



MARCH 2019 - N. 1

BULLETIN



**PONTIFICIUM OPUS A SANCTA INFANTIA
SECRETARIATUS INTERNATIONALIS**



**YOU ARE MADE
FOR GOD**

FOCUS

**NURTURING
CHILDREN'S
SPIRITUALITY**

LITTLE

**MISSIONARIES IN...
PAKISTAN**

THE VOICE OF THE CHILDREN



SINGING THE MISSION



Missionary
Childhood
Competition

Purpose of the competition

to engage children and young people of every Diocese, assisted by the animators, in composing lyrics and music of songs that should have the refrain "Baptized and sent". Both, lyrics and music, should be in **local language** and reflect **local customs and practices**

Stages of the competition

Each Diocese, after having chosen the winning song at local level shall send the audio and video files to the National Office of the Pontifical Mission Societies of their country

Recording of a cd/dvd

The National Office of each country shall choose the winning song at the national level and send it to the International Secretariat to be recorded on a cd/dvd



The songs will be published online on PMS' and October 2019's websites



THE “seed” of God has been planted in each one of us. But, it can germinate only if it is cultivated.

In a way, God cannot be taught. God must be cultivated within each person. We learn God by looking at the other. This is the message of the following testimony.

Today, it is important to cultivate a heart that is able to respond with hope and charity to people and events with the certainty that there is good in everyone, because we have all been created in the image of God. We need to discover and cultivate this good. The word of God is the energy that nourishes the good seed present in the human heart. This helps us to be missionaries to every man, woman, and child, in every situation of life, without excluding or preferring anyone. This is our responsibility.

From the spirituality of Jesus to the missionary spirituality of every baptised person.

Jesus is in constant communion with the Father and profoundly and totally dedicates himself to the salvation of every man and woman. It is by a personal experience of Jesus Christ, dead and Risen, that transforms every baptised person in what is sometimes called “crisification”: becoming one with Christ (Gal 2,20). The spirituality of Jesus is not based on some esoteric gnostic reality, but on genuine attitudes and gestures that spring from an intimate relationship with the Father and move one to forgive and to pray, even for one’s enemies. Jesus proposes the centrality of self-giving love freely given as the way for developing human relations.

Spirituality is innate in every person; it is a predisposition to dialogue with God, which is inside of us from our birth. It does not depend on culture, which, however, does provide a language in which it may be experienced. The spiritual dimension is the most important in the life and growth of every person, since it is the element that integrates all of the other dimensions (cognitive, affective, moral and religious) and provides unity to the person. The development of the spiritual dimension is slow and demanding, needing care, liberty and the availability of the person, as well as constant engagement.

Children naturally possess an inclination to the spiritual dimension.

We are invited to cultivate a missionary spirit according to our motto, “children helping children” to acquire a profound faith in God, who is Father of everyone and who loves each one of us; and to come to know the needs of children in the world, especially those that are in difficult situations. The various activities of the Missionary Society of the Holy Childhood invites children (and involved adults) to nurture and keep alive a missionary spirit!

To care for this dimension from the time of one’s infancy, allows for better spiritual growth and personal integration. Keeping in consideration the proposal of Mons Charles de Forbin Janson to the first group of children belonging to the Holy Childhood, that is one Hail Mary a day, we find these elements and intents.

Missionary spirituality expresses the unity of the Church.

This first issue of the Bulletin of the International Secretariat of the Pontifical Mission Society of the Holy Childhood makes spirituality as its point of departure and the fundamental element for missionary action. In *Misio ad gentes* the baptised, guided by the Spirit and by love, are moved to go beyond their own borders to share the Faith in Jesus Christ with people and cultures that have not yet come to know him. As Pope Francis emphasises in *Evangelii Gaudium* n. 78, it is the spiritual life that nourishes one’s encounter with others, one’s engagement in the world, and one’s passion for evangelization. This recalls the words of St. John Paul II in *Redemptoris Missio*, which speaks of missionary spirituality in terms of “letting oneself be led by the Spirit, to live the Mystery of Christ sent, to love the Church and all people as Jesus loved them, to holiness” (cfr.

nn. 87-91). As Pontifical Mission Societies we are called to promote missionary vocations and spirituality, as well as zeal and prayer for the missions (cfr. *Ad Gentes* n. 24).



SR. ROBERTA TREMARELLI

Secretary General Pontifical Society Missionary Childhood

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Pontifical Society of Missionary Childhood or
Holy Childhood
Via di Propaganda 1/c
00186 ROMA
vati176@poim.va

Director: Sr. Roberta Tremarelli, AMSS
International Secretariat
Giorgio Bertucci
Enrique H. Davelouis E.
Erika Granzotto Basso
Sr. Maddalena Hoang Ngoc Khanh Thi, A.C.M
Kathleen Mazio
Augustine G. Palayil
Matteo M. Piacentini

Editorial board: International Secretariat

Cover, graphic design and layout:
Erika Granzotto Basso

Have contributed to this issue:
Enrique H. Davelouis E.
Erika Granzotto Basso
Sr. Maddalena Hoang Ngoc Khanh Thi, A.C.M
Kathleen Mazio
Augustine G. Palayil
Matteo M. Piacentini

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YOU ARE MADE FOR GOD

by **Fr. FARYAAD ANSER**
Christ the King Seminary
Karachi, Pakistan



Men and women of our times are facing certain challenges and living some particular circumstances that humanity perhaps has never come across. Ours is a generation that has been invaded by individualism, materialism and an attitude of disregard for whatever is happening around.

The ideals of self-contentment/satisfaction and 'personal' happiness prevail. Modern means of communication have astonishingly made the world small and reachable, but unfortunately it is also leaving men and women unhappy, isolated, lonely and dejected/depressed. There are hundreds of online guides/psychiatrists/gurus/bloggers offering a wide range of multiple solutions to this human restiveness. Regrettably, very often, their guidance leads men to further loneliness, despair and depression. Their message often is to remain unaffected by whatever is happening around, to worry for nothing but one's own peace of mind.

On the other hand the interior of every human being always has a longing to be immersed in the Divine who is true peace, and a tendency to do something fundamental i.e. love. While in our age the voice of the world jars 'you can do it – you alone – without needing anybody to be with you,' faith teaches us that 'you are made for God – you must do it – and you need God desperately – and you can do nothing without Him.' This nature of the human soul is rightfully illustrated by St. Augustine: "Because You have made us and drawn us to Yourself and our heart is unquiet until it rests in You."

The fundamental character of the discipleship of Christ is coming into relationship/union with the Lord, to remain connected with Him/united in

Him, and bear fruits of love and communion in abundance. The following is an exegetical reflection on the similitude of the True Vine (John 15:1-8). It is advisable that the readers now read this text slowly and try to grasp the development of different parts of this passage.

The True Vine passage is part of the long Last Supper discourse of Jesus in the gospel of John. It is also the last of the famous "I am" statements in this gospel which denotes the divine character of Jesus and in him manifested the fullness of divine revelation for the salvation of human beings. In John 15:1-8 Jesus is compared with vine and his disciples with its branches. Why has the symbol of *vine* been selected and what does Jesus want to teach his disciples? The exegetes often think that the image of the vine is an allusion to the Old Testament references where often Israel is symbolized as *vine* or *vineyard* (cf. Hos 10:1-2; Isa 5:1-7; Jer 2:21; Ezek 15:1-5, 17:1-21; 19:10-15; Ps 80:8-18). Awkwardly in all these instances the tone is that of disapproval with regard to Israel. Ezekiel considers the vine and its branches useless and as fuel for the flame, and that the vine of Jerusalem will be destroyed by fire (Ezek 15:1-5). Isaiah laments that though Israel was the choicest vine in the vineyard of the Lord, it brought forth nothing but wild grapes (Is 5:1-7). When the Lord planted this vine i.e. Israel, it was noble but it then became degenerate (Jer 2:21).

Hosea presents Israel as a luxuriant vine and its judgment is inevitable (Hos 10:1). This is the vine that God brought from Egypt and planted it having prepared the ground for it, but it has been ravaged by animals and laid waste (Ps 80:8-18).

Thus, every time in the OT, Israel is compared to a *vine*, the tone is that of lamentation with a prophecy of immediate destruction. Here it's an obvious comparison between the degenerate vine that is Israel and the True Vine i.e. Jesus himself. The presentation of Jesus as the True Vine also renders all other claims to be the *vine* as false. So neither Israel, nor any groups in Israel, nor Judaism itself, but Jesus is the True Vine, whose gardener is God Himself. The use of the adjective ἀληθινός i.e. real or true, is very significant here. Jesus is the *genuine* Vine. He is not like the one who does not produce fruit or produces wild grapes. Rather he is the True Vine because he imparts true life. This vine does not depend on anyone else for its life, rather the vine itself is the source of life.

The relationship of Jesus' disciples with him is like that of the vine with the branches. Obviously the branches could not survive without the vine. An existence or life cut off from the vine could never be expected. So the branches i.e. the disciples are admonished to *abide in the vine* [15:4 Μείνατε ἐν ἐμοί, καὶ γὰρ ἐν ὑμῖν (*abide in me as I abide in you*)]. Μείνατε initiates an imperative sentence; it is an aorist imperative of the verb μένω that literally means *to remain*. The aorist imperative μένατε would imply 'step into union with me.' Thus the invitation is open to all the disciples of all times and not restrictedly to the immediate listeners of the similitude. The expression *remain in* is used ten times in verses 4–10 that demonstrate the prominence this verb holds in the passage. To *remain in* Jesus signifies here not just believing in him, but it connotes stepping into relationship/union with him and continuing to live in association with him.

It's in the *remaining in* the vine that assures the branches of their existence. The branches share the life of the vine. So the message of the gospel is not that of the 'self-sufficiency,' that 'you can do it by yourself'; rather the life and the mission of the disciples are conditioned

to *remaining in* Jesus. The life of the disciples is Jesus himself. Separated from Jesus is equal to being dead like the branches that are cut off and thrown away into the fire (15:6). Therefore for Christians, not human wisdom, nor any meditation guides and gurus but Jesus is the source of life. Hence, any ministry or any mission would be a false perception and would end up in destruction if not rooted fundamentally in Jesus – the True Vine.

This *remaining in* is two way process. If the branch (disciple) remains/abides in the vine (Jesus), he will in turn remain/abide in the disciple. This connectedness/association with Jesus assures his disciples of life i.e. grace. However, the relationship of the vine and the branches (so Jesus and his disciples) does not come to its closure just with both remaining in each other. Christianity is not mere fantastic spiritualism that soothes the soul and has its end in one's personal calm and relaxation. It is not just a mere life of 'prayer' and no work, or an esteem of the grace without any works of charity. Otherwise it would be honouring God with lips only, while the hearts remain far from Him (Is 29:13-16; Matt 15:8). Rather the discipleship of a Christian is a **faith→action** phenomenon. And association with Jesus should motivate the believer to **act** and to **bear fruit**.

The love of Jesus does not come to an end just at his union with the disciples. He is not content at just transmitting his life to the disciples. But the branches further have to produce fruit. The life i.e. grace of God that the vine transmits to the branches must flourish and multiply. The purpose of the branches is to produce much fruit. As the branch is wholly dependent on the tree since by the tree's sap the branches flourish and become fruitful, so are the disciples dependent on the Lord for their existence and fruitfulness in Christian life. Moreover, the fruit-bearing is conditioned by remaining in Jesus, because ὅτι χωρὶς ἐμοῦ οὐ δύνασθε ποιεῖν οὐδέν *because apart from me there is nothing that you can do* (15:5). So to *remain in* Jesus is to become fruitful. Hence, the disciples apart from Christ produce → nothing, while disciples in Jesus → much fruit.



Here, we proceed with a logical question: but what is this fruit that the disciples who abide in Jesus produce? What type of fruit is this or what is its nature? The following verses 9–17 indicate vividly that the fruit that the disciples are supposed to bear is that of the obedience to Jesus' commandment and keeping his love. Being fruitful is actually keeping the commandments. Once again we are reminded that the Christian faith has its completion in action. Obedience is the fundamental characteristic of the vine (Jesus) as well. He first obeys the Father's commandments and thus he remains in his Father's love (15:9-10). This significant trait of Jesus i.e. obedience to the Father, is vividly noticeable in the Fourth Gospel (cf. 4:34; 6:36; 8:29, 55). It's his obedience to the Father then that causes redemption of mankind (John 10:17-18; 12:7-28; 14:31). And the only commandment the disciples are to obey is the commandment to love: *This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you* (15:12). Ἀγάπη love is the sole commandment of Jesus. Jesus had obeyed the Father and has loved us. Now he admonishes us once more: μείνατε ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ τῇ ἐμῇ *abide/remain in my love* (15:9). The aorist imperative μείνατε would signify *come into union with and continue to remain in my love*. In other words the obedience to Jesus and keeping his commandment of love is not a temporary choice or an option for some particular moments; rather it has a covenantal nature that encompasses every moment and all the days of our life. Hence the life or the sap that the vine (Jesus) transmits to his branches (disciples) is **obedience** and **love**, and the same are the fruits expected of the branches. And it is in fruit-bearing that the relationship/union between the vine and the branches (the *remaining in*) is held healthy, solid and authentic.

Meanwhile there are two things that the disciples should be cautious of. Firstly, as described in the v. 2 *He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit*, that even *remaining* in the vine sometimes the branches may not be producing fruit. The disciples could be associated with such branches, when they bear the epithet of regular church goers and 'devout' Catholics

but their lives have not been transformed, when they do not bear witness by their lives. Perhaps looking inwards we might find ourselves exactly like these branches that are in the vine, who believe and pray, but whose faith is shallow and without action. Let's not forget that these are the branches that would be cut off and thrown away.

The second important thing to be remembered is that even the fruitful branches have nothing to boast about with regard to their fruitfulness because they are not the cause of the fruit but their fruit-bearing depends on *remaining* in the vine: *Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing* (15:5). The branches by themselves are incapable of bearing any fruit. It is in *remaining* in the vine that they bear fruit. Rather their fruit will be known as the fruit of the vine. Therefore, let all the missionaries and every faithful know that for all their accomplishments in the vineyard of Lord it's the Father who is to be glorified. Let us not be foolish in boasting about our talents, capacities, and undertakings; we are mere instruments in God's hands: *My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples* (15:8). It's His work that is done, and He does it in us and by means of us. All glory be to Him alone.

Be it the church in Pakistan, though a young but thriving community, or believers anywhere in the world, the faithful often accredit their faith to the life-witness of other Christians or the missionaries. Our faith is born, grows up and is sustained, reflecting on the saintly examples of so many men and women who live their faith in action. They are the branches that constantly *remain in* the vine and bear fruit. As Disciples of Christ we must always strive to *remain in* Jesus, the True Vine, the source of our life and grace – so a strong and fervent prayer life is essential. But discipleship of Christ would be an 'empty spiritualism' if it does not stimulate the disciples to act and bear fruit i.e. obedience and love. ○

NURTURING CHILDREN'S SPIRITUALITY

Prof. **ADRIAN-MARIO GELLE**
*Department of Pastoral Theology
 University of Malta*



Over the past millennia, children have been, generally speaking, underestimated, neglected or abused. It was only over these past two centuries that there has been a slow yet progressive change in the attitudes of society towards childhood and towards children in general. Indeed, it is only now that more importance is being given to listening and respecting the requirements of the child rather than simply imposing or directing. In this regard, it is paradoxical that while Christianity has been so central in shaping the Western World's concept of the human person and of the individual (Rudmann 2008), it has done very little to change society's attitudes towards children (see for instance DeMause 1974). This, notwithstanding the radical way how Jesus understood and upheld children (Gundy-Volf 2001). Truth be told, the advent of Christianity has contributed to a change in society's attitudes towards abortion (at least for one and a half millennia), infanticide and sexual intercourse with children, as well as introducing concepts of the innocence of childhood (Bakke 2005). Yet, overall, for the past two millennia the predominant understanding was that the child needs to become,

and is therefore deficient and incapable. This led society and the Church to focus more on the adult life rather than the immediate present of the child and on the contribution that the child may give.

This preoccupation with the future has limited theological discourse and reflection on the child. In most cases, the spiritual and religious formation of children was tied to the visible sign of the sacraments of initiation. By the ninth and tenth centuries, due to practical social reasons, the sacraments of the Eucharist and of confirmation were administered at a later stage in life. Various local church councils and chapters exhorted parents to form their children into Christian life (Braido 1991). In the East, Saint John Chrysostom was more explicit when stating that parents are duty bound to raise their children in the perfection of Christian life. For him, the virtuous life of parents counts nothing in front of God if they do not educate the child in godliness. Chrysostom was so adamant about his beliefs on childhood and on the duties of parenthood that he claimed that those who neglect the formation of their child are guilty of the gravest evil and injustice (Guroian 2001).

At the end of the 18th century, the attention given to the child by the romantic





movement, for instance, by Rousseau and Pestalozzi and Fröbel, led to a reevaluation of childhood which eventually led to a better understanding of the child, especially from a psychological and education perspective. Currently, the predominant view is that childhood is not a preparatory stage that one needs to grow out of, but is a significant moment in the life journey of the human person. Consequently, as a full member of the human community, the child is also spiritual being whose requirements have to be acknowledged, respected and nurtured.

Both Friedrich Fröbel, the German 19th century educationalist who is credited with the concept of kindergarten, and Maria Montessori, the Italian 20th century pedagogist, have insisted on the central role of spirituality in early childhood education (see Best 2016; Tregenza 2008). Their understanding of childhood, which was also very much influenced by their Lutheran and Catholic background respectively, led them to recognise the spirituality of the child and to view spirituality as central to the child's education. The two educators were precursors of a nascent movement and of an acknowledgement that children have a spiritual life.

A major shift in the lives of Catholics and in the spiritual life of children was made possible by the document *Quam Singulari*, approved by Pope Saint Pius X in 1910, which permitted children to receive communion at the age of seven (S. Congregatio de Sacramentis 1910). This decision brought considerable protests from French dioceses, where many feared that the formation program, which at times lasted four years, would be threatened. A typical program covered doctrine, education to prayer, included retreats, and made genuine efforts to form children in Christian love. Since for the previous two centuries, the ritual of the First Holy Communion had also become an established social rite of passage to adulthood, it was feared that all the structure of Christian initiation would be shaken and children would no longer attend the



catechetical program. In response to the protesting bishops, the pope maintained, "There will be saints amongst children" (Borriello 2002). Indeed, these were prophetic words, for no other century had ever seen the opening of so many causes of canonization of young children and adolescents. Within a century, the church had proclaimed Domenico Savio, who died at the age of fifteen, Jacinta and Francisco Marto, who died at the ages of nine and ten respectively as saints and is currently investigating 83 cases of child martyrs and another 70 children who lived sanctity in everyday life. For the first time in its history, the Universal Church is being presented with children as concrete models of sanctity in the ordinary life.

Until a century ago, it was unthinkable that children and adolescents could be included in the canon of saints and blessed. There seems to have been a certain perplexity with regard to the capability of younger members of the church to live to the full the perfection of Christian life. The issue was discussed for more than forty years, and it was only in 1981 that the Catholic Church accepted in

principle that children of the age of seven and above could be considered for the process of canonization (Borriello 2002). Giving one's life completely to God has always been seen as the highest ideal, even for a child. Various saints were "converted" or consecrated themselves completely to God from a very early age. For instance, Domenico Savio consecrated himself to God at the age of seven, whereas Catherine of Siena saw Jesus in a vision at the age of six. In his letter to children, Pope St John Paul II outlines what is so central to children's spirituality,

Earlier I was speaking to you about the "Gospel of children": has this not found in our own time a particular expression in the spirituality of Saint Theresa of the Child Jesus? It is absolutely true: Jesus and his Mother often choose children and give them important tasks for the life of the Church and of humanity. I have named only a few who are known everywhere, but how many others there are who are less widely known! The Redeemer of humanity seems to share with them his concern for others: for parents, for other boys and girls. He eagerly awaits their prayers. What enormous power the prayer of children has! This becomes a model for grown-ups themselves: praying with simple and complete trust means praying as children pray. (Pope John Paul II, 1994)

According to this understanding, children's spirituality centres on their relationality, that is, their ability to enter in communion with Christ and to be connected with their fellow humans. This is not far from the conclusions that David Hay and Rebecca Nye (1998) arrived at after conducting studies among children. Hay rested his research on the assumption that as human persons children are intrinsically spiritual. Hay believed that spirituality has a biological basis. The spiritual life of children had been made visible through the stu-



dies conducted through 500 interviews made by Robert Coles a few years earlier. Coles (1991) was surprised to find a spiritual thread, most often than not shaped by religious and cultural language, that connected all children, including those coming from an atheist background. His analysis of the conversations he had with children led him to believe that spiritual awareness is a universal human dimension.

Hay and Nye posit that children's spirituality is mainly expressed through a relational consciousness. In this way the authors started to acknowledge that spirituality does not pertain exclusively to the cognitive domain but that there are other factors that govern the child's spiritual experience. First amongst this is the child's ability to develop an awareness of self and to interact with the context. In and through these relations, the child makes meaning of various personal, interpersonal and relational experiences. Hay and Nye identified four sub-categories in and through which the child is aware and relates with, namely, child-self, child-people, child-world



and child-God. Nye (2006) claimed that

In this 'relational consciousness' seems to lie the rudimentary core of children's spirituality, out of which can arise meaningful aesthetic experience, religious experience, personal and traditional responses to mystery and being, and mystical and moral insight. (p. 109)

Hay argued that the current Western way of life and mode of child rearing is harming children's ability to access and develop their spiritual potential. This may be due, amongst others, by an increasingly individualistic mentality and lifestyle as well as by the prevalence of positivistic attitude towards knowledge.

Different disciplines have tapped on to the research question on whether children can be spiritual. Among the most prominent pedagogical approaches that promote children's spirituality are those developed by Sophia Cavalletti and Jerome Berryman. Cavalletti was a Roman Catholic biblical and liturgy scholar who studied under the direction of Maria Montessori. Through her interactions with children and through the use of narratives and symbolic artefacts she tapped on children's existential questioning, metaphoric capability as well their abilities of awe and wonder. This, together with her expertise in Scriptures and the liturgy, led her to develop the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (see Cavalletti 2002, 1983). The method that she developed respects and responds to the child's ability to sense mystery, to connect with the community,



both past and present, as well as the child's need to interact with analogic truths rather than arid cognitive doctrines.

Berryman continued to develop and popularise this pedagogy through his Godly Play. Berryman (2009) describes this method as play with the language of God and of God's people through narrative, liturgy, and silence. It is a method that engages the whole child by involving heart, mind, senses, and intuition. These pedagogical methods made practitioners and researchers aware of the spiritual potential of children, in terms of their ability to make use of both relational and cognitive dimensions, including those of a very young age.

Studies on, and related to children's spirituality should caution us against giving too much importance to an arid cognitive based catechesis. On the contrary, more attention should be given to the natural language of the human person,



that is, the development of silence, interaction with the deeper meaning of stories, an education in the ability to form meaning and the development of the relational dimension of the human person. If anyone has any doubt of the spiritual life of children or on the pre-eminence that should be given to the spiritual life of children, one should read the life and 'letters' of the young girl Nennolina who died at the age of six. The wisdom and profound spirituality that she expressed is comparable to that of a mature person who had taken a long spiritual journey (Vanzan 1999). In her 'letters' (Del Genio 2009) one finds a witness to a deep child spirituality that is expressed through an intimate relationship with Jesus, God the Father, the Holy Spirit, Mary, and the Guardian Angel, as well as through her profound sense of connectedness with humanity and her ability to express meaning. Her individual relationship with the persons of the Blessed Trinity was possible because she perceived that humans have the seed of the divine in their being. It was the formation of her spiritual life, particularly through personal and individual relationship that led her to deep theological understandings (Del Genio 2000). ○

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ANNO DOMINI 1847



HOLY CHILDHOOD MASSES

There are few works of charity that offer their associates so many spiritual graces as those of Holy Childhood ... This Society does not only operate through charity but also by means of prayer. Besides the daily prayer that is asked of its members, two Masses a month are celebrated either in one of the principal sanctuaries consecrated to the mysteries of Our Lady's Holy Childhood, or to the Virgin Mary, and two Mas-

ses are celebrated yearly for the living and dead associates. What a consolation for Christian families to think that, for such a small offering, they assure themselves, during their life and after their death, to participate in the holy sacrifice of the Mass so frequently offered for their intentions and in such sanctuaries! But also what blessings have come to the poor children of China from so many prayers offered on their behalf through the Name of the Child Jesus and that of the Name of Mary! Sometimes we are asked: what does the Holy Childhood actually do? Where are the results you can show? Couldn't we

ask ourselves the same question about the Apostles gathered with Mary in the upper room? What did they do? They prayed.

When the work of the Society of the Holy Childhood has to show for itself only the prayers of its associates and the Masses that are celebrated, then it will be a great and powerful association in the Church. What does the Society of the Holy Childhood do? It prays a common and constant prayer through its associates, gathered in thousands, in the name of the Child Jesus.

ANNALS N°4
April 1847



CONSECRATION

For the consecration of the children to the Child Jesus, the statue or image of the Child Jesus is placed on the altar or at the beginning of the nave in the church; at his feet there are, on one side, the bag with the offerings of the associates; on the other, the images, medals and Annals to be distributed; the children are standing, the males on one side and the females on the other. The children's choir begins to sing, the celebrant or the director of the Society recites aloud the 4th commandment that the

children repeat together as follows: we will honor our father and our mother; following this, the prayer of the Holy Childhood is recited. Finally, everyone kneels down and the celebrant or one of the children reads the formula of consecration to the divine Child Jesus aloud.

Following this, the solemn blessing of the children takes place.

ANNALS N°6
December 1847

A PROPHETIC CHURCH THE APOSTOLIC PREFECTURE OF ROBE

covers a territory of 103,769 square kilometers and has a population of more than 3 million inhabitants belonging to two principal ethnic groups: the Oromo and the Somali, both adherers of Islam. In fact 99% of the population is Muslim. In the oldest cities of the Prefecture there are some Orthodox Churches, as well as small communities of Protestant and Catholic faithful. The Catholic Church arrived thirty years ago and counts about a thousand faithful. Its presence is has a somewhat pro-phetic sense.

La The population is predominantly rural, where shepherding is practiced in a situation of extreme poverty. Notwithstanding the efforts of the government, many children – especially girls – are not able to go to school. Indeed, they participate in aiding the family economically by practicing animal husbandry (cows, sheep, goats, mules).

The Catholic church carries out predominantly social activities, assisting the poorest of the poor and disinherited in the following locations: Kofale, Kokossa, Dodola, Adaba, Herero, Ardaita, Dinsho, Alemghena, Robe, Goba, Dallo Manna. The activities carried out by the Apostolic Prefecture are mainly scholastic. It administers 11 kindergartens and 10 elementary schools, that accommodate some 4000 children. Indeed, it is precisely thanks to this activity that the Church has come to know the situation of families, striving to make bridges of friendship and dialogue without religious or cultural barriers. In fact, most of the alumni of the schools, are not Christian. The school is a place for a kind of pre-evangelization, and seeks to guarantee

the right to schooling for as many children as possible. The Prefecture also offers 3,000 orphans basic schooling in many of the cities and also in the country areas of the territory under its jurisdiction.

THE PREFECT APOSTOLIC RECALLS

It is a missionary Church. What can the meager thousand Catholics immersed and dispersed among 4 million Muslims do? Are they to close themselves within their small, almost insignificant communities? Should they lament over their small size or be discouraged by their seeming insignificance? Absolutely NOT! On the contrary, animated and enthusiastic by their meeting with Jesus, they become missionary disciples of the Gospel. As people among their own people, they are best equipped to announce the Kingdom. In Robe Prefecture, the Gospel is announced by living persons, they are lay people in their parishes that invite their neighbors, friends and families. In this way the Faith is transmitted, by way of a kind of virtuous infection. The poverty of means show that the





Faith is transmitted by living witnesses. It is also celebrated in a tent or under a tree. The fragility of the missionaries and the means at their disposal show their total dependence of the Lord, trust in Providence and makes the treasure of the Gospel stand out.

It is a totally charismatic Church. Being few in number, it pushes the Spirit to bring forth charisms and create ministries. It calls everyone to service, without great distinctions between clergy and lay, and especially not concentrating everything in the hands of the priests. Animators, catechists, coordinators... each one offers a helping hand, as they are capable and as they are able. It is forbidden to cross ones hands and close oneself in on oneself.

It is a poor Church for the poor. Poor, because it has no power: no powerful organizations, no mo. The small change collected at the Sunday offering may appear to be insignificant, but is precious... Of the poor, because the faithful and the catechumens that make up the community are poor.

THE DIRECTOR OF THE PMS IN ROBE RECALLS

During the month of October, I invited the children and missionary youth of different parishes to pray every day for missionaries spread throughout the world and to collect offerings for children throughout the world. At Abada, in particular, missionary children are particularly active and zealous. They also brought to life a very interesting and praiseworthy activity. They collected offerings for missionaries by an initiative called "missionary market". The children cultivate vegetables and on Saturday morning they go to market to sell what they cultivated, the proceeds of which are destined for the

Holy Childhood Day. Just like last year, the Holy Childhood Day is celebrated on Ethiopian Christmas Day, which in January 7th (according to the Julian Calendar used by the Easter Churches). During the 4 weeks of Advent special missionary activities are proposed to the children and young people of the parishes in preparation for Holy Childhood Day.

And more:

Ordinary weekly catechesis on the Sunday Gospel is carried out using video images and photocopies along with the text of the Gospel that the children and young people glue and color in their notebooks. Every child comes to possess an "illustrated Gospel" with which one can come to know the life of Jesus. They are also invited to write their own reflections and prayers in the notebook.

[...]

One day a week, with missionary children of the parish in Adaba, we go to the nearby city of Herero, where we have a small Church and school, to celebrate the Eucharist. At Herero there are no Catholics, and thus, the missionary children invite the children that live nearby to the Church, playing with them and making friends with them, participating in the Mass and praying with them. At the end of the celebration of the Mass, the missionary children divide the children that are present into small groups and, using their "Illustrated Gospel" catechize the children present on the Gospel. ○



MAKING OF MISSIONARY ROSARIES

DIOCESE OF MPIKA- ZAMBIA

We are teaching and encouraging Holy Childhood groups to pray the Missionary Rosary regularly, collectively and individually. Happily, seem to be making progress because we have observed an increase in a number of people committed in praying the rosary especially among children. Therefore, the demand for Missionary

Rosaries has increased a great deal. However, the Missionary Rosaries are difficult to find (not readily available). We ask ourselves: why should simple articles of faith like a Rosary be so scarce? This project is a practical answer to this question. In Zambia we are importing Rosaries from other countries. It shouldn't be after so many years of Catholicism: 126 years! The little we have of Missionary Rosaries are either gifts which individual Priests or Religious receive in the form of donations or bought from other countries. I have inquired from all dioceses, none of them are making Missionary Rosaries, let alone or-

dinary rosaries. From this situation of need, we have mobilized animators for the Holy Childhood, and started teaching them how to make rosaries.

We have invited Sister Proscovia, from Uganda, to come and teach Holy Childhood Animators how to make rosaries. The few who attended the training will in turn teach others. Given the necessary materials and tools, they are determined to start massive production of rosaries for our diocese and beyond. ○



TO BE JESUS' FRIEND

DIOCESE OF PORT LOUIS - MAURITIUS

My name is *Anastasia Chutoo* and I'm from Holy Family Rose Belle parish. I have been part of the Holy Childhood Missionary Society ever since the 3rd grade at Notre Dame du Refuge school in New Grove with Miss Corinne Quirin.

Every Thursday we meet during recreation time to become more familiar with Jesus. I lived through powerful experiences during retreats and annual Masses. I met many friends and learned many things about Father Laval, the Bible, etc.

I continued to be part of the Missionary Society of the Holy Childhood in the parish.

In 2016, with other children of the island, we shared the Word of God and food with the families of the Cité la Cure. It was a touching experience, an event that I will never forget.

We met two times a month at our parish, sharing

the Word and engaging in other activities: visits, listening, sharing...

A few weeks ago we were in the Church at Cassis for a missionary parade to get to know the Missionary Society of the Holy Childhood and other children in the parish. I learned much more about the history of the Holy Childhood in the world and on the islands of Mauritius. The children of our parish prepared a presentation of the Gospel passage when Jesus was twelve years old.

During these years I learned many things, especially about how to be Jesus' friend; how to bear witness; how to help other children in need; how to meet the elderly. Above all, I learned that I was important in the eyes of God. I grew in faith.

Today, my mission is to share with other children what I had freely received: to share the Word of God and to encourage other children to become part of the Missionary Society of the Holy Childhood.

Thanks be to God for this gift! ○



ANIMATION & LEARNING



DIOCESE OF DEZDA - MALAWI

I am *Rosa Mtaukira*. I am from St. Louis Small Christina community Corpus Christi Ntcheu Parish in the Diocese of Dedza.

I am an animator of Holy Childhood: I team children and help children participate actively in Liturgy especially in the Liturgical Dance group of Holy Childhood at my parish.

In general, Holy Childhood formation program is helping the children and adolescents to grow with Christian values: they are learning how to pray, how to share what they have, they helped to behave well at church, home, school and wherever they go.

THROUGH THE WEEKLY LESSONS FOR CHILDREN AT PARISH I OBSERVE THAT

Many children are able to know the importance of prayer; to say the Catholic prayers; praying the rosary, attending mass, adoring Jesus Christ present in the Eucharist who is the source of our salvation and blessings to these little ones.

We animators also are being helped since in teaching and accompanying the children we are have to be active and understanding the Catholic Church teachings, teaching by examples.

The faith of Children and that of animators is strengthened by the Holy Childhood activities.

Children are developing a spirit of self-sacrifice and many are learning to share with other children in their daily life. The children contribute money and some items for other needy children and the elderly in the communities and in hospital.

They also contribute money in money tin for fellow children through the Holy Childhood collections money sent to the Pope for helping children in the while world.

CHILDREN ACTIVITIES

In our parish community children express their

faith and do the following:

Reading the word of God during mass, especially in the feast days like the Epiphany

Attending and participating actively in the Eucharistic celebration

Sometimes praying of the missionary rosary

In some days like Saturday we normally have Bible sharing

Time for Eucharistic adoration

Doing charitable works to our fellow children first and to the people in most need /the elderly).

CHALLENGES

The biggest challenge is that sometimes children do not come in large numbers consistently. Most of them come when there is an occasion when they will participate actively. This challenge is caused by many factors:

Parents do not encourage children, Children are many in most communities but parents neglect them or give them work at home. Other children on Saturday are sent by parents and guardians to sell items at the market so that the family should get some income

Parish communities and Small Christian communities have no incentives for children. Children like to participate actively in Liturgy and want to have some things to play with and keep them busy at parish/communities. But children are not given chance often in liturgy. The parish does not have money to provide for items for kids at the parish community.

Poverty in some families affects children. So children have no enough cloths, so they wash good/school cloths on Saturday and cannot go church and mix with others, thus, they remain home.

Some animators are not well trained. So they do not effectively help the children. ○



APOSTOLIC VICARIATE OF SAN



75% of the children of the island of San Andrés, Providencia and Santa Catalina are characterized by their integral formation. They participate in various activities of the Missionary Society of the Holy Childhood, attend school and also take part in various meetings and cultural celebrations organized by the island community. Meetings take place every week with the animators and coordinators of the Holy Childhood.

GINA ISABEL NIEVES AMUD

I am 9 years old and belong to Sacred Heart Parish on the island of San Andrés. I would like to share with everyone that the Holy Childhood is not only a group that I

belong to, it is my family in faith, because there I can have a personal encounter with Jesus Christ and Mother Mary. In the Missionary Society of the Holy Childhood, I learned to pray, to respect others, to share, to value what we

experience in the Eucharist and to grant Mary her rightful role as Mother of Jesus and our Mother. I invite all of the children, not only to participate, but to be part of the Missionary Society of the Holy Childhood in their own parishes. God bless you. "De los niños del mundo siempre amigos".

LEONEL RAMÍREZ ARCHBOLD

I am 10 years old. I belong to the Missionary Society of the Holy Childhood. Love and Joy are the most precious gifts God give us and we need to always have them in our heart, to serve our brothers with the talents and charism that we have, following the example



ANDRÉS Y PROVIDENCIA

of the Child Jesus. When I meet my friends, I discover that in each one of them there is a richness and abilities that help me to better understand the importance of catechesis, the Eucharist, a desire for prayer and a respect for the Word of God, which is nourishment and light on the way that we are walking.

LOREN SOFIA CABRERA CARREÑO

I am 10 years old. I have been a member of the Missionary Society of the Holy Childhood for 2 years. I really like to participate in this group because every time we meet I learn new things that help me to grow spiritually, to better serve my family, my parish, the vicariate and the universal church. For this reason, I encourage all children to become part of the Holy Childhood so as to become disciples of Jesus and to collaborate in the mission that He has entrusted to the Church through small communities. I used to go to Church and was bored and distracted because I didn't understand the significance of the different celebrations that were taking place. Now I am happy to go to Church and to participate actively in various pastoral activities. I am happy because I can share with other children different cultural and religious activities.

SHANDEY BRITTON BOWIE

I am an adolescent of 13 years of age. Five years ago I became a member of the Missionary Society of the Holy Childhood in San José parish on the island of San Andrés. On my missionary journey, it was important for me to involve my family to come closer to Jesus. Two years ago I began to invite my grandfather to share in Sunday Mass. With the help of my parents I was able to bring him to the parish for the Sunday Eucharist at which I sang in the children's cho-

ir. His sharing in the Sunday Eucharist helped my grandfather to move from a passive faith to an active experience in the celebration of the sacraments. For all of these reasons he began to prepare for the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Eucharist. Today, he participates in Sunday Mass and he never misses his encounter with Christ in the Holy Eucharist. ○





CHRIST IS COUNTING ON YOU

COMAYAGUA DIOCESE - HONDURAS

My name is *Liney Nazaret*. I am 9 years old and I belong to a Christian family that is very involved in the Church. I belong to the Missionary Society of the Holy Childhood (IAM) at St. Jerome's parish in Comayagua. The reason why I decided to be part of the IAM was because I wanted to continue to be in communion with my friend Jesus and to learn more about his teachings. What motivated me the most was when my grandpa-

rents received Holy Communion I felt the same desire and something indescribable inside of me. This motivated me, and participating in the IAM I learned to pray more, to be more generous and involved, to make sacrifices and to be in solidarity with everyone.

Another very important thing is that we go to visit the sick, which I liked very much because they were very happy to have us visit them; you could see it in their happy faces.

Besides this, we have good leaders, whom we love and because of this all of the children are motivated to participate, especially those that have made their First Holy Communion. We wanted to continue the meetings to learn about the marvels of God. Children, we are waiting there for you, Christ is counting on you, as you

count on his Grace.

I am sending you a hug and missionary greetings from a young girl that loves and belongs to the IAM.

May God abundantly bless all of the children of the world.

De los niños y adolescentes del mundo, siempre amigos.

May God bless your life, your family and your work. ○





WE ARE SECURE HERE

MARAWILA CHILDREN'S HOME CHILAW DIOCESE - SRI LANKA

A hearty welcome to you!

We are very happy to have you with us today.
Hope you will enjoy your stay with us.

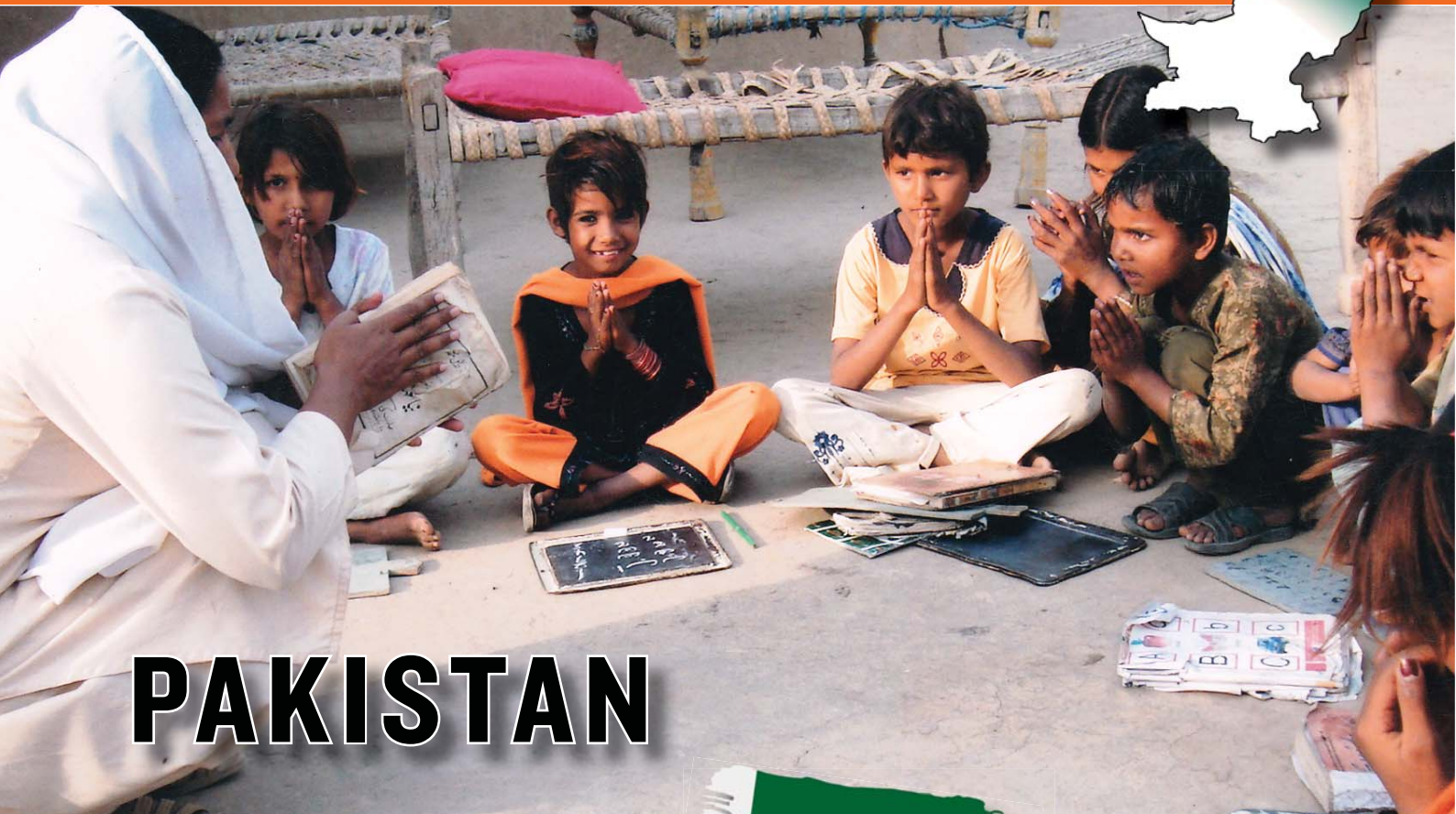
We are 23 girls living in this house which is our home, with sr Elizabeth Marie and sr Brigid, our dear sisters love us, take care of us, feed us and guide us from getting up in the morning till going to bed.

All of us go to the near high school run by the government.

We just finished our annual house feast last week, the feast of the Holy Cross. We are happy children of the Holy Cross Home. We are very secure here. We get everything we need, generous people help us in our needs. Indeed we are very lucky to have come to this place to study and build our lives. Our only desire is to study hard and grow spiritually, physically, psychologically and socially and one day to achieve our goal and have a bright future.

God bless you! ○





PAKISTAN

MISSIONARY CHILDREN IN AN ISLAMIC STATE

The Pontifical Mission Society of the Holy Childhood in Pakistan has been present and active since 1950, despite the difficult situation facing the country. The Society has been propagated in various archdioceses, dioceses and vicariates, though the law on blasphemy and forced conversions weigh heavily upon animation activities carried out in favor of children, and the Islamic State limits the possibilities of evangelization to the parochial schools and to Sunday school programs.

The Christian communities are generally made up of the poorest population, often, as in the case of the Archdiocese of Hyderabad, linked to a feudal system that forces women and children to work the fields, in order to make up for/pay the debts they owe to their landowner. Tribal groups are usually nomads and are forced to move by the will of the feudal lord or in search of better pastures, so children are impeded from attending

school from May to October. The percentage of illiteracy is very high, given that the state does not impose the obligation of literacy, and due to continuous moving, it can take a long time before a child is registered by parents in a new Catholic school, provided that there are schools near their new residence, and start again to frequent it. In addition, children often leave school to help their families.





Schools, parishes and other institutions can be located very far from each other or in remote regions, making it difficult to organize common activities and the delivery of material by the National Direction. Usually the initiatives are organized locally and independently, even if there are meager resources.

IN SPITE OF THIS

rather, thanks to this situation, the country has many Missionary Childhood groups in Catholic schools and parishes that, in many Archdioceses and Dioceses, meet once a week in the “Schools with Jesus”, receiving the Word of God, catechesis and the support of communion. The groups, which often carry the names of missionary saints to strengthen the common unity, elaborate collective strategies to help their peers, near and far, and to perform small works in favor of the community. Some dioceses organize, with the help of the ordinary subsidy received by this Secretariat, training courses for animators and teachers, propose annual themes of animation, and increase the children’s awareness of the environment and society. Once a year, usually in February, the Day of Missionary Childhood is celebrated and, for the occasion, large groups of children are gathered at a diocesan level, celebrating with Masses, recitation of the rosary, dances, theater and Bible knowledge competitions . There are many initiatives at the level of local schools and parishes, including summer camps. In 2016, there were two courses for animators at the national level in the Sindh and Punjab regions.

One of the main challenges for Holy Childhood is missionary spirituality, which unites and binds members of the community in a strong way to cope with even silent persecution. However, the way of life of Christians has a great impact on the level of witness, especially when each missionary walks in the light of the Holy Spirit.

THE NATIONAL DIRECTOR SAYS

We have been entrusted with a very special and sacred mission. The Pakistani Church faithfully continues the Church’s mission by helping the less fortunate children throughout the country. Today there are thousands of “little missionaries” in the parishes, schools and movements in all the dioceses. The Pontifical Mission Society for the Holy Childhood en-

courages children all over the world to pray and share, while supporting both the spiritual and material well-being of children through prayer and pastoral assistance. With the material contributions of the children, the Society carries out educational, medical and social assistance projects.



FR. ASIF J. KHOKHAR
National Director PMS Pakistan

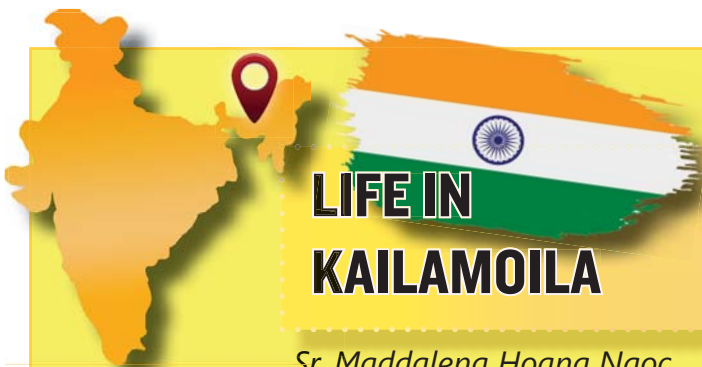
The formation of faith through education has always been a continuous battle. The dioceses include a considerable number of children and all parishes take part in different missionary activities.

In every diocese there are animators who carry out the missionary work of the Society of the Holy Childhood, sensitizing the children to the missionary call. This helps children to grow in the spirituality of Holy Childhood and to strengthen their faith as a child. Bishops, priests, religious, parents, catechists, and young people take part in various activities. The animators help and guide the children by empowering them and accompanying them in carrying out their task.

It is very important to educate and make children aware of their responsibilities towards their companions who do not know the Good News of the Gospel.

The promotion of the activities of the Holy Childhood has reached high levels despite the presence, at times, of difficult pastoral situations. The children gather in their respective schools, Sunday schools and parishes. They are like little disciples of Jesus when they gather to break bread. They receive the Word of God, catechesis, spirituality, service and are strengthened by communion. Their active participation in the group has led to innumerable ways of rendering service. The National Direction holds conferences and workshops for children in different parishes on various topics.

The figure of a child has always had an irresistible and indisputable influence on each person’s heart. The simplicity of a child, his or her beauty, his or her lively vitality, seems to reflect the life of the Lord. Jesus, who became a child among us, spoke affectionately of the children. “Let the children come to me and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.”(Lk 18:16). ○



Sr. Maddalena Hoang Ngoc

My name is Sister Maddalena Hoang, I am in charge of Asian countries: Cambodia, India, Laos, Vietnam and including Oceania. Every year I have received many projects from these countries. So, I would like to choose one of these projects to present to you:

Koilamoila parish was opened 2001 to cater to the spiritual and material needs of the people of this remote area. It is situated 72 km away from the city of Bongaigaon, in India. There are 2500 Catholics in this parish. Every year they are getting a good number adult baptism. People of the area are very

co-operative with the Catholics.

The people mainly rural farmers, they cultivate seasonal crops and it is depending on rain. People are very poor and most of the villages located far away from school, the small children are not able to ride bicycle and come to school. Since the parents are illiterate, they are not able to help their children in their studies at home. Therefore, the Sisters of Sacred Heart Convent have selected 45 girls children from remote villages and in difficult situation and kept them in the boarding house.

In the boarding house children get formal education, regular catechism, food, books, uniform and medical care.

During Christmas season children went around the villages for carol singing and also collected some amount of money and gave to the poor and the neediest.



Matteo Maria Piacentini

I am responsible, among other things, for the territories of English-speaking Africa. Among the most interesting projects that have come to my attention this year, mention should be made of the project from Mwanza Archdiocese in Tanzania, for "School fees and stationeries for 31 children at Buyegi pre-primary school". In Tanzania the population of albinism is calculated to be approximately one every two thousand persons. Currently there is a growing tendency of the majority of people to think of the power of witchcraft to realize their dreams. This illo-

gical and superstitious belief, according to which albino children are believed to have magical powers, ends up in the hunting and killing of the albino children, who are literally cut to pieces by death squads ready to do anything to sell parts of their bodies to local sorcerers, for their insane magical pursuits.

The main purpose of the project which I'm writing about is to protect the albino children and provide them a safe and secure environment and take care of their basic education needs, such as school fees and stationeries. The Archdiocese of Mwanza has decided to put them in a Boarding school where they can be safe and also receive proper education. The hope is to provide them a shelter and a good formation, in order to grant them a carefree childhood and a bright future.



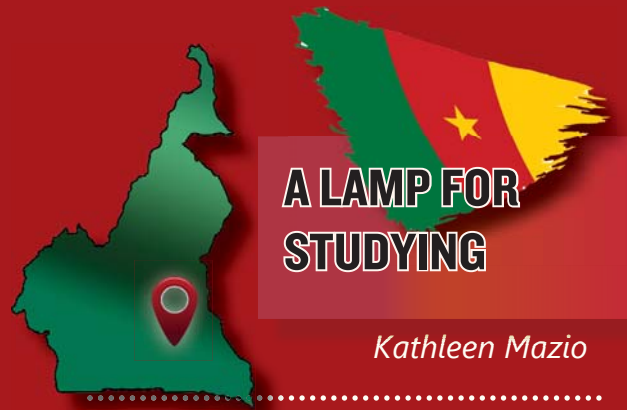


Augustine George Palayil

It is a great joy for me to learn from the applications for subsidies we receive how the local churches, even in remote areas, are keen to the appeals of Pope Francis on the themes so dear to him like Care for our Common Home -Laudato Si'-, the protection of Minors in the Church or care for Migrants. The children of Missionary Childhood are directly involved in such initiatives.

The project I wish to focus is on care for Migrants received from Bangkok-Thailand to support especially the children of Laotian migrant families. The grant requested is to provide education and to prevent them from becoming victims of the vicious cycle of drug addiction, child labour and human trafficking. The children who will benefit by this project are either Buddhists or Muslims. Christian and missionary education is integrated in the formation of values: love, respect and sharing.

The project report concludes "...we sent to the diocese the little contribution we had collected from our «Child helping a Child» drive of the Thai and Laotian children for the solidarity fund of the Missionary Childhood. It is the way our children too can help other children like them. Thank you very much for sharing God's Love and Hope to these children..."



Kathleen Mazio

My name is Kathleen and I am in charge of the projects from French-speaking Africa. Several problems from this part of the world are quite unknown and I would like to draw your attention to one of them. Among the most creative applications I happened upon this year, there is a request of solar lamps from Cameroon.

The Diocese of Doume Abong-Mbang is located in East Cameroon, in an isolated region of 36.000 square kilometers in the middle of the rain forest. It runs 25 parishes and 28 schools. Around twenty of these parishes are far from the "Route Nationale", the only paved road in this part of the country. The electrical grid that supplies this area running only along the road, the majority of the population does not have access to electricity.

About a thousand students from the villages far from the main road are not able to do their homework or review their lessons - one more challenge to their studies.

The project presented by Sr. Regina involves the purchase and distribution to these children of little solar lamps which, recharged in the sun in the daytime, could allow them to study in the evening.



PRAYER SPACES

in the schools of

MALTA



This year Missionary Childhood has introduced Prayer Spaces in schools as part of evangelisation programme. The PMS are in charge to prepare these sessions and assists children from different classes in the school to participate for these interactive prayers and activities. This is to help them experience the love of God for them and for others.

The aim is that our students will grow further in the love for God's word, in this way, they can be a sign of hope and offer solidarity to those children around the world who are suffering.

A MASS IN THE CHAPEL OF THE MISSIONARY CHILDHOOD –

FRANCE- PARIS - Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris

The relics of a young Chinese martyr, Paul Chen, were moved to this chapel located in the Cathedral of Paris on June 10th, 1920. Paul Chen was a Chinese child who was helped by the Society of the Holy Childhood. In 1861, he died as a martyr with two other seminarians, because they refused to deny their faith. In the year 2000, St. John Paul II canonized him along with 120 other Chinese Catholics. Since the 23rd of January 2019, the Missionary Childhood in France, in collaboration with the priests of the Missions étrangères de Paris and the Chinese community, offers a Holy Mass for the evangelization once a month.





*Heavenly Father,
when your only begotten Son Jesus Christ
rose from the dead,
he commissioned his followers
to “go and make disciples of all nations”
and you remind us that through our Baptism
we are made sharers in the mission of the Church.*

*Empower us by the gifts of the Holy Spirit
to be courageous and zealous
in bearing witness to the Gospel,
so that the mission entrusted to the Church,
which is still very far from completion,
may find new and efficacious expressions
that bring life and light to the world.*

*Help us make it possible for all peoples
to experience the saving love
and mercy of Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
One God, forever and ever.*

Amen.

Franciscus



EXTRAORDINARY
MISSION
MONTH | October
2019



**PONTIFICIUM OPUS A SANCTA INFANTIA
SECRETARIATUS INTERNATIONALIS**