



**PONTIFICIUM OPUS A SANCTA INFANTIA
SECRETARIATUS INTERNATIONALIS**

OCTOBER 2019 - N. 3

BULLE IN



THE UNEXHAUSTIBLE TREASURE OF A CHILD

FOCUS

**ADOLESCENTS,
THE WORLD, THE CHURCH**

LITTLE

MISSIONARIES IN...MYANMAR

THE VOICE OF THE CHILDREN



TOWARDS HOLINESS

BULLETIN

PONTIFICIUM OPUS A
SANCTA INFANTIA
SECRETARIATUS
INTERNATIONALIS



MISSIONARY NEWSLETTER
N.3 OCTOBER 2019

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Boys and girls are dear to the heart, as they are for Jesus, the Son of God!

He was never indifferent to anyone, especially not to children and young people.

In this edition we would like to speak especially about them, the adolescents, an age that the Society of the Holy Childhood doesn't seem to be engaged with in any evident manner, especially given the name of the society, but in reality they are included and are present. I would like to begin with the name since this is what provides identity. The Society was born in 1843 in order to engage children in the mission of the Church. It took as a point of reference, the childhood of Jesus. For the Hebrew people, to whom Jesus belonged, 12 year of age was the turning point from being a child to becoming an adult. The number 12 was proposed by the founder of the Society, Bishop Charles de Forbin Janson, as the upper limit of the age for membership. The first recorded regulations of the Society indicate that the number 12 was proposed not for the age of the members but for the number of members in each group. In fact, according to the first regulations of the Society children of a very young age to those who made their First Holy Communion were admitted.

As in very institution, also for the Society of the Holy Childhood, there was a certain evolution resulting from adapting to diverse ecclesial, cultural, and social realities so that the missionary dimension would be adequately developed in the young people, while holding true to the original charism.

This process was evident also in the name of the Society.

In the Annals of the Pontifical Society of the Holy Childhood of 1983-1984 we read "in francophone countries the Holy Childhood took on a different name: the Pontifical Society of the Missionary Childhood. However, the goal of the Society did not change: education and charity. It was all about communicating a missionary spirit to children, to reawaken their interest in the Universal Mission of the Church and to have them participate in it."

At the end of the 90's in Latin American countries,

the Society of the Holy Childhood began to register considerable growth and progress. In order not to lose what was already sown in the hearts of the children, the conversation began to include Missionary Adolescence. There was great concern for missionary ministry for adolescents. In this was, in 2002 in Argentina, the first continental meeting of the Missionary Adolescence was organized.

Today the Society of the Holy Childhood encourages all children and adolescents in the world to be protagonists in the evangelizing efforts of the Church, through prayer, personal witness of life and sacrificial offering to the Universal Solidarity Fund of the Society. In this way the proposal addressed to adolescents gave rise to the creation of a bond between the missionary child and the young missionary; a red missionary thread that will be able to be present in the life of every baptized person, helping them on their road to holiness of life.

You will find this proposal in this edition under the new rubric of "Towards holiness" where we recount the life of two girls, both members of the Society of the Holy Childhood, who also in moments of suffering continued to sustain the missionary activity of the church with their prayers and offerings.

We hope that these two testimonies of faith will be held up to all of the children and young people as examples of a missionary spirit and a way to holiness of life.



SR. ROBERTA TREMARELLI
Secretary General Pontifical Society Missionary Childhood

FIVE LOAVES and TWO FISH



THE INEXHAUSTIBLE TREASURE OF A CHILD

SR. ÉRICA A. SÁNCHEZ

Franciscana Angelina
Santa Cruz - Bolivia

The Holy Spirit does not cease to inspire new paths and open new horizons that respond to the new realities of God's people in the world.



In many ways, we propose to open a new phase of evangelization marked and animated by the spirit of synodality, remembering that being a missionary of the Church is nurtured in communion. It is a synodal ecclesial path that demands to live communion in the participation and co-responsibility of all the people of God who put their gifts and capacities at the service of the Church.

As a singular union, we are all summoned to reconsider within a “we” that opens us to the assessment of the other, that even in differences, and these of any kind, generates the culture of dialogue and encounter, of which we both Pope Francis speaks.

Being open to and believing in an “we” leads us to reflect on each of the areas in which the body of the Church is present. In this case, we focus on the world of youth, just as the last post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation “Christus Vivit” invites us.

Does it make sense to insist on the world of youth of the Church today? What role do the “little ones” play in this

synodal path?

We will concentrate on the Gospel of John, which in the story of the “Multiplication of loaves” (Jn 6: 1-15) offers us some light on this subject.

None of the four gospels overlooks the story of the multiplication of the loaves. This confirms the importance of its message and its meaning for the first Christian community. Such is the case, that among a total of six stories are found with their respective differences in Mk 6:30-44; 8:1-10; Mt 14:13-21; 15:32-39; Lk 9:11-17; and Jn 6:1-15.

In the Gospel of John, the story is precisely located in union with the seven signs (or miracles) that Jesus does in favor of humanity as salvific actions that discover his identity.

After careful reading of the Word, some points for reflection can be found.

“After this, Jesus went across the Sea of Galilee [of Tiberias]. A large crowd followed him, because they



to come and carry him off to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain alone. (Jn 6:1-15)

JESUS SYMPATHIZES WITH THE CROWD

The scene is on the shore of Lake Tiberias in the presence of a large crowd that followed Jesus for the wonders he performed, and his disciples. Jesus lets himself be filled by compassion, so he takes the initiative and looks for

something to feed them, including his disciples in the search for a solution: “Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?” Jesus’ compassion is not obscured by Philip’s response, “for he himself knew what he was going to do.” Philip calculates and sets limits, Jesus is generous and trusts. He is the One sent by the Father who by incarnating assumes our history and in solidarity shares our human nature until the end (Heb 2,17). As we can already see in the first chapters of the Gospel, Jesus is totally human, fraternal, linking himself with the other in such a way that he transforms his reality. (cf. Vanhoye A. “*The message of the letter to the Hebrews*”, 1980)

saw the signs he was performing on the sick. Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. The Jewish feast of Passover was near.]When Jesus raised his eyes and saw that a large crowd was coming to him, he said to Philip, “Where can we buy enough food for them to eat?” He said this to test him, because he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, “Two hundred days’ wages worth of food would not be enough for each of them to have a little [bit].” One of his disciples, Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, said to him, “There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what good are these for so many?” Jesus said, “Have the people recline.” Now there was a great deal of Grass in that place. So the men reclined, about five thousand in number. Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed them to those who were reclining, and also as much of the fish as they wanted. When they had had their fill, he said to his disciples, “Gather the fragments left over, so that nothing will be wasted.” So they collected them, and filled twelve wicker baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves that had been more than they could eat. When the people saw the sign he had done, they said, “This is truly the Prophet,[i] the one who is to come into the world.” Since Jesus knew that they were going

THE SOLIDARITY GESTURE OF JESUS ACTIVATES THE MISSIONARY



As the scene develops, we find the great gesture of Jesus overcoming the walls of doubt realizing the miracle that is much more than the multiplication but also consists in the sharing of the bread.

With three actions, which are at the same time, specifically eucharistic gestures, the miracle is performed. Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks and gave them to his disciples to distribute the pieces. In this way, the merciful and supportive gesture of the Lord reveals the identity of the disciple: his missionary being. It activates you in this dynamism by

implicating you in the responsibility of attending to and satisfying the needs of the one near you: “You give them something to eat.” (Lk 9:13); (cf. EG 27)

On the other hand, the satiety of the multitude manifest Jesus, the Son of God, as the fullness of life. The hunger of material bread or the bread of meaning has no place in the presence of the Lord. When the bread of one’s life is shared, it is enough for everyone. Jesus teaches us that, in spite of the obstacles of human selfishness, the path is from sharing, to life itself; It is the path of encounter and fraternity that leads one to consider the other in its entirety. (cf. EG 10, 121, 156).

IN THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST THE OFFERING OF THE YOUNGEST ALSO COUNTS

The architect of the miracle of the multiplication of bread, without a doubt is Jesus, the Father’s envoy. Even so, the text makes it very clear that the miracle begins with a boy’s offering: five barley loaves and two fish. But, “What is that for so many people?”

Among the crowd a boy highlights, that even in poverty, he was willing to offer everything he had. (Juan’s clarification about breads made from barley is not a minor fact: barley was the raw material of simple people’s food). As it happens in each miracle story, we can see in the same way here that Jesus acts positively before a difficulty assuming an act of faith. It is to be appreciated that in this case the act of faith that leads to the miracle is

from a simple boy. In this way, when estimating the faith and offering of the young man, Jesus teaches a lesson to all the public present: the contribution of the youngest, although apparently little, in the hands of the Lord of history multiplies transforming into a great gesture for the one who needs it.

DISCIPLESHIP

Faced with overwhelming obstacles because of his age, the hungry crowd, the disciples assessing the situation and the eminent presence of Jesus the great prophet, it is significant to highlight the young boy’s ability to risk and offer what little he had in his hands. As is also to value his capacity for critical thinking when he identifies with his ideals and makes a decision to act.

He was among the crowd that “followed Jesus” ... there we see him, like every boy, in fragility and instability he goes after Jesus as a seeker of meaning. He is open to discipleship and friendship with the Master. (cf. CV 134-143; 150-157)

PERSISTENT IN LOVE

The figure that this boy plays in the story is more than significant. He highlights the most human side of a young person. He does not act according to selfish criteria but is moved by a “merciful” heart and becomes solidary with the crowd. His young energy does not limit it him, it does not make him indifferent. Even in simplicity, he persists in the love that is generosity in the face of a need. He reflects the hidden offering that all the “children” of the world have the capacity to give and that is willing to be transformed by the encounter with Christ. (cf. 174)

THE SIMPLICITY OF HIS OFFERING BECOMES A CHALLENGE

The disciple Andrew in this story is the prototype of all those who barely value youth and see them as a lost cause: “But what are they among so many people?” Or better, what good can a child do or give? On the contrary, Jesus himself demonstrates that the child has much to propose, show and deliver to the Church and the world.





The challenge is to truly believe in the potential, in that inexhaustible treasure of this member of the Body of Christ, often weak and broken, and knowing how to accompany them on the path of the Christian life. (cf. CV 41)

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH, NEVER WITHOUT CHILDREN

All the members of the people of God share the unique responsibility of carrying out the evangelizing task as a continuation of the saving work of Christ, each according to their own vocation and charisms. None is excluded (1Co 12 :4-27). In this sense, the Church increasingly values the place, the value and the contribution of all its members: ordained ministers, religious, laity, elders, youth, children and women. (cf. CV 42; 199)

Likewise, it is essential to rethink a ministry that knows how to accompany each one of them. But who is in charge? Shepherding the “the youth field” is a task that is done in community. It must necessarily be carried out via prayer, organization, formation, as discernment on how to discover and rescue the hidden treasure in

that field. And so, enlightened by the Gospel of Christ, every young person becomes an active disciple of the evangelizing mission of his Church.





ADOLESCENTS the WORLD the CHURCH

“If in the adult-child relationship, the adult’s task is to introduce the child to the completeness of adulthood, in the adult-adolescent relationship, the adult’s task is to translate the adolescent into the incompleteness of adult age”.¹

The Church, as the school, alongside the family, must preserve her educational value and the ability to be an environment in which the child can experiment himself in relationship with others and with the Other.

The world today is home to about 1.2 billion adolescents: the largest group of this age group in history. Adolescence is a critical period of cognitive, emotional, physical and sexual development with consequences that go beyond adulthood. However, this period gives a second opportunity to lay the basis and promote positive behavior in the person.

THE ADOLESCENT AS HORIZON OF VALUE OF THE ADULT

Adolescence is the segment of life that precedes maturity (at least legal). Generally an adolescence does not receive a recognition of value for what he is and does, for being an adolescence, but for a functional or sentimental assessment. Functional evaluation looks above all to the future, to what he will be and will produce, to his contribution to the world of adults. Sentimental evaluation looks mainly to the past and is seen by the adult as a memory and reminder of what he was. For these reasons an adolescence is often considered an incomplete, a path towards the ego and not an ego in progress. Jesus instead tells us that the

an adolescent is the horizon of value of the adult and the disciple. The term child appears about 200 times in the Gospels and does this indicate the importance a child had for Jesus? And for us today? Have we ever wondered if adolescents really feel welcomed in our communities? In the Church? In society? Do we consider them a gift for the Church?

A METAMORPHOSIS

Adolescence is a period of transformations, both physically (puberty) and psychologically (adolescence in itself). Something changes in the mind and thoughts of an adolescent, parallel to a such a rapid physical transformation that it can be compared, as “speed” of metamorphosis, to that what occurs in the first years of life of a newborn. Moreover, even on a psychological level, so many things happen that allow us to compare the adolescent period with the first three years of child development. In particular the great changes that take place in the adolescent mind can be summarized as follows:

- increases creative exploration, the drive to see and experience new things;
- there is a search for greater social involvement. The adolescent is turned to the



outside, towards the group of peers, who, like a magnet, drag him by force out of the original context;

- emotions are experienced with greater intensity. The adolescent carries out partial evaluations on the experiences he lives and of what he intends to do, in particular with an imbalance between those which are the “pros” and the “cons” related to the different experiences.³

GIVE CONFIDENCE

Expectations and fears, sadness and desire for novelty, nostalgia and solitude are some typical realities of the adolescent period. The non-belonging to a group, the difficulty in making friends, the lack of educational proposals appropriate to their age often push adolescents into an abyss of desolation and emptiness, accentuated

also by the difficult relationship with their growing body which is difficult to manage. All this is at the base of the complexity experienced by adults in involving adolescents in the ecclesial reality, sometimes forgetting that they can exploit the positive elements of this fantastic age group, even proposing experiences that give security in their abilities, reinforce the interests and desires, making adolescents more confident in their talents and motivating them to move forward with joy and perseverance.

Adolescence is the period in which everything is questioned, in particular the role of adults and of God in one's life, but also personal identity.

BELONGING, SHARING, LISTENING AND SELF-CONFIDENCE

Relating to peers and gaining experience of belonging helps a child to define his own personal

and then ecclesial identity. In diocesan, national and international gatherings, adolescents can experience first-hand that there are many peers who live faith or who are looking for ways to live and witness it. The group creates continuity! Having a group, a community, a group of people in which to share values, experiences, languages, but at the same time be open and listen to their surroundings can make a difference in an adolescent's life.

Adhering to a group, to a movement, to the mission, to Jesus is for them a choice, big and free, in which they grow day after day, experience after experience, and that involves a certain responsibility because it means being part of something greater than them and to whom they are called. Adolescents are able to choose, to exercise a responsibility, even with their instability and discontinuity, towards their peers, family, the world.

LISTENING

Children must be helped to discover what their personal charisma is, by diverting attention from their needs, to develop their own strengths and to commit to a task that fascinates them.

The support of significant adults is a promotional factor that, adding to the support of parents, enriches the contribution of the latter and has an influence in the social sphere of the adolescent.



P r i e s t s ,
c o n s e c r a t e d
p e r s o n s a n d
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i m p o r t a n t
p o s s i b i l i t i e s
f o r
l i s t e n i n g .
L i s t e n i n g t o

adolescents in confession or moments of spiritual retreat, on the path of initiation to the faith or in missionary formation requires care and skills that are not only linked to the specific content, but also to the management of the relationship.

Listening as a priest, consecrated or animator means knowing how to leave the door open to the other for what he is, for how he is able to express his point of view. It means to be capable of giving value to what he is laboriously communicating, enhancing it, considering his path of growth.

A TWO WAY RELATIONSHIP

And this is based on the idea of a relationship that cannot be only in one direction, from the adult towards the adolescent, but which must necessarily be two-way. Even the priest, the consecrated and the animator must know how to activate one own's receiving channels in order to be able to do well what their mission proposes and to be able to listen and value the adolescent, above all the discontinuous one, who struggles, who cannot keep up with others or simply the one who sometimes wonders what is the point of what he is doing.

Listening is useful for the adolescent:

- to practice a space and a time to reflect on the meaning of what is happening in his life, of why it is happening;
- to contextualize the problem exposed living it as a moment of the evolutionary path which takes place over time;
- to perceive a "better" future than the present.

PROPOSE CERTAINTIES

To educators when Francis had not been elected pope yet said:

In "this moment marked by crisis and changes, do not be ashamed to propose certainties. Not everything is in motion, not everything is unstable, not everything is the result of culture or consensus. There is something that has been given to us as a gift, which surpasses our



AN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

A big risk is to continue to operate and make proposals with a language that for many, especially adolescents, has now become incomprehensible. It is urgent and indispensable to rewrite the grammar of evangelization for effective communication. And we have a splendid Master in this: Jesus, whose language was not only fascinating but full of life and experiences rich in everyday life, and it was this that fascinated and attracted even the youngest, such as the child with 5 loaves and 2 fish that he had followed for a long time in the crowd.

Accompanying children to grow up in “age, wisdom and grace” does not only mean transmitting contents, but

it is a real mission to announce a real and concrete, human and humanizing God in the person of Jesus Christ. Following Jesus at the service of children is a choice of freedom that makes people capable of creativity and able to recognize the beauty in the most obvious and repetitive gestures.

It is necessary to embrace God’s gaze on children who at the center of the Christian community are constituted by the Lord as a memory of the past, a prophecy of the future and an awareness of today. It is necessary to help them “to stay inside” their questions, not to run away from them and this will only be possible if we are increasingly convinced that children, with all their characteristics and peculiarities, are capable of God.

THE CAREFUL EDUCATOR

The careful and wise educator never replaces the child’s decisions, but chooses how and where to place himself to help them grow. Sometimes he will place himself in front of them to show them the way; sometimes next to the child to support and extend his hand; sometimes behind to prevent them from leaving the path taken.

capacities, which goes beyond everything we can imagine or think ... In these moments of historical turning point and of great crisis, the Church needs the strength and perseverance of an educator and a Christian animator who, with his humble but sure faith, helps the new generations to say with the psalmist: «With my God I will climb over the walls» (Psalm 17.30), «Even if I go through a dark valley, I fear no evil, for you are with me» (Ps 23: 4).⁴

Today, Pope Francis himself reaffirms the importance of the role of young people and children in the Church and in society.

“They have a preponderant role. They are not the future of our peoples; they are the ones who are already shaping the spirit of humanity with their dreams and their lives. We cannot think of tomorrow without offering them real participation as agents of change and transformation. We cannot imagine the future without making them participants and protagonists”.

Respecting children means listening to them, letting them talk, taking their feelings and words seriously without underestimating them.

INVOLVED IN THE CHURCH

The protagonism of children and young people in the Church is the planning and pastoral translation of that “putting Jesus at the center”, it is taking care of them, making them able to walk alone, to become great in faith and in life.

Children and adolescents, according to Jesus, cannot remain on the threshold but must be involved as subjects with autonomy.

Jesus reverses their position by affirming that they are the horizon of value of the adult and the disciple. They are the visible and concrete memory of the form of smallness and fragility with whom the Lord is present in the midst of his disciples, in the heart of the Church. The Church, throughout her journey, must always confront and choose between two types: to be the Church of the greatest, of the most important, or to be the Church of the child at the center and allow the child to evangelize the heart and life.

However, the protagonism of children exists only in virtue of a relationship based on trust and with the awareness that what we live today is part of a larger project.

We are responsible for helping children and adolescents to be protagonists, but without fostering a sense of leadership.



PROTAGONISM AND SERVICE

The term protagonist is now in common use also in the pastoral care and in what concerns the life of the Church, it speaks in fact of pastoral actors with the meaning of not remaining to watch as spectators and simple receivers of what is proposed by priests, by animators and by consecrated persons in the various ecclesial areas. This is what Mgr. Charles de Forbin Janson also meant when he first proposed to French children to help him.

But we must not forget the style of Jesus, which is that of service.

Being protagonists in the mission of the Church therefore means putting oneself at the service of the Lord so that his Kingdom spreads to every part of the earth and every man, woman and child can get to know him. This participation in the mission of the Church that comes from baptism takes on various typologies, first of all prayer, then action and cooperation.

Going back to being a protagonist and at the service, we can say that for Jesus, service was not just an experience, an aspect of his life. Being a servant is what Jesus epitomizes all his being and his mission. But did this service make Jesus the protagonist? Was He the first actor?

From the Gospels we do not seem to find such a



response. Jesus never acted alone: the words he speaks are not his but those of the Father, he goes into the desert driven by the Spirit, he chooses his people after a night of prayer, in the Spirit he rose to new life. Therefore the story of Jesus does not seem to talk about protagonism.

And if each of us is called to incarnate Jesus in our lives and to make it grow and if the history of salvation is the history of God and history of man, or rather the history of God in human history, then instead of being protagonists we must speak of co-agonists.

CO-AGONISM

Father, Son and Holy Spirit are co-agonists, they act only together because they are the only God who is Love.

The beauty of love, of being Christians, of being baptized, missionary disciples consists precisely in this: in not wanting to be protagonists or in giving in the protagonism to the other, but in always being co-agonists, in recognizing that our identity is fulfilled only in being together.

This does not only mean making space for children and adolescents but building together with them, being a mission together, integrating paths and proposals to activate dynamics of true co-agonism that are more demanding but full of future.

Agonist: participant, actor

Protagonist: first actor

Co-agonist: participate together and put to fruit their talents, their skills and their creativity, making them capable of exercising responsibilities.

A CHURCH THAT WELCOMES

With adolescents, there are various ecclesial challenges, including that of being a Church that welcomes,

educates, accompanies, it is a point of reference, proposes faith, announces Christ; a Church that bears witness to unlimited love for every human being and gives a desire to grow, to commit and live a chosen and joyful faith. A Church where one can meet adults of all ages who open to them horizons of knowledge and action, who bear witness to a fulfilled life, which give confidence. And all in the name of Jesus Christ.

If in regard to the parable of the workers at the vineyard, the *Christifideles laici* speaks of the different hours of the day, when there is the call of the master, as the ages of life, then we are responsible for not making adolescents become the workers of the last hour who remain in squares, at the edge of the road to watch and wait because no one called them.

The Editorial Staff

NOTES

¹ Bucciarelli C., *Adulti-adolescenti: relazione cercasi*, Ave, Roma 1993.

² Dati Unicef

³ Cfr. Siegel D., *La mente adolescente*, Raffaello Cortina Editore, Milano 2014

⁴ Card. Bergoglio, *Chiamati a servire e ad annunciare*, Buenos Aires, 12 marzo 2005.



LET US NOT LEAVE THEM ON THEIR OWN

TO ACCOMPANY PARENTS IN THE EDUCATION
OF THEIR ADOLESCENT CHILDREN

...I would like to share with you a few “premises” that may help us in this reflection. Often we do not realize it, but the spirit we reflect with is just as important as the content (a good athlete knows that the warm-up counts as much as the performance that follows). Therefore, this conversation can help us in this sense: a “warm-up”, and then it will be up to you to “give it all you’ve got”...

Educating adolescents in motion. Adolescence is a phase of transition in the life of not only your children but of the whole family — the whole family is in a transitional phase — you know it well and you experience it; and as such, we must address it in its totality. It is a phase of bridging, and for this reason adolescents are neither here nor there; they are in motion, in transit. They are not children (and they do not want to be treated as such) and they are not adults (but they want to be treated as such, especially at the level of privileges). They are experiencing precisely this tension, first of all within themselves and then with those who surround them. They always seek confrontation; they question, dispute everything; they look for answers. And at times, they do not listen to the answers, and they ask another question before the parents say the answer.... They pass through these various states of mind, and their families with them. However, allow me to tell you that it is a precious time in the life of your children. A difficult time, yes. A time of changes and of instability, yes. A phase that presents great risks, no doubt. But above all, it is a time of growth for them and for the

entire family. Adolescence is not a pathology and we cannot address it as though it were. A child who experiences his or her adolescence (as difficult as it may be for the parents) is a child with future and hope. I am often worried by the current tendency to prematurely “medicalize” our young people. It seems that everything is resolved by medicalizing, or controlling everything with the slogan “make the most of your time”, and in this way young people’s agenda is worse than that of a senior manager.

Therefore I insist: adolescence is not a pathology that we must combat. It is a normal, natural part of growing up, of the life of our young people. Where there is life there is movement; where there is movement there are changes, seeking, uncertainty; there is hope, joy and also anguish and desolation. Let us correctly frame our discernment within the foreseeable fundamental processes. There are margins that are necessary to be aware of so as not to be alarmed, not to be careless, nor to be negligent, but to know how to accompany and help [young people] to grow. Not everything is insignificant, but neither does everything have equal importance. For this reason it is important to discern which battles are to be fought and which are not...

Our young people seek to be and want to feel they are — logically — protagonists. They do not at all like to feel commanded or to respond to “orders” coming from the adult world (they follow their “accomplices” rules of the game). They seek that complicit autonomy that lets them feel “they are in control of themselves”...





In this search for autonomy that young people want, we can find a good opportunity, especially for schools, parishes and ecclesial movements. To encourage activities that put them to the test, that make them feel as protagonists. They need this. Let us help them! They seek in many ways the “dizziness” that makes them feel alive. So, let’s give it to them! Let us encourage all that helps them to transform their dreams into projects, and enables them to discover that all the potential they have is a bridge, a passageway to a vocation (in the broadest and most beautiful sense of the word). Let us offer them broad goals, great challenges, and let us help them to accomplish them, to reach their goals. Let us not leave them on their own. Thus, let us challenge them more than they challenge us. Let us not allow them to receive that “dizzying sensation” from others, who do nothing but put their lives at risk: let us give it to them ourselves; but the right dizziness that satisfies this desire to move, to go forward... Make them protagonists of something.

This calls for finding educators capable of committing themselves to young people’s growth. It calls for educators spurred by love and by the passion to make grow in them the life of the Spirit of Jesus, to show that being Christian demands courage and is a beautiful thing. To educate today’s adolescents we cannot continue to use a merely scholastic teaching model, of ideas alone. It is necessary to follow the pace of their growth. It is important to help them to acquire self-esteem, to believe that they can truly succeed in all they they apply themselves to. In motion. Always.

This process requires **a simultaneous and integrated manner of developing the various languages that build us as persons**. That means teaching our young people to integrate all that they are and that they do. We might call it socio-integrated alphabetizing, which is education based on the intellect (the head), feelings (the heart), and actions (the hands). This will offer our young people the opportunity for harmonious growth, not only at the personal but, at the same time, the social level. It is essential to create places where social fragmentation is not the

dominant framework. To this end it is important to teach them to think what they feel and do, to feel what they think and do, and to do what they think and feel; that is, integrating the three languages. A dynamism of ability placed at the service of the person and of society. This will help enable our young people to feel active and as protagonists in their growth processes, and will also lead them to feel called to participate in the building of the community.

They want to be protagonists: let us give them room so they may be protagonists, guiding them — obviously — and giving them the tools to develop all of this growth. For this I believe that the harmonious integration of different spheres of knowledge — of the mind, the heart and the hands — will help them to build their character. We often think that education is imparting knowledge, and along the way we leave emotional illiterates and young people with countless incomplete plans because they have found no one to teach them how to “do”. We have concentrated education on the head, overlooking the heart and hands...

Address of His Holiness Pope Francis, Pastoral Conference of the Diocese of Rome - 19 June 2017



NATALYS

a little BIG missionary



This story begins in a small batey (a rural community) of a sugar mill called Haiti, near Santa Cruz del Sur in the province of Camagüey, there on November 26, 1979 a girl named Natalys Vidal Menéndez was born, joining her parents, Ismael Vidal and Mariela Menéndez and her Brother Andy Vidal. They were a simple and poor family that lived without discovering the richness of faith.

From a very young age, Natalys has a great interest for the church, every time she passed

with her parents holding hands by the little chapel of her town, she felt an attraction to enter, something that her family did not allow. But despite that on many occasions, at eight years old, she went alone to the church where she stayed at the door with sorrow and fear that her

parents and brother would discover her in the church.

The restlessness was so great that no one could stop her from attending the church.

THE FIRST TIME IN THE CHURCH

At the age of eight accompanied by Maydelis, a little friend she entered the church for the first time. On this day they gave her a child's Bible, it was a great gift for her. When she arrived at her house, she told her dad about this visit and that she wanted to continue attending. He responds that the Church is something serious, not for children. Still, she remained very intrigued.

Time passes and her desire did not fall asleep. It was Christmas 1989 when she went back to the church but this time with her brother Andy whom she wanted to take so that he would also know God and feel what she felt. Without her knowing, she was becoming a great missionary. From this day on, Natalys never missed a Sunday.

Every day her spirituality was growing, and everyone noticed her faith and devotion. Many testified that she would transform when she went inside the church, feeling a joy that others





noticed. Despite her young age she had great respect for the Church and for her religion.

DETERMINATION

Her Father recalls that when she entered school her grades were low. But one day for a math test she told her teacher:

“Teacher tomorrow, I’m going to score a hundred points!”

And so, it was, she took the test, and obtained the highest grade. It was a very great joy for her since she had never received this score. From that moment all her grades were excellent.

She advised her brother Andy to do the same. She was demanding, setting goals that amazed everyone. Her seriousness and perseverance were an example of admiration.

AN EXCEPTIONAL GIRL

She felt an immense passion for Jesus in her heart. She would fill each day with the Word of God and would convey it to her family and friends with great emotion.

In this way it was how little by little she was getting to know God and committing herself to His work. It was small, but with missionary ardor. It was simple and sweet, and her face reflected peace.

Her catechist Polda would tell the parish priest that this girl was special, that she noticed something she had never noticed in other children.

The priest, Father Wilfredo Pino, began to observe her and realized that what the catechist was telling him was true. He observed that Natalys was very devoted to her Church and to God, for this reason Fr. Wilfredo approached Natalys. Among the things they talked about, she expressed the desire to be like him, because she just wanted to give herself to Jesus and help others.

Fr. Wilfredo did not expect to hear this from



such a young child. He addressed her desire by telling her about religious sisters, which was something that she did not know about, he spoke to her about their life of surrender, and this served to animate her even more.

THE DECISIVE MOMENT

After this conversation, the priest realized that she was truly an exceptional girl, as her catechist had said.

Seeing so much enthusiasm, he invited a religious Teresian to visit so that the young girl could meet a sister. The following week Sister Ana María came to visit and from this day on, Natalys maintained contact with Sister Ana María. Mariela, Natalys’ mother, recalled that one day she told her that she wanted to be a sister, she became annoyed and responded, *“But daughter! What are you saying? You are crazy!”*

MISSIONARY CHILDHOOD

In 1992, Missionary Childhood was beginning in Cuba, as part of this effort Enrique (Fidelito) Cabrera visited this community to motivate and encourage children’s missionary work.

Missionary Childhood Association began there with few children from the religious education program.

Natalys, showed a special understanding for missionary work. She immediately joined the movement, participating in all its activities with great enthusiasm and missionary spirit. Within the group, she communicated with great seriousness the different subjects that were given to her to develop.

Over time, many children and adults were affected and inspired by her example. She was a true missionary, and many would listen carefully when she spoke.

At that time, many people did not go to church for fear, since the government system was atheist people of faith were watched and treated badly. But, nevertheless, some remained faithful. Natalys fearlessly proclaimed the Gospel. She always shared with others the message she received every Sunday at Holy Mass. For her it meant a lot, so she acted with determination and commitment.

SUFFERING

A few years later, she began to suffer from continuous and severe headaches forcing her to become bedridden. Despite so much suffering because the pains were stronger every day, she

never lost his joy. Medical tests were performed and finally doctors give the diagnosis: Natalys is discovered to have a brain tumor.

The first of the many operations to which she was subjected is quickly performed.

Everything seemed to be better and she was able to go back to school but for a very short time. Shortly before her 15 birthday her hair fell out due to the treatment.

BIRTHDAY WISH

She asked Jesus with all her heart that her hair grow for her party, a request that everyone doubted, but she was confident and trusted that Jesus would listen to her. For God nothing is impossible, which was confirmed when her request was granted in infinite mercy. Her hair grew in time for the event she was looking forward to. Soon after she had to go back to the hospital and back to the operating room. The doctors and nurses tell that she was singing to Jesus on her way to the operating room. Her illness worsened and she was not able to return home. Everyone awaited her end, but Natalys was calm for she will finally go to heaven.

TO OFFER HER ILLNESS FOR MISSIONARY CHILDHOOD

She also knew the life of Santa Teresita del Niño Jesus and how she had offered her illness for the missions. In those years, there was a wish that the work of the Missionary Childhood Association would reach all the dioceses of the country, for this reason the children of Camagüey had a motto that said "*Missionary Childhood will be in all of Cuba.*" Natalys offered her illness for Missionary Childhood, so that this work could reach all of Cuba. This was made known to Enrique





Cabrera (Fidelito), a layman who started this work in Cuba and at that time he was encouraging it.

The girl repeated to Fidelito that the Missionary Childhood would take root in Cuba, because, like Santa Teresita, she had offered her illness. On July 2, 1995, Natalys went to heaven. She so desired to be with God and now lives forever with Him. She is happy with Jesus and from heaven she prays for us especially for the missionary children.

Sister. Ana María, who guided this child and was very fond of her, could not be with her on her final day because her superiors had transferred her to Mexico. Interestingly Sister's flight was on July 2, 1995 at 3:00 in the afternoon, the same day and at the same time that Natalys finally closes her eyes.

MISSIONARY CHILDHOOD EXPANDS

It was something wonderful and curious at the same time, when soon after their departure to heaven, Fidelito begins to receive letters from some bishops requesting that Missionary Childhood could be founded in their diocese. The interest in all the dioceses began to arouse so the work grew and a commitment began to create this work in Cuba.

LITTLE BIG EVANGELIZER

Years later this motto "*Missionary Childhood will be in all of Cuba*" could come true. We are sure that from heaven this little missionary girl has helped us a lot and continues to intercede for our childrens missionary work in Cuba. This story is a great example.

Natalys was that girl who knew how to bring Jesus to her family and everyone. A short time later her brother Andy found his priestly vocation, entered the seminary and was ordained a priest.

Her parents Israel and Mariela were not

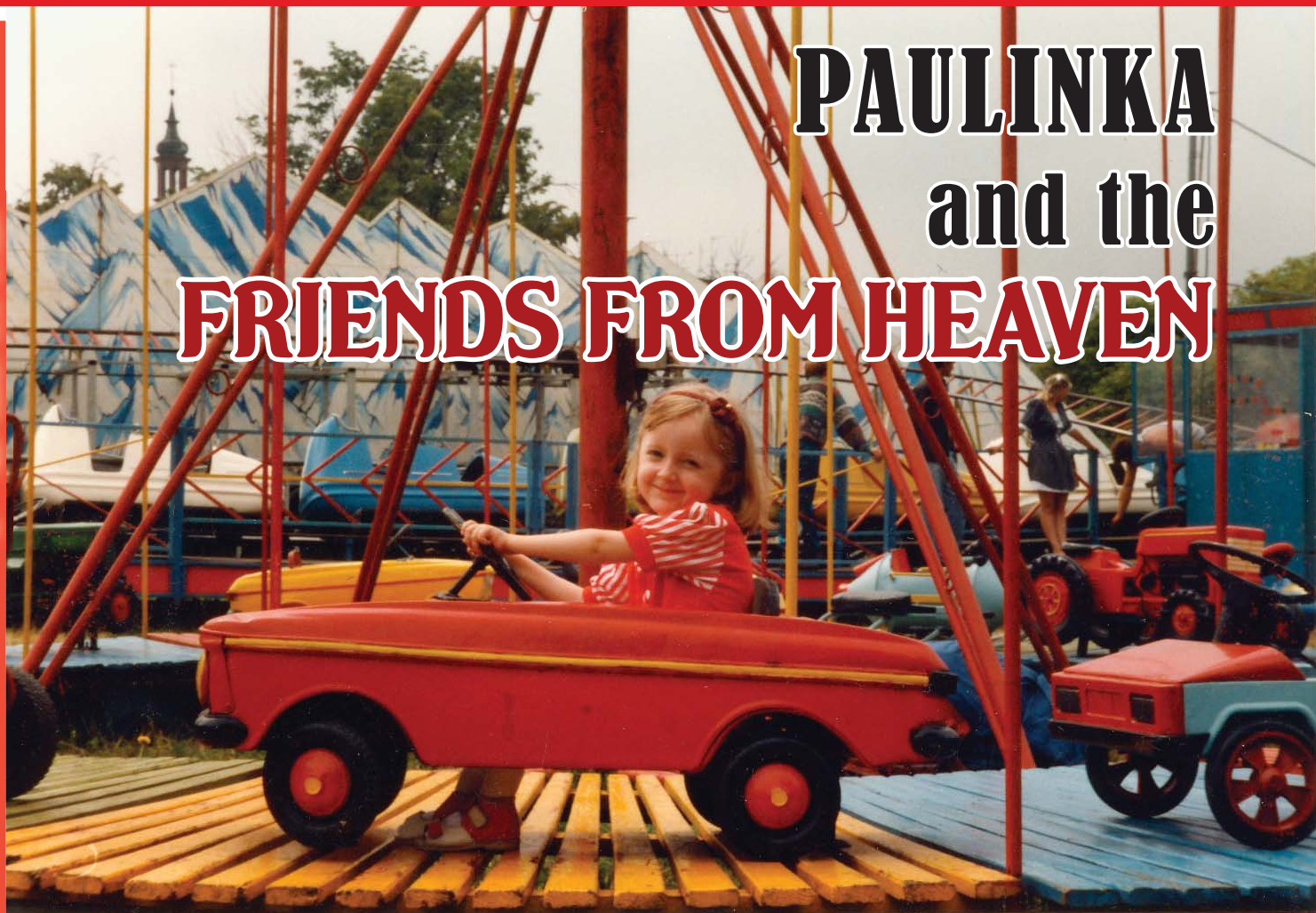
believers.

Natalys knew how to be a missionary in her own home to the extent that her parents today

enjoy knowing Jesus Christ through her daughter, supporting the decision of their son Andy and are proud to see him a priest.

Let us thank God for this girl who has left us so many examples and helps us increase our missionary strength.





PAULINKA and the FRIENDS FROM HEAVEN

Paulinka was born in 1990. She lived in a small village in the Mazovia region, in the heart of Poland. She lived only 13 years, but her life was very fruitful. Through her experience of faith she enriched not only her relatives, but also her neighbors, as well as her peers. She wrote letters, poems and testimonies of faith, touching the hearts and minds of many animators of the Pontifical Society of the Missionary Childhood who, like her, undertook the path of holiness through their commitment.

Paulinka never experienced the joy of running, climbing or carefree walking alone as she suffered from spinal muscular atrophy. This incurable disease, which gradually weakened her whole body, caused her great suffering, and yet, as she herself repeatedly emphasized, she was a happy child, as her parents confessed in a letter to the editorial staff of the “Missionary

World”: “It was happiness that gave her a profound piety”. From an early age she loved to pray to Jesus, the Mother of God and the saints. She prayed the entire rosary, with the surprise and admiration of her parents. She had attached the rosary on the wall of her room and practiced various sacrifices, especially during Lent.



FRIENDS FROM HEAVEN

Her profound faith and piety were transmitted to her by her parents and other family members; she, in fact, grew up in an atmosphere of great religiosity.

As her parents recall, Paulinka read a lot, often religious books. She read the books of the Old Testament and the biographies of many saints. Reading the “Lives of the Saints” profoundly marked her heart and her memory. Above her bed she had created a large “bulletin board” of saints, where she had put her favorite saints: Blessed Henry Suzo, Saint Rita, Blessed Margherita di Castello, Blessed Giacinto, Saint Faustina and the servant of God Paulina Jaricot. Every day she “spoke” with her “friends from heaven”, as she called them.

ILLNESS AS A GIFT

Prayer was something very natural and necessary for her in everyday life. She prayed in the morning and evening, before and after meals, in moments of joy and moments of sadness. Every event, encounter or any difficulty was an impulse to turn to God. Prayer helped her to live her suffering. Spirituality changed the viewpoint in her thought: the question “why me?” changed into “for whom who can I offer this suffering?” Perceiving illness as a “gift” was her path towards holiness. Following the example of specific saints, she discovered that suffering, together with prayer, can be offered to God for specific intentions. This is why she loved missionary Childhood Society so much.

“It was easier for her to suffer when she knew she was suffering, as she said, the same sufferings of her friends from heaven:

Saint Teresa of Liseux, Saint Faustina, Blessed Giacinto” - her parents recall. - “While she was in intensive care, she did not allow the miraculous medal she always wore to be removed”.

THE OFFERING OF SUFFERING

The child deeply trusted that through faith, prayer, the offering of suffering, the witness of life and support for missionary childhood, the fate of her

peers in mission countries could be changed. She also supported missionaries in the difficulties of their work. She felt a bond with the children she helped in this work, in Africa, in Asia, in the islands of Oceania, but also with the children who prayed and supported the Holy Childhood. She was a zealous reader of the missionary world and exchanged letters with the editorial staff. The servant of God Paulina Jaricot inspired her in her missionary commitment. She repeatedly emphasized the special bond between her and her homonymous “saint”. In the

life of Paulina Jaricot and her experience of faith, she found inspiration for her life.

MISSIONARY ANIMATOR

Paulinka was an extremely zealous Holy Childhood animator in various ways. She joined the Pontifical Missionary Society of Missionary Childhood with self-denial.

There was no similar group in her parish, and she had received a Holy Childhood newspaper from a catechist entitled “Missionary World”, which inspired her to write a letter to the director asking for admission.



Paulinka with her cousin in front of the “bulletin board” of saints

Thus began the correspondence between her and the National Secretariat for Missionary Childhood in Poland. Paulinka became the first missionary animator in her village, talking about her work to her schoolmates, sharing mission materials and encouraging them to pray together for missions. The child shared her missionary “successes” through her letters to the Holy Childhood secretariat and the news of her death in 2003 was a shock. There was no mention of her illness in any of her letters. On the contrary, they expressed joy for life and fervent missionary activity. They reflected a deep faith and missionary desire. Only the analysis of one of her poems (“Suffering Man”), which her parents made known after their daughter’s death, shows us her awareness of suffering.

SONGS AND POETRY

Paulinka’s work - the lyrics of her songs and poems - largely reflect her spirituality. She shares her emotions in them, very often the joy of the arrival of spring, the flowery meadow, the singing of birds. There are also funny stories, anecdotes, observed situations that she wanted to share. It is the aspect of someone who is extremely good, kind, empathic, who perceives good and beauty in everything and in everyone. In her poems you can feel the certainty that the world is beautiful and a wonderful gift for every being, because it was created by a good and loving God. Her small works contain descriptions of saints, family and people she met.

Paulinka’s poems were published in a local newspaper (Gazeta Gostyńska n. 2/2003 of 1 February 2003) and in the periodicals “Missionary world” and “The small archer of the Immaculate”.

The first collection of poems entitled “Living with a painted poetry” published by the Association “Our Future” was published after her death, thanks to the efforts of the child’s friends and students of the secondary school in

Bulków.

“Paulinka is no longer with us, but her admirable and respectful attitude has become an inspiration for young people who read these extraordinary poems that express admiration for the world, the hopes and disappointments that life brings, dreams and wishes”, the editor wrote in the introduction to the volume.

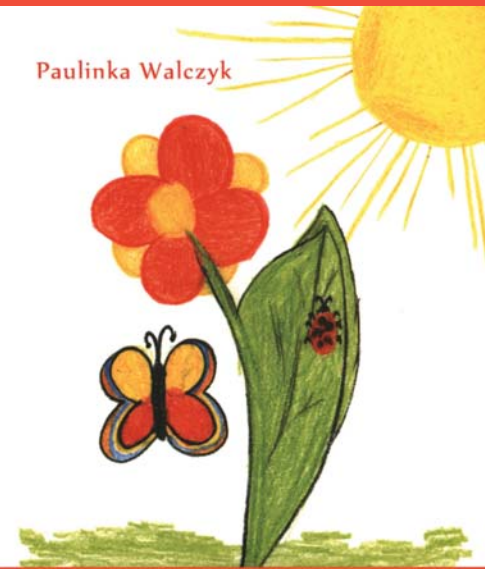
Another expanded and colored volume of poems was published by the Pontifical Mission Societies in Polonia and illustrated by the children belonging to the Holy Childhood, who did not know Paulinka and her mission, but came from the same diocese. These are the children of the elementary school in Szczytno, directed by Mrs. Eliza Łoniewska, animator and catechist.

INSPIRED BY PAULINKA

The publication gave way to a wave of extremely moving events.

On the initiative of the children themselves it was proposed to present poems and songs by Paulinka Walczyk to a wider audience in theatrical form. The students, with the help of teachers and parents, prepared costumes, decorations, artistic settings and songs on the theme of poems, which were collected and disseminated through a volume published by the Pontifical Society of the Holy Childhood in Poland. At the presentation of the volume there were, among the invited guests, Paulinka’s parents, her friends and teachers, the headmasters of the nearby schools and bishop Piotr Libera, ordinary of the diocese of Płock.

Paulinka Walczyk



Objąć misje
małym sercem



It was a beautiful and touching experience for all those present and for the Holy Childhood animators and a great example of missionary animation. Shortly after this event - thanks to the testimony of the teacher and organizer of this school event, Mrs. Eliza Łoniewska, with the national PMS direction - organized similar shows prepared by teachers and students of schools and centers in various parts of Poland. The reports of these events bear witness to the incredible impact that this child's creativity and testimony had on others.



Pontifical Society of the Missionary Childhood

*We belong to the Pontifical Society of the Missionary Childhood
and we entrust our life to God.
For the people who do not know God
and often cry and suffer sadness.
We pray for them with all our heart
and we ask God please let them know
the existence of heaven
and may they eat at least one piece of bread frequently.
We join, with our problems, the missionaries
living in distant lands
and want to teach God to men.
But children cannot go to distant countries
and learn about the habits of others.
But when they read the magazine "The missionary world" they
get to know the lives of their peers.
They pray for them so that God's love may be learned
and at least feel a little joy.
Because children are those who love God the most
and people's heart open to God.
They want to become Little Missionaries
and be exemplary helpers of Jesus.
To preach the Gospel throughout the world
both in autumn and in winter, in spring and deep summer.*



Paulinka with her mother and little sister

TEENAGERS IN THE SEARCH OF GOD



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

We want to share with you some missionary experiences in the reality that God has allowed us to live.

It begins on a Friday afternoon at 4:00, after many invitations to teenagers in the parish, schools, colleges, in the streets, on the boardwalk and in every corner. With weekly meetings that over time were growing and were maintained with the nuances of reality itself: inconstancy, unpunctuality, laziness and finally with all the obstacles that are known, begins a mission.

Teenagers are in that search for God, whether encouraged by themselves or their families, especially their mothers or grandmothers, who repeatedly with their Dominican-style scolding or wise advice, “send or force” them to participate and so the work begins to strengthen.

Great moments have been shared that will undoubtedly remain forever in their hearts and in their memory: of joy, of fear, of shame, but in the end and with great courage, they open their lives to a close experience with Jesus that undoubtedly leads them to strengthen their Christian faith through weekly meetings.

When the sisters have met with these boys and girls, the presence of God is seen, the presence of the Mother of good counsel is felt, advising us and advising them. There have been meetings in which “life is lived” within the everyday, simple and modest with great experiences of personal knowledge, friendship, prayer, participation in the Eucharist, mission: visiting the houses and carrying the Word and devotion to the Holy Rosary to families and the sick in the hospital and

in jail; with plays, and other various presentations; camp-style days called: lunada; retreats; Pascua juvenil; concerts, movies and food sales for fundraising for the purchase of their own t-shirts, and for help with social works. On several occasions, not everyone

has been lucky to participate in the activities, because they are minors, for example when they went to visit the jail. But this is not an impediment to being a teenage missionary, since from outside they manage to share with the inmates and others in spite of shame and fear. For the first time they evangelized from house to house trying also to fulfill their mission.

From the beginning we looked for the opportunity to

prepare the teenagers and lead them towards a consecration, this is how on Sunday, March 18 at the 8:30 Mass, the first teenagers of the Province of Samaná consecrated themselves to God, they consecrated themselves in service to the Church with the name “Missionary Teens with a Heart of Fire”, fulfilling the mandate of Jesus their Master “You will love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind” (Dt 6, 5; Mt. 32, 37-39); These teenagers study “Escuela con Jesus” based on the methodology used by the Pontifical Mission Societies with the guidelines and their criteria.

The Sunday of their consecration; they said “Yes” to God, and although perhaps some very conscious others not so much, all were willing to add their wills to discover how to be better, to love and serve, risking a step in their walk as a people of God, in the Church that Jesus once entrusted to common people and who were at the end of everything, his closest friends.

Today the teenage missionaries of Samaná also commit themselves to history, society and the world.

*Sr. Carmenza Ramirez, EMSS
Samaná Community*





CHILD, GO AND ANNOUNCE



BURKINA FASO

Missionary Childhood Week took place in all the parishes and Catholic schools of the diocese from 21 to 28 February 2018. The theme that inspired the children's meditation and gave a particular direction to their activities was: "Child, go and announce what the Lord has done for you". The children lived the activities of the week in the usual context of their lives: the parish, villages, the Basic Christian Communities, families, Catholic schools. During this week the children met every evening for prayer (listening and sharing God's word, reciting the rosary), and animation (awareness raising, sharing of experiences, songs, dances, etc.). At the end of each encounter the children, with the contribution of their parents, made a spontaneous collection for the Universal Solidarity Fund. The various ecclesiastical assistants and counselor nuns held discussions and exhortations on the theme of the week.

The Sunday liturgy (songs, readings, altar service), Missionary Childhood Day, was entirely taken care of by them. The collection of this mass is obligatory and each child was sensitised by his companions, to give one's contribution to the Universal Solidarity Fund. The rest of the Day was spent in

joy and sharing, in the spirit of fraternal communion. During the week the children were accompanied by adults, whose presence was a strong sign of encouragement; but all the animation was their work.

Missionary testimonies of some children of St. John the Baptist Dapelogo parish:

VIVIANNE: *this week is our week. We prayed in our Base Communities before meeting, on Saturday evening, here in the parish. Once here, the catechist who looks after us gave a talk on the theme "Child, go and announce what the Lord has done for you". I learned that thanks to baptism we are missionaries of Jesus Christ. I do not have to wait to grow to bear witness to Him, to His goodness and mercy. I can and must do it on every occasion, especially in small things.*

SAMUEL: *we chose Thursday during Missionary Childhood Week to testify, to our sick brothers, the grace of health that God has given us. Thus, with all the students of our school, even those who are not Catholic, we cleaned the Center de Santé Publique et Social (CSPS).*

DOROTHEE: *Prayers and good deeds, that is what she learned from this week. On Sunday, after mass, there was a kermesse with lots of games.*

TESTIMONIES

THE GIRLS OF THE "CASA HOGAR"



THAILAND

"Casa Hogar Nuestra Señora del Rosario" ("Home Our Lady of the Rosary") in Udon Thani, Thailand, is run by the Dominican sisters of the Congregation of Saint Dominic.

Their mission is that of offering religious and scholastic education to girls and young women who are orphans or who belong to families with scarce economic resources.

In 2018, the house hosted 30 girls, 20 of whom where under the age of 14, from the fourth year of primary education to a diploma, as part of a formation program for women that would allow

them to contribute to the building of a more human and fraternal society, at university or at work.

Hi, my name is **NOINA'** and I am happy to talk about Jesus with the catechist and my classmates; to talk about how Jesus helps everyone, and especially the most poor. I am happy to have met the parish priest, an Italian missionary, and the sisters, who teach me to be thankful for the good things I receive from Jesus every day and to help the girls who are most in need.

Hi, I'm **NANWUAN**. In catechism class we pray for the missionaries. We also pray for the sisters of the "Casa Hogar" who take care of the girls who cannot study in their villages, because the school is too far from their house.

Hi, I'm **PAI**. Did you know that missionaries help the poor just like Jesus did, and that all of us should also be as good as Jesus was and help our friends, our parents, and our grandparents?



BORN A MISSIONARY

DEAR FRIENDS,

My name is **ÁNGELES DANIELA**, I am 12 years old, and I belong to the community of the Child Jesus of Missionary Children and Adolescents. I am from the Quasi Parish of San Ramón Nonato of Luque, in Paraguay. My parents are Ibel Acosta and Laura Román. Both of them are committed parishioners. I don't remember the day in which I became part of the MCA, but I would like to tell you the story of my birth, just like my parents tell it. My mom has always been an animator of the MCA in our parish, and, when she was 8 months pregnant, in the year 2007, she participated in the V National Congress of the MCA, which took place south of Encarnación, about 360 km from Asunción. At that time, she was the parish coordinator, and so she could not miss the CONIAM, because parents entrusted her

the responsibility of accompanying their children to the Congress. Mom had to stay in the same house as Enrique, a 7-year-old missionary child, because she was his chaperone, but they ended up being hosted by two different families. The house that hosted my mom belonged to the missionary family in charge of cooking for the children participating in the Congress. The first night, after a long trip together and a full day of activities, they had the opportunity to wash-up, have dinner, and talk a little bit with the host family before going to get some rest for the second day. In reality, it was not so. Mom tells me that, at one o'clock at night, she started feeling strange pains in her belly. They seemed normal and possibly caused by fatigue, but they gradually grew in intensity. She passed the whole night of February 2nd of that year with these pains. At dawn, an animator who shared the room with my mom noticed that she hadn't slept all night because of the pain, so she woke

up the lady of the house, who, realizing that my mom was experiencing many contractions, told her that the baby was about to be born. She hurriedly woke up her husband, Mr. Zacarías, and they brought her to a place where she could receive medical assistance. She was quite surprised when, while talking with the doctor, she discovered that she was the aunt of Enrique, the missionary child she was in charge of. The doctor was very kind, and, when she had ended her turn to be on guard duty, she decided to stay and help my mother in the birth. I was born 45 minutes later, and I weighed 2750 grams. I consider my birth a “missionary miracle”, and so do my mom and dad. What happened on that day gives me strength and determination in my commitment to help those who are most in need in the world. Likewise, I must help other children, both close to me and in other parts of the world. I feel the constant desire to be a missionary, because I was born during a Congress on mission. I really enjoy being with the little ones and teaching



them dances and songs. I think I can become an animator of Missionary Childhood.

My dad says that if in the future I would like to become a missionary in another country, he will help me and, if possible, come with me. I have participated in 3 National and 2 Diocesan Congresses. In each meeting of MC I learn to value the missionaries that leave their countries, and I pray that they may have the strength to continue to serve those most in need.

I will always be a missionary, because, even before receiving baptism, I was born a missionary.



I WANT TO BE A LITTLE MISSIONARY

I want to be a little missionary, i would say to my parents when i was in the first year of primary school. Actually we were all little missionaries, and it would be strange if one of our companions was not – at least a singer in the children’s choir. The parish of San Michael the Archangel of Zagred, at Cra cani has a long tradition of the same. We were a group of little boys and girls who sold some handmade articles during the holidays and feasts, to be able to collect funds for our friends in distant countries, for their education and for their sustenance. For us it was normal to be part of a choir, and to be also little missionaries.

“Instead of learning, they rummage through the garbage, instead of playing they are afflicted. These children have been deprived of their childhood.” We were very moved by the fact that someone would have had this type of a childhood. I could not imagine living in those conditions. Nonetheless, at a certain state, during the third year of primary school, i happened to see a pamphlet that depicted African children about my age, apparently smiling, seemingly prosperous and



satisfied. How was this possible? I was surprised. Isn’t it true that they do not have much to eat and wear? Isn’t it true that they live in terrible conditions? Why do they now smile? May be to pose for the photograph I thought. Well, I realized that it doesn’t take much to be happy, it doesn’t even mean having everything. Joy springs from other sources. Oh Yes! They are together, happy to be alive, said Sister Ursula, one of the many persons who guided us and cultivated in us these inestimable values.

I enjoyed my participation in the Children’s action of the Star of Bethlehem, initiated in my country in the year 2005, at the heart of the activities of the Pontifical Works of the Holy Childhood. The children of our parish collected funds for the needy children of the whole world, by making visits to homes during the Christmas vacations. As John Paul II would say, “ the little proclaim the Good News to the adults and at the same time, help the most vulnerable of their friends,”

For many years we were involved in the works of the Holy Childhood with joy and courage. After some years, the association developed successfully and was welcomed with joy to our parish, spreading then successfully to many other parishes of our Archdiocese. I can testify that these visits to the families, more or less youth, are not simple visits but much more than that. There is a joy and an indescribable presence of the





love of God, among us who bring help with our songs and the cries of those little ones, so that we may be witness of love of the persons who with great zeal and faith hope that they can with their contribution make someone happy.

This action spread quickly in all of Croatia. In 2009 we had the honour, along with other children's groups, to participate at the World Meeting of Little Missionaries in Rome, where we were strengthened by the witness of many of our companions, who do the same service in their countries. I remember a sight that has been burned into my memory. In the queue to enter the hall where we would have met Pope Benedict XVI, the Germans were ahead of us and the Spanish behind us. We were all different and I said to myself: "Come from all over the world, of different languages, this notwithstanding, we are here in the same queue thinking about the very same pathway that will lead us to the same goal."

Often it is difficult sharing something with others, sacrificing for ones neighbour, and what's more, for a stranger. Often we are not coherent with the commandment of love given by Jesus. Anyway, I can testify that the Ursuline sisters had inculcated in us a great sensitivity toward man. They taught us to love the whole world, to not have enemies, and respect every human life and to give oneself totally to the other, even if one day we were not to be reciprocated in anyway. It is true that the greatest treasure that I have received is the habit of helping anyone, at least a little, and of comforting persons. All this because the joy that God gives in return is indescribable! Even if I was not a little missionary anymore (for I am already "a little older"), and that I am no longer a singer of the Star of Bethlehem, I regularly accompany the children and tell them all that our holy sisters had taught us – that with small gestures of love one can change the world.

Just as Mother Teresa rightly said : it is not important to do great things, but little things with a big heart. It is not necessary to be a 'great missionary', because we can do great things through our little actions and our little efforts. You too can be a little missionary in the context in which you live, in which God has placed you, to proclaim the Good News, to witness to the abundance of His love for us, the richness that transcends any material poverty.

Nikola Pašalić



MYANMAR



FR. BERNARDINO NE NE

National Director PMS Myanmar



The foundation of Missionary Childhood in Myanmar varies considerably from diocese to diocese. Generally speaking, the Society has grown gradually since its foundation in 2004 and become a more united one recently. At present, we use the one and same logo, scarf, membership card and handbook which our National Office prepare and guide all to make use of.

Whenever animation and formation programmes for Missionary Childhood members are organized in a particular diocese, PMS national director and its diocesan director usually cooperate in area of promoting the Society by means of information and knowledge sharing.

LITTLE MISSIONARIES IN THEIR COMMUNITIES

The boys and the girls belonging to Missionary Childhood, accompanied by their animators, propose to be little missionaries in their communities and to help

the children of the whole world. They are friends of Jesus and they make friends for Jesus. It is Jesus himself who has called us: “*Come and follow me*”, “*friends*”, “*Go and evangelize all peoples*” (Mt. 28:19). We hope that we will be his disciples and that we will make disciples for him. This is what the children of Missionary Childhood propose: “to be friends of Jesus and to make friends for Jesus”. Certain parts of the Country continue to be wounded as a result of chronic wars and conflicts. Ethnic minority are victims of many forms of exploitation and oppression.



THE MISSIONARY CHILDHOOD DAY

The Missionary Childhood Day is celebrated in Myanmar on Epiphany Sunday in some dioceses and on Feast of Holy Innocents (December 28) in some dioceses. Usually we aim to provide different courses in order to help them develop their knowledge on missionary cooperation. Through the Liturgy and lectures, we guide the children to listen to the Word so that they may more understand the mission. We can call it “*missionary catechesis*.” Then we accompany them to live the Word, renewing our life in Jesus’s lifestyle: our missionary heart, feelings, attitudes and choices. We can call it “*missionary spirituality*.” Next, we help them to put the Word into practice, making disciples for Jesus, teaching what we have learnt from Him, through testimony, the announcement of the Gospel and missionary services. We can call it “*missionary service*.” Finally, we reinforce ourselves as live, dynamic and missionary ecclesial communities. We can call it “*missionary communion*.” Our Facebook page is: “Missionary Childhood (Myanmar)” and it is all in Myanmar language.

INITIATIVES

This year our missionary awareness course will closely follow the suggestion proposed by the Baptized and Sent guidebook. It will serve as a preparation for the Extraordinary Missionary Month of October 2019 so that the participants can begin to study the rich resources from the guide book and plan similar formation courses and commemorative events for the grassroots in their diocese in October.

We, PMS national director and all diocesan directors, made discussions and agree to have Missionary Childhood Get-together once in 4 years and we believe the International Secretariat can help our National Office to develop the duty of missionary animation among the children.



Last October, Yangon Missionary Childhood children opened their ears and eyes to the need of their fellow children, staying in a depressed parish (St. Paul’s boarding house, Kaunk Pyu, Yangon region). And so they collected some money (MMK 5012,200 or US\$ 340) through their own initiatives and sent their limited donation to their needy brothers and sisters



In a similar way, Taiwan Catholic children sent their gifts to Myanmar needy children last Christmas season. We were very much encouraged and remained grateful to PMS National Office personnel of Taiwan for their solicitude and wonderful gifts which made 2018 Christmas special for our village children. “Children helping children” made manifest in this amazing experience



A CRY FOR HELP

Augustine George Palayil

A project from Lisanjala Parish, Zomba Diocese, Malawi.

The description of the project offered by the applicant Fr. Charles Namalitha can be recapped as “In the last few years the people who depend on their cultivation are heavily hit by storms, drought or irregular and insufficient rain falls. Many people do not have enough food and approach the parish for food, especially children crying with empty stomach. This affects not only their present but their future as well, especially their health conditions”.

Of course this is only an example of hundreds of requests we receive to meet the basic needs of children in different countries. It is very regretful to see the funds available are often insufficient to adequately support the projects received.

Whether it is the cry for food, for protection or for justice, it cannot be met with mere gestures of alms giving or empty words, but profound sense of responsibility and love, particularly for children, their needs, their rights and their roles. It is encouraging to learn from a good number of projects that the dioceses and parishes are ever more concerned about children and their animation. Yet, too far from putting the children, together with their families, at the centre of every social and pastoral initiative.

Let us hope the extraordinary missionary month be a favourable time for a radical pastoral conversion of all who are responsible for the missionary animation in the Church, especially for children. Not only the education but moreover the animation remains a question of heart, heart of a true “mater et magistra”.

The motto of the newly proclaimed Saint, Card. John Henry Newman, so close to the Propaganda Fide, “cor ad cor loquitur” (“heart speaks unto heart”) may inspire all our evangelisation and animation endeavours!



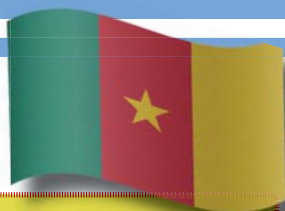
AGAINST MALNUTRITION

Matteo Maria Piacentini

The Diocese of Tamale in Ghana is an extremely poor and rural Diocese. The inhabitants are mainly peasant farmers with low incomes, struggling to take care of their families and providing the basic needs to the children.

In 2016 we endorsed a subsidy to provide food and care to the needy and malnourished children of St. Lucy Hospital Catchment Area. The Hospital normally tries to help the many needy and hungry children from the villages comprising its catchment area. The purpose of the Hospital is also to provide a better health care to the children. The Hospital also runs an outreach program, to reach the nearby villages and bring food to the poorest children directly to their homes. This program is slowly but gradually reducing malnutrition in the area. The parents are extremely grateful for the help received and they are very active in the promotion of the Holy Childhood and collecting the offers to the Holy Childhood.





LAUDATO SI'

Kathleen Mazio



The project of the Tchéré school, which may seem to be a typical request for the extension of a school, actually offers us an important message.

The village of Tchéré is located in the extreme north of Cameroon. It is a poor region, of agricultural nature, being itself victim and author of the desertification.

Until a few years ago schooling was not considered necessary - the men were engaged in the fields of millet, sorghum and cotton, crops that necessitate a large quantity of water and the women were employed in the handmade production of the "Bilbil", a millet alcohol, partly illegal for its social consequences, produced through a lengthy boiling. This process requires felling the trees to get large amounts of firewood.

This attitude was changed after the arrival of the missionaries.

Now the parents have understood the importance of education to offer a better future to their children who, in turn, have learned the importance of ecology.

Since 1998, the population has participated in the construction of the elementary school and every young student has planted a tree. The shadow they produce improves the learning conditions and the Tchéré school has become a reference school. Today the first students continue their studies in the higher school and university, becoming teachers or nurses.

The ten classrooms, built with durable materials, currently accommodate 609 children from the surrounding areas, but are no longer enough. It is therefore necessary to increase its reception capacity.

On the google maps the school is recognizable thanks to the trees that surround it (ed.).



A SCHOOL FOR THE GILBERTESE CHILDREN

Sr. Maddalena Hoang Ngoc

The diocese of Gizo is the remotest of the three existing diocese on Solomon Islands, comprising a huge territory of three political provinces. The Solomon Islands archipelago is composed of 952 islands. There is no public transport system to Nusabaruka. Everyone has to find his own way of travelling which is usually done by small paddle boats.

The Nusabaruku Community is settled at the western side of Gizo Town, the second largest town in Solomon Islands. The people live on fishing, mostly by night, diving done by their youth. This provides them the cash needed to buy some rice and fruit.

The children are not sent to kindergarten and school, they also rarely go for medical needs. The water source is polluted, there is lack of hygiene and children health care. Diarrhea and pneumonia are endemic, taking the lives of a huge amount of children.

This project is for a construction of a new school for children of 60 Gilbertese families (Kiribati), who are climate change migrants to Solomon Islands. The parish has just been erected to take care of all Gilbertese migrants people who had to leave their country at the north boundary with Solomon because of the water and the global sea rise and warming.

At the present there are 118 students: 62 in the first and second year Kindergarten and 56 in Grade one (some of them overage).



*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**