sometimes, but even during the most challenging times, Jesus the Good Shepherd is always walking with us, and young people should never lose hope in Him. Before the concluding rite, his Excellency blessed the 2023 Catholic Education Week Plaque painted by a student.

The Director of Education, Mr. David Hansen thanked all who were present to support the pilgrimage walk, including the students, parents, and teachers. In his address to the young people, he reflected on the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis, “*Christus Vivit*” saying “Do not leave until tomorrow to contribute your energy, your audacity.” He told them to take bold steps and use their talents and creativity to transform the world.

After the final blessing, the Vice-Principal of Cathedral High School, Ms. Andrea McCabe directed the students to go out in batches to begin the pilgrimage walk with Christ, Justice for the Poor. This was to avoid congestion at the doors of the auditorium, as the number of participants was great. The 8-Kilometer walk ended at St. Anthony Daniel Catholic Elementary School.

Sr. Juliana Tanye, FMM
National Secretary – Pontifical Association of the Holy Childhood



Students on the Pilgrimage Walk. Photos taken by staff of the PMS

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.

Introduction

This report is an account of some major events and daily activities that took place mainly during the 2022/23 academic year. Key issues that will be highlighted include but not limited to the following: Brief history, Staff and Seminarians; Academic and formation programmes; some recent events; the role of Seminary Formation and Catholic Education in the evangelization mission of the church.

Brief History

Pope John XXIII Minor Seminary is the formation house which accommodates students who gain admission into Pope John Senior High School and Minor Seminary to be helped to discern their vocation towards the Catholic Priesthood while they pursued concurrently the required Senior High School education programmes.

The school was established on January 21, 1958, as St. John's Seminary and College with student population of forty-five (45): fourteen (14) seminarians and thirty-one (31) day students. The vision of the founding fathers from the Divine Word Missionaries (SVD) led by Bishop Joseph Oliver BOWERS SVD., DD., JCL of blessed memory, the then Catholic Bishop of Accra, was to establish an institution of excellence, to train not only young priests for the new nation Ghana which had just gained Independence from British Colonial Rule in 1957, but also to contribute to the education of new generation of citizens imbued with the right Christian morals and academic proficiency through time-tested Catholic education for private and public service to Ghana. Under



Seminarians in Chapel for Benediction

the administration of three SVD priests and a lay-teacher, St. John Seminary and College operated as a private Catholic institution financed by the then Catholic Diocese of Accra for a period of ten years; when, with the approval of Bishop Bowers the school due to ever increasing running costs officially applied to be incorporated into the Public Education System of the Ministry of Education in September 1968. Upon incorporation as a government assisted School, St. John's Seminary and College had a name change to "Pope John XXIII Secondary School and Junior Seminary" not only to keep the identity and purpose of the original name 'St. John' but more importantly to honor Pope JOHN XXIII who had just convened the Second Vatican Council. Subsequent education reforms led to the modification of the school's name to Pope John XXIII Senior High School and Minor Seminary. Today, the school has a total population of more than 2,600 students, 200 teaching and non-teaching staff members and about 80 seminarians.

Staff and Seminarians

The Seminary serves two Dioceses, the Catholic Diocese of Koforidua and the Accra Archdiocese. The two Bishops responsible for the seminary are Most Rev. Joseph Afrifah-Agyekum of the Koforidua Diocese and Most Rev. John Bonaventure Kwofie, CSSP, of the Accra Archdiocese. Four Priests, two full time (The Rector and Seminary Prefect) and two part time serve as the team of Formators in the Seminary. However, five priest pastors, and assistant priests in the nearby parishes also help out with Spiritual Directions, Recollections, and Retreats and serve as Confessors etc. to the seminarians. There is great collaboration among the team of Formators which greatly enhanced efficiency of the formation process.

There are Eighty (80) Seminarians: forty (40) final year; twenty (20) second year and twenty (20) first year seminarians. Apart from the general Senior High School education programmes of Science, General Arts, Visual Arts and Business, the seminarians are also taken through specific formation programmes including introduction to some Church teachings, Spirituality, basic Apologetics etc. Regular Recollections, Eucharistic Adorations, Sporting activities, singing practice etc. are some additional activities which the seminarians are involved in. Also, there are regular interactions of formators with seminarians during Conferences and panel sessions where seminarians are offered useful guidance and direction regarding academic performance, response to formation programs and other challenges in the formation process.



Seminarians at play.

Most of the seminarians are from good Catholic homes with quite a few having a parent or relative serving as Catechists in an out station of their parishes. Other seminarians whose family may not be entirely catholic find themselves in the seminary either due to their association with catholic friends, families and benefactors. Sometimes the influence of a parent or relative who was a beneficiary of Catholic education caused a particular student to show interest in the Catholic faith which sometimes even triggered desire for the catholic Priesthood.

The non-teaching staff, the cooks, security men and caretakers also play significant roles in facilitating smooth running of formation programmes in the seminary.

Formation programmes

A day in the life of a seminarian in this seminary, after rising at 4.30 am, is interspersed with various academic and formation activities including: morning prayers, meditation, Holy Mass at 6.00am which some of the other students join. The seminarians then go for regular classes or academic work which begin and end between 7am and 4pm respectively. On return from classes, seminarians take a brief rest and then get ready for some sporting activities or games which alternate daily with manual work. The seminary garden, orchard and bushy areas of the seminary are all taken care of by the seminarians themselves. Evening preps or studies begin at 7 pm followed by night prayers at 9 pm. The seminarians retire to bed for the day at 10pm. On weekends, general cleaning of the dormitories and chapel takes place after mass on Saturdays as well as singing practice and evening entertainment. Conferences, teachings and general interaction with formators also take place at various times on Sunday after lunch.

Some recent events

Some major events that took place during this academic year include: Founders' day celebration and induction of a new substantive Headmaster, Rev. Fr. Benjamin Opoku Ohene into office. Twenty-first of January every year is marked by the seminary and entire school community as Founders' day to commemorate the day Pope John XXIII School was established. Old Students, Traditional leaders, the Bishop of the Diocese, the Clergy, Parents as well as several stakeholders of education attended the Wreath-

laying ceremonies, Durbar and Eucharistic Celebration in honour of Bishop Joseph Oliver BOWERS SVD and other SVD missionaries and personalities whose vision, sweat and toil laid the foundation of this great Catholic institution of learning which has produced many illustrious, faith-filled and disciplined citizens and priests for the country and the world at large.

As a yearly tradition, the Bishop of the Koforidua Diocese Most Rev. Joseph Afrifah-Agyekum hosted more than 2,400 Catholic students from all the Senior High

schools in the Koforidua diocese at Pope John Senior High School and Minor Seminary to Celebrate St. Thomas Aquinas day. As patron saint of Students, St. Aquinas day is celebrated every year on 28th January where Catholics and other students convened at a chosen venue to hold symposia, talks and variety entertainment which is climaxed with Holy Mass often presided over by the Bishop who always exhorts the young boys and girls not only to take their studies and Faith seriously but also to allow the life, spirituality and studious nature of St. Thomas Aquinas be their guide always.

Some old students of the Pope John Seminary who couldn't continue to the Major seminary after graduation visited the seminary to interact with the seminarians. These former minor seminarians who were pursuing various courses in the Universities and other tertiary institutions, encouraged the seminarians to remain focused and to take their formation programmes as well as their academic work seriously for, as they testified, the seminary training added extra value to their academic formation upon graduation from the Senior High School. Now, they are among the more disciplined, focused and enthusiastic catholic youth in the universities and other tertiary institutions where they are furthering their education.

Seminary Formation and Catholic Education in the global evangelization mission of the church

Excellent education delivery has always been the core mandate of the Catholic Church, an intrinsic part of its evangelization mission. Thus the theme for the year under review "Lord, I come to do your will" driven by the school's motto, "Vela damus" ("We set Sail") as well as its Core values of Prayer, Hard work, Discipline, Endurance, Accountability and Transparency appropriately set the tone toward achievement of holistic education and formation of the boys for the service of God, and entire human community. Thus the additional formation programmes of the seminarians such as Recollections, Retreats, personal Meditations and Spiritual Directions; other programmes like the regular conferences and talks on building healthy relationships, Personal Hygiene, health and wellness underscore effective religious, spiritual and moral development of the seminarians for effective discernment



Rev. Fr. Dr. Marcellus Gorleku and first year seminarians.

of their vocation towards the Catholic Priesthood. Again, each seminarian by choosing a Spiritual Director as well as having opportunity to access regularly the sacrament of reconciliation, personal reflections and weekly Eucharistic Adorations is further groomed for their future service of the church as priests or as good patriotic Catholic citizens who will impact and transform their communities.

Furthermore, Catholic education in Pope John Senior High School and Minor Seminary aims to offer young boys the wherewithal to succeed in life, however challenging. Catholic education enabled holistic formation of the Minds, Hearts and Hands of boys with requisite skills to be harnessed for the service of God and humanity. This holistic faith-based formation has led to many students, not only embracing the Catholic faith every year but over the past sixty-five years, students who graduated from this school, also known as POJOBA (Pope John Old Boys Association) have excelled in nearly all fields of endeavour. Apart from the hundreds of Catholic priests produced, many POJOBA who are non-Catholic, also became pastors, ministers of religion, evangelists. Many other professionals from the school are making various contributions to national development as: Doctors, Engineers, Teachers, Pharmacists and so on.

Some Challenges to the formation

The excellent Catholic education and remarkable success of beneficiaries of Catholic education have made Catholic educational institutions the schools of choice where most parents prefer to have their wards educated. Consequently, the Catholic schools in Ghana and indeed worldwide sometimes have difficulty admitting all the qualified students who apply for admission into those institutions. Students from both Catholic and non-Catholic homes compete for admission. As it turns out, sometimes more non catholic students become beneficiaries of Catholic education than the Catholic faithful. For instance, out of the present student population of about 2,600 at Pope John Senior High School and Minor Seminary, only about 347 are Catholic and vast majority are non-Catholics and Muslims. Though this

may be opportunity for evangelization to gain converts, there is also the challenge of getting the overwhelming number of non-Catholic group to effectively appreciate the catholic values and practices without the relevant human resource support and logistics which is highly inadequate.

Secondly, since Pope John School became government assisted, a church –state partnership where the government provided remuneration and teaching and learning resources as well as maintenance of infrastructure while the Church provided administrators and other staff to run the school, most of the infrastructure has seen little or no renovation and maintenance.

While the government cites unforeseen circumstances as reason for inability to fulfill its responsibilities to the schools, the churches have had to seek support from other sources to resolve infrastructural deficits and much definite maintenance needs of their schools. In the seminary, maintenance of infrastructure as well as refurbishment of other facilities such as classroom desks, dormitory beds and electrical connections, the lawn Mower and other machines for the maintenance of the seminary landscape and environment for effective formation process, have largely been done with the generous support of donors and benefactors. Such donations which the seminary receives annually have really sustained the maintenance culture in the seminary. The Pontifical Missionary Society of Canada has indeed been a great blessing to seminary formation in Ghana. As through their regular donations, the Pope John XXIII Seminary has been able to sustain its education and formation programmes for seminarians in their quest to discern their vocation to the priesthood.

Gratitude

On behalf of the Bishops in charge of the Seminary, Most Rev. Joseph Afrifah-Agyekum, Catholic Bishop of Koforidua and Most Rev. John Bonaventure Kwofie, CSSP of the Archdiocese of Accra; the formators and staff of the seminary, the seminarians and the Headmaster and Staff of Pope John Senior High School and Minor Seminary, may I express most profound gratitude to the Pontifical Mission Society and the society of St. Peter the Apostle, Toronto, Canada for the tremendous support to the seminary over the past years. Profound gratitude also goes most especially to all the generous donors and kind hearts behind the scenes whose donations continue to sustain missionary work and especially seminary formation activities. The seminarians pray for all their benefactors at their daily Masses, prayers and Eucharistic Adorations. May God continue to bless your work and your families always.

Written by: Rev. Fr. Dr. Marcellus Gorleku
Acting Rector
Pope John XIII Minor Seminary
Koforidua Ghana

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

Sacrosanctum Concilium, the first constitution resulting from Vatican II to be proclaimed by Pope Paul VI, has been instrumental in initiating many significant liturgical changes in the modern Church. Within the context of the optimism of the early 1960s, the bishops and their assistants assembled and considered how to implement

Pope John XXIII’s mandate of ‘aggiornamento’ or updating some of the Church’s practices to increase its relevance. The document also furthers the steps taken by previous popes earlier in the 20th century for more liturgical involvement among the faithful.

The Pope announced the constitution in December, 1963 and 60 years later, it continues to be discussed and interpreted. The bishops’ intentions and priorities must be clearly and accurately understood, keeping in mind the fundamental social and geopolitical changes the world has undergone since then.

The main theme of Sacrosanctum Concilium is modification of the liturgy in order to integrate more active, conscious participation by the faithful, primarily in the Mass, but also in the other sacraments: “active participation in liturgical celebrations . . . by the Christian people . . . is their right and duty by reason of their baptism” (S.C. II.14). It is the clergy’s responsibility “to ensure that the faithful take part fully aware of what they are doing, actively engaged in the rite, and enriched by its effects” (SC I.11). In order to achieve this, among the many changes encouraged in the document are an expanded breadth of biblical readings “so that richer fare may be provided for the faithful at the table of God’s words” (S.C. II.51). The bishops emphasized the Paschal mystery, keeping in mind the centrality of Jesus in our lives and that he is actively present when the faithful gather. Pope Francis, who uses his weekly general audience to reflect on priorities in Catholic life, has stated that Sacrosanctum Concilium “comprehensively and organically reaffirms the importance of the liturgy for the life of Christians.” Underlining the importance of liturgical

prayer, and its connection to Sacrosanctum Concilium’s theme, Pope Francis has reminded the faithful that “Christ is present! In the liturgy, you pray with Christ who is next to you.”

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



Photo of outdoor Papal Audience taken by editor.

A View from the Pew...

“Indeed, the word of God is living and active...” Hebrews 4:1



By Lori Lisi

In preparation for the 2025 Holy Year -‘Pilgrims of Hope’, Catholics around the world are being asked to read and study the four documents of Second Vatican Council.

One of the constitutions of Second Vatican Council is *The Dogmatic Constitution On Divine Revelation Dei Verbum*

(November 18, 1965), which “sets forth authentic doctrine on divine revelation and how it is handed on, so that by hearing the message of salvation the whole world may **believe**, by believing it may **hope**, and by hoping it may **love**.” This document is a reflection on the Word of God, who is Jesus,- the apex revelation of God. It encourages us to attentively contemplate the ‘Word of God’ (Dei Verbum), who, through His life, death and resurrection, continues to speak to us through the Bible, for the purpose of revealing God and His plan for creation. It addresses both sacred scripture and sacred tradition, which together form the content of divine revelation. The chapters of this document speak to such topics as revelation, tradition, inspiration, the old testament, the new testament and the use of scripture in the Church.



Photo of St. Peter's Basilica taken by editor.

Revelation,...

In His goodness and wisdom God chose to reveal Himself and to make known to us the hidden purpose...

~Ephesians 1:9

- God reveals himself by deeds (proof that God is real) and words (explanation of the deeds)
- God is revealed in Sacred Scripture (the Old Testament and the New Testament) and God is revealed in sacred tradition; ultimately revealed by the person of Jesus to the Apostles, who handed on to their successors all that they had received.
- Both Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture equally reveal God to the whole of humanity.

Tradition...

a ‘handing on,’ all that the Church is and believes

- referring to the passing down of God’s revelation which was later ‘put into writing’ for the sake of salvation’.

Inspiration...

‘God-breathed’...The special influence of the Holy Spirit on the writers of Sacred Scripture;

- “All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.” ~2 Timothy 3:16-17
- God is the author of both the Old Testament and the New Testament, which makes the books of the Bible true and without error.

The Old Testament...

A term denoting the time from the origin of the human race to Christ; also the primitive, patriarchal, and prophetic revelation.

- God chose people to whom He would entrust His plan of salvation and promises; first to Abraham, then to Israel through Moses, etc...
- The Old Testament remains ‘permanently valuable’ to every generation, not just the past generations.

The New Testament...

is the fulfillment of the Old Covenant and includes all that Christ did and said during his visible stay on earth for our eternal salvation.

- Here we learn of the origin and life of the Church
- It contains the four Gospels (the principal witnesses for the life and teaching of Jesus) and the epistles of St. Paul and other apostolic writings.

The use of Scripture in the Church...

Scripture is the inspired record of the revelations made to mankind by God about himself and his will for men.

- The Church ensures that Sacred Scripture is accessible to all by translating it into different languages.
- Sacred theology rests on Sacred Scripture, as well as, sacred tradition, as its primary and perpetual foundation.
- All those who are involved in the ministry of word, (priests, deacons, catechists,...) through conscientious reading and mindful study must be guided by and loyal to Sacred Scripture.
- Prayer should accompany the reading of Sacred Scripture, for when we pray we ‘speak to God’; When we read the Word, we hear ‘God speak to us’.

Through the person of Jesus, to the Apostles, God reveals himself and his purpose, which is our salvation, freeing us from sin and death and raising us to eternal life. In turn, the Apostles announce to us all that they have seen and heard, so that we, too, may be in communion with God.

We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us— we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

~1 John 1:2-3

So, how do we in our daily life continue to come to know God, be in relationship with Him, and share all of this with others?

Is it enough to simply attend mass on Sundays or does knowing God and being in relationship with him require more of us? Being present at mass on Sundays reveals God to us in both word and deed. It is here that we join in prayer, with our brothers and sisters, to praise and honour God. We listen to the Word of God in the readings from Sacred Scripture, and to the explanation in the homily that accompanies them. It is here that we unite with God in the Holy Eucharist and receive His graces, made possible through Christ. Furthermore, we are called to be more than ‘passive recipients’ who simply ‘*learn about*’ God; We are called to ‘*know*’ God by being ‘active participants’ and revealing God to others. “*And he said to them, ‘Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation.’*” ~Mark 16:15

Thus, it is incumbent upon us to ‘know’ God by meditating, contemplating, reading and putting into practice in our daily living all that God reveals to us, for only then can we grow in



Photo of outdoor Papal Audience taken by editor.

relationship with God and become His true disciples. By studying Sacred Scripture, both the Old Testament and the New Testament, we will come to know God more intimately. Remaining steadfast, reflective, collaborative, contributing members of God’s family and engaging in the daily process of being life-long learners for the purpose of **knowing** God and **revealing** Him to others, we glorify God.

All missionary work in the modern world involves being true to the Word, and thus, remaining true to God’s plan. We, as missionaries, have been entrusted with the truth and so we must not remain ignorant of the Word. What may change for missionaries, as the world changes, is not the ‘what’ about who God is or what his message is, rather it will be the ‘how’. How we share the Word will be prompted by time, place, and people. How we share the Word will affect how people receive it. Second Vatican Council asks the Church to respond to the needs of the changing times, and thus we will need to differentiate the ‘how’, while remaining true to the ‘what’. At the words of

St. Jerome, we are reminded of the importance of studying sacred scripture, for it nourishes us with the knowledge of who God is and continues to sustain our relationship with Him, because as he states,

“Ignorance of the Scripture is ignorance of Christ.”

~St. Jerome.

The Society for the Propagation of the Faith

“Ss. Peter and Paul’s Catechists’ Bible Training School” Yangon Archdiocese (Myanmar)



The St. Peter and Paul Catechist Training Center in the Archdiocese of Yangon, Myanmar, opened its new academic year on June 1, 2022. There are 19 students participating in the Center this year, 15 new students and four who need to complete the two-year course.

Formation Team and Staff

The Center consists of an eight-member team for the entire training program. To evaluate the training plan, and specific program content, trainers and staff meet once a month. Training includes four clearly delineated areas: human, intellectual, spiritual and pastoral.

The formation program has four sections: human, intellectual, spiritual and pastoral

Human Formation

In fostering the integral growth of the candidates, human relationship among the members of the community are encouraged. Daily activities included Liturgy, general maintenance and are coordinated by different service groups headed by an appointed office bearers. The students have opportunities to organize and participate in community activities.

Intellectual formation

Because students come from different dioceses and have different

levels of education, some of them find it difficult to take courses because they have little knowledge of the official Burmese language. Other courses include gaining basic knowledge of the Bible, sacraments, catechism, the Magisterium of the Church and liturgical music. Students have the opportunity to attend workshops and seminars on various topics: on health, leadership, peace building, AsIPAIPA (Asian Integral Pastoral Approach)[1], biblical apostolate, catechism-teaching method.

The main subjects taught include the Old Testament and New Testaments, Catechism, Liturgy and Church History. Minor subjects are Music and Hymns, Spirituality for Catechists, Personal Growth, Social Communication and Medical Knowledge.

Exams were held twice, once in September and once in March..

Spiritual Formation

To foster and deepen their spiritual life, students participate in morning prayers, meditation, Holy Mass and evening recitation of the rosary; adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, night prayer; spiritual retreats are held every Saturday and Lectio Divina every Thursday.

On Sunday, students can engage in pastoral-missionary activities in St. Peter and Paul Parish, animating and preparing children and youth for catechism.

A monthly retreat is held on the second Saturday of the month and students are offered spiritual direction.

Pastoral formation

Students have an opportunity to learn principles and techniques relevant to the ministry of teaching and leading the people entrusted to their care. During the Christmas season last year (2021), pastoral activities were held in a village in Bago parish, including singing, concerts, plays, and dances typical of the Karen people.

To gain pastoral experience, during the summer the students were sent to some parishes to catechise and prepare children and youth for First Holy Communion and Confirmation as well as to learn and practice the Karen language.

Unfortunately, during the year 2021 this was not possible due to COVID 19.

Once the two-year training period is over, the trainees continue with some vocational courses over a span of a few months. These include learning English, sewing, nursing, and driving,. This is to make their service correspond better to the needs of their home dioceses and parishes.

Activities of Catechists

Catechists are divided in two groups: Full-Time and as Part-Time Catechists. The Archdiocese of Yangon has 107 catechists. After finishing their two-year degree and receiving their diploma, the Catechists, return to their respective parishes to begin their pastoral service, beginning with Part-Time service. After three years and another period of preparation, they can advance to full-time service. The internship period requires a minimum of six months of training, which will involve primarily intellectual and spiritual subjects.

With a solemn Eucharistic celebration, they reach the status of catechists by dedicating their whole lives to the service of God and the Church.

The Activities of Catechists are:

Teaching Catechism to children, youth and adults.

Celebrating para-liturgy in the absence of priest, and preaching Gospel.

Preparing the young and adults for the sacraments of baptism, communion, Marriage, Etc.

Leading the communities of the faithful in rural places and taking care of their Faith, Education, Health, Family, and social affairs.

During the Covid-19 pandemic and the military coup of 2021, most catechists became promoters of peace and justice, heralds of love and forgiveness. Bearers of consolation and help to the needy. Solidarity is alive among catechists and they have shared this all with those most in need.

All catechists live their lives in the presence of God and serve Him and His people with joy,

Fr. **Jerome Win Shwe Kyi**, Rector of Catholic Bible Training School, Insein, Yangon

<https://www.ppoomm.valen/i-progetti/tutti-i-progetti/2022/catechists-bible-training-school-yangon.html>



The Society of the Propagation of the Faith has the goal of opening every believer’s heart to the vastness of the missionary horizon through spiritual and material support for the proclamation of the Kingdom of God.

Message From The Editor

“Hearts on Fire, Feet on the Move” (Luke 24:13-25)

“Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?” (Luke 24:32)



On the first Easter Sunday, two disciples of Jesus are returning home to Emmaus. As they walk along, Jesus appears to the despondent disciples, but they do not recognize him. (Luke 24:13-35) One of the unique features of this resurrection story is the way Jesus ministers to the two disciples. At first, Jesus assists the two disciples to understand the crucifixion by interpreting the Hebrew scriptures for them. Then the two disciples finally recognize Jesus when they eat together, in the breaking of the bread. These incidents in the story are unmistakeable allusions to the Eucharist. Jesus uses the contours of the Eucharistic liturgy, of word and sacrament, to illuminate the hearts and minds of the two disciples. Jesus's actions in this resurrection appearance account indicate that the flow of the Eucharist can be used as a method for ministering to others. As the Catholic Bishops of Ontario indicate in their pastoral letter on Catholic education, “It is in the Eucharist where we find the most perfect ‘faith formation program,’ and we are evangelized, catechized, and made holy as we are drawn into the mystery of our salvation.” (Renewing the Promise, p.23).

For Jesus, then, there was no disconnect between the Eucharist and his ministry, nor any separation between his actions at the last supper and the rest of his mission on earth. This example from the Gospel, therefore, should remind us of the deep connection between the Eucharist and our vocation. The Eucharist is not merely a ritual with which we appease God or fulfill a church regulation. It is above all a guide for our mission here on earth. Our various ministries should be shaped by our participation in

the liturgy of the Eucharist. Conversely, our vocations should also inform our involvement in the Eucharistic liturgy, in the sense that it is the very ups and downs, the joys and sorrows of our ministries that we offer up to God through prayer in the Eucharist. Fr. Bernier in his treatise on the Eucharist has articulated this intersection between ministry and ritual as follows: “What is celebrated at the altar is meant to be paralleled in actual life. What we live out daily is what is brought to the altar to be transformed by God.” (Living the Eucharist, p. 11)

As was reported in the Spring 2023 issue of Missions Today (pp. 6-8), Pope Francis uses this account of the disciples on the road to Emmaus to formulate the theme for this year’s World Mission Sunday. Similar to Jesus, who connects Eucharist with ministry, Pope Francis links for us the work of the missions with the Church’s most significant communal prayer. As their encounter with Jesus enkindled the hearts of the disciples, so too our participation in the Eucharist should enflame our hearts for the missions. As the disciples return quickly to Jerusalem to share with the other disciples that Jesus is risen, we too, after leaving Mass, should be on the move to spread the joyous message that is in our hearts. Our participation in the Eucharist should make “Our hearts on fire and our feet on the move.”

The vocation to the missions, to which we are all called, has some significant connections with the Eucharist. Catholic missionaries, like all the faithful, are expected to



attend Sunday Eucharist on a regular basis. The Eucharistic liturgies, however, in which they partake can have greater import to missionary disciples than simply fulfilling their Sunday obligation. Their participation in the Eucharist can become for Catholic missionaries a vehicle by which they can come to a fuller appreciation of their ministry. As Jesus used the framework of the Eucharist as a model for ministry in his interaction with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, so too Catholic missionaries can apply this example to their own ministry. In their own work, Catholic teachers are called to proclaim the Gospel and to continue the teaching ministry that Jesus initiated. The Eucharist can help them to come to a fuller appreciation of how to accomplish this sacred task.

This year’s World Mission Sunday theme, then, correlates the vocation of Catholic missionaries with the significance of the Eucharist. Missionary disciples can bring into dialogue the numerous responsibilities within their ministry with the various parts of the Eucharistic liturgy. In this dialogue, from the gathering of the community and opening hymn to the final blessing and dismissal, there are various ways that these parts of the Mass can give some specific direction to Catholic missionaries concerning their ministry to their spread the Gospel message. Missionary

disciples can draw out the implications that the different parts of the Mass have for their work. These meditations can have a similar focus as Fr. Bernier’s book whose main purpose is, “... to try to bridge the gap between liturgy and life, so that the inner reality and dynamism of the Eucharist itself may begin to inspire the self-understanding of the Christian.” (pp. 1-2)

Any reflection on the missions and the Eucharist can also assist to develop a spirituality for those who minister in God’s vineyard. At Mass, missionary disciples can reflect on the interior disposition that they require for their ministry. Not only can the different parts of the Mass provide Catholic missionaries with concrete suggestions for their work. Attaining a greater appreciation of the Eucharist will also impact their own self-awareness as Catholic missionaries. Such meditations will deepen the spiritual life of Catholic missionaries. In short, a dialogue between mission and the Eucharist can shape both the practice and the spirituality of the Catholic missionary.

Catholic missionaries are indeed a gift for the entire Church. Not only do they minister to those in need in the present, but they impact the future of the Catholic Church for generations to come in many unforeseeable ways. Catholic missionaries are the most important resource that the Church has in spreading the Gospel. They give of themselves completely to their people and to their vocation, often without much notice or appreciation. May this World Mission Sunday serve as a sign of appreciation and gratitude for all that Catholic missionaries do for the life of the church and the good of its youngest members. As Catholic missionaries reflect on the connection between their vocation and the Eucharist, as Pope Francis encourages us to do, may it lighten their load and increase their morale. May they not only come to see how critical their work is, but more importantly, how special they are and the unique qualities that they must possess for being called by God to such a difficult ministry. Reflecting on the Eucharist and the missionary vocation is intended to support the work of these often-unheralded heroes of our church. Hopefully, those who work diligently every day to spark the flame of faith in those they serve may find inspiration in these meditations for their own lives and work. And so, may these reflections enrich ignite their heart and guide their feet.

In Remembrance

Our Deceased Donors

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

Mr. James Joseph O’Connell Vancouver, BC

Missions Today is always interested in hearing from you. If you have any comments on the articles we have used; the new structure of the magazine; or anything you would like to see us explore in future issues, please get in touch with us!
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