



JUNE 2020 - N. 5

BULLETIN



PONTIFICIUM OPUS A SANCTA INFANTIA
SECRETARIATUS INTERNATIONALIS



FOCUS

FRIENDSHIP
A LIVELY RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN REAL PEOPLE WHO
WANT TO WALK TOGETHER



THE VOICE OF THE CHILDREN
COVID-19 SPECIAL



MISSIONARY NEWSLETTER N.5 - JUNE 2020

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Photographs: Archives PSMC, National Offices
in: Argentina, Guatemala, French Speaking
Canada, Australia, India, Italy, Madagascar,
Mozambique, England and Wales, Poland,
Honduras, Bolivia, Malawi

Cover picture: Archives PSMC

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“I have called you friends” (Jn 15:15)

During his earthly life, Jesus had many friends, and with some of them such as Peter, James and John or Martha, Mary and Lazarus, he had a bond so profound and strong, by sharing moments and unique experiences that have left a deep mark in their life and memory. Jesus invites all his disciples to stay with him, to live with him, to become his friends (Mt 3,15; Jn 15). Is an invitation for all christians of every time and every place, but also of every age, indeed to become friend with Jesus since childhood helps us to grow in this relationship throughout life, learning what He teaches, maturing and bearing fruit. The Lord calls and summons the youth to savour the grace of his friendship, to walk together towards the maturity of life.

The School of Jesus is a tradition in the society of the Holy Childhood and has the aims of bringing in all the children and adolescents of the world in communion with Him and through them, so becoming missionaries, witnesses, growing in the sense of fraternity and love.

Friendship with Jesus is unique and special. He has assured us that He will not leave us alone (Mt 28:20), not abandon us or betray us and even if we can't touch Him or see Him in person, the Holy Spirit gives us the capacity to experience this bond in many ways and in relation with the other persons.

In this time of pandemic, we have witnessed with joy that the presence of others, the relation, the closeness and the sharing are important and essential to the life of everyone. We were constrained into relationships lived in a different way, we have made a kind of purification in thoughts and in ordinary gestures. At all times the faith in the resurrected Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit revive in us the hope. Today we can thank the Lord looking at the experiences that the children and the adolescents in various part of the

world have lived and realized with missionary spirit and according to the charisma of Holy Childhood. The creativity of the Holy Spirit acts in open and available hearts and allows to perform great work, discovering moments of opportunity in times of crisis. I thank all those who have worked to accompany and encourage the children and adolescents without leaving them to fall in boredom and passivity, not making them to feel alone.

As Pope Francis said in His recent Message to the Pontifical Mission Societies *“Rejoice and savour these encounters that you experience thanks to the work of the PMS, and let yourselves be astonished by them. I think of the reports of many miracles that happen to children, who perhaps encounter Jesus thanks to the initiatives proposed by the Holy Childhood.”*

In this number, you will find an extensive session on how this time has been lived, animating and involving children and adolescents in prayers, together with their family, in the spirit of the HC and according to the original desire of Mons. Charles De Forbin Janson who placed in these little ones an inestimable treasure for the mission of the Church.

Happy Fruitful Mission with the Holy Spirit.



SR. ROBERTA TREMARELLI

Secretary General Pontifical Society Missionary Childhood

FRIENDSHIP FOR ADOLESCENTS TODAY: THE CASE OF DAVID AND JONATHAN



The Church in her mission reads and interprets the signs of the time. There are many challenges and opportunities present in the society today. In reading the signs of the times and being open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, she interprets the prevailing socio-cultural, political and anthropological condition and becomes a source of authentic hope to all people and especially to the young people (adolescents).

In her faithfulness to the teaching of Christ that, “let children come to me”, the Church welcomes all peoples and assures them hope in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ who was a friend to all reminds all young people to develop genuine and positive friendship amongst themselves. This genuine friendship was manifested also in the Old Testament between David and Jonathan. They helped and protected each other to grow in faith in the Lord and in their daily endeavors. Young people are also challenged to embrace positive friendship. Pastoral work for young people in the Church involves reading and interpreting the signs of the times in order to help teenagers establish a strong relationship

with Jesus and with each other.

MISSION OF THE CHURCH TO ADOLESCENTS

The Church is called by Christ to be a witness to all peoples. She is called to give humanity hope in Christ Jesus. The life of the Church in all totality is a mission. A mission manifested by witnessing through prayer and knowing the signs that Christ offers.¹ Like Jonah, the Church’s mission is to overcome the temptation



P. ODONYA HENRY JUMA
*Catholic Diocese of Eldoret
Kenya*



of individualism, spiritualism, dependency, parochialism, and pessimism.² She confronts these realities through Gods guidance and consequently giving hope to humanity. And through Christ all are called to holiness in our day to day activities. Indeed Christ is the sign of hope to humanity and always renews us in our weakness. He always leads us to the periphery, to places where people are weak, marginalized, and dehumanized. Therefore, there is no need to fear to reach out to others who are weak in the society.

The family is the place where the very fabric of life is woven; it ought to be, ideally, the centre of meaning and energy for all Christians. It is the milieu all are called to grow in sanctity.³ The family is the place where fundamental relationships for life are created and modeled. Here one learns to be loved and to love, to serve others and to share life. In the family, the Christian man, woman or child lives their daily experiences of choosing in line with the highest ideals set by the community – be it the family itself or its larger context. Accordingly, it is in the family that children learn the processes of making choices and living out the responsibilities inherent in such choices. There must be no fear to reach out to teenagers and their families since they are also part of the human family. Care, concern, positive human formation, faith, and all good human values must be bequeathed to teenagers. A sizable



part of people consider teenagers as rebellious, rude, lacking respect and direction. On the contrary our young people must be guided and be shown the correct path to follow. Christ said, “let little children come to me”. He did not chase them away, rather he welcomed them to himself. Similarly, the Church as a family is called to embrace all peoples and give them hope. Therefore, given the challenges that teenagers encounter today in the society the mission of the Church toward the teenagers is more urgent. They are to be guided and formed on developing a positive concept of friendship amongst themselves in the community and with Christ.

FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN DAVID AND JONATHAN(1 SAM 18,1-5)

The first book of Samuel narrates that, the war was finished and calm was felt everywhere. There was relative peace after wars were fought. But there was something unique about the last war, it brought suddenly calm in the countryside. Consequently king Saul decided





to hold an audience with his officials and decided to inquire who had had killed Goliath. In attendance was his eldest son Jonathan and a youthful handsome shepherd full of zeal and enthusiasm. Jonathan had won many battles in his carrier as a soldier. But today's victory did not belong to him, but to a young handsome man called David. David had killed the giant Goliath and facilitated the victory of Israel.

King Saul was not happy when David returned from the battle because women sang songs praising the bravery of David. He was angry and sought to kill David by all means. However, his son Jonathan intervened and convinced him not to kill David. Many times, Jonathan also gave warnings to David about the wickedness his father was planning (1 Sam 19,1-2). David was a man who was in danger especially from Saul the father of Jonathan. In fact, it must be remembered that young David was already anointed as King by Samuel when Saul was still on the throne. This must also have aggravated his relationship with David. Following the sequence of events namely: the anointing of David as king by Samuel (1 Sam 16, 1-14), the killing of Goliath by David, and the women praising the bravery of David (1 Sam 18, 6-8). These must have been a recipe to put David into

enmity between king Saul's family and David. It would be expected that the whole family of Saul would be against David, and look at him as a potential threat to their existence. On the contrary, one person, one of Saul's family members stood besides David and defended him all along against the evil ways of their father. This was Jonathan, a young man and a close friend of David (1 Sam 18, 1). Jonathan had made an oath with David initially to be friends and support one another.

The covenant that David and Jonathan made was the foundation of their friendship. This is because David knew what God had planned for him: He was to become the next king of Israel. He must have shared that knowledge with Jonathan. Probably as good friends they had open and honest communication, not on secrets and lies. How would knowing of David's prospects have impacted Jonathan? Suppose Jonathan had desired and hoped of becoming king one day? It seems that Jonathan had internal struggles on this situation, but ultimately remained loyal to his friend David and to his faith in God. He was sure that God's spirit was with David (1 Sam 16,1; 11-13). As a result, Jonathan fulfilled his oath and continued to look at David, not as his rival or enemy, but as his friend.

The consequence of that friendship turned out to be a great blessing. It made them grow closely together and enhance their faith and trust. In fact, Jonathan's faith points to the fact that any servant of God does well to see the value of friendship. People can be friends regardless of their age, background, tribe, education background, status, religion, or race. Friends can be of great help and do a lot of good if they have genuine faith. Jonathan and David were able to strengthen and encourage each other many times and especially when they encountered greater tests in life.

To be sincere, Jonathan underwent through



a serious and painful challenge on whom to be loyal to. Between a friend and one's family, which one comes first? In such context, people would advise that family must always come first. But Jonathan knew better. How could he side with his father when David was a loyal, obedient servant of God? Certainly, Jonathan must have let his faith and loyalty to God guide his decisions. That was why he was on David's side. Furthermore, although Jonathan's loyalty to God came first, he proved loyal and obedient to his father by counseling him honestly instead of telling him what he wanted to hear.

The prize of loyalty is very painful as manifested in the relationship between David and Jonathan. On several occasions Jonathan tried again and again to reconcile Saul with David but with little success. David came to Jonathan in secret, revealing that he feared for his own life. He knew that Saul wanted to kill him. "There is only a step between me and death!" he told his friend Jonathan (1Sam 20,3). Jonathan agreed to investigate his father's position on the matter and notify David the status of the things as they stood. Meanwhile, they agreed that while David hid, Jonathan would signal him the news by using a bow and arrows.



Jonathan often spoke well of David to Saul, but the king was furious! King Saul in anger referred to his son Jonathan a "son of a rebellious woman" and derided his loyalty to David as shameful to the family (1Sam 20,30). He threatened Jonathan with many things. Unmoved, Jonathan again pleaded with his father: "Why should he be put to death? What has he done?" Saul exploded in defense of David! Though old, Saul was still a mighty warrior. He threw a spear at his son! He missed. Deeply hurt and humiliated, Jonathan left in anger (1Sam 20,24-34).

The following morning, Jonathan went out into the field next to David's hiding place. He fired an arrow as agreed, letting David know that Saul was still intent on killing him. Then Jonathan sent his attendant back into the city. He and David were alone, so they had a chance to talk. Both men wept, and Jonathan sadly saw his young friend off as David started his new life as a refugee (1 Sam 20, 35-42).

Later, Jonathan went to battle with his father against the Philistines, the enemies of Israel. He fought alongside his father in good conscience, for he did not let his father's wrongs get in the way of his own service to God. He fought bravely





and loyally as he always had, unfortunately the battle went against Israel. Three of Saul's sons, including Jonathan, were killed in battle. Saul was wounded and took his own life (1 Sam 28, 6-14; 31,2-6).

David was deeply grieved. He even mourned for Saul, who had caused him so much pain, misery and hardship! David loved Saul and Jonathan and expressed touching words to them after their death. The most touching words are to David's beloved mentor and friend: "I am distressed over you, my brother Jonathan; you were very dear to me. More wonderful was your love to me than the love of women" (2 Sam 1, 26).

THE EXPERIENCE TODAY

The teenagers have an inalienable right to be guided by the society to choose what is morally right for them. The task of the society is the formation their consciences so that they may at all times choose the good. The mission of the Church towards young people is very important. The Church journeys with the youths, their parents and guardians and ensure that the youth are guided well to choose the good always and be responsible in friendships and many other things. Saint Don Bosco the apostle to the young

people stressed the importance of educating the young people in love. This is because the young people will then understand well what it means to be loved, to be joyous, to be cheerful, and coexistence in love with the human family .⁴

According to Don Bosco, education of the young must always be oriented to the fact that one is loved and is also called upon to love others. In fact, love in itself is relational and it leads to true friendship. This was manifested in the friendship between David and Jonathan.

The oath of friendship between David and Jonathan is an important aspect that can help us analyze the commitment and meaning of true friendship among young people today especially the adolescents. Positive friendships in the community are important part of the journey to adulthood. They help teenagers learn important social and emotional skills. Skills such as being sensitive to other people's thoughts, feelings and wellbeing are inculcated into teenagers lives when they have positive friendship. In fact positive friendship helps grow a sense of belonging, a feeling of being valued and helped to develop confidence. Confidence is the belief





to be successful. It is akin to trust, conviction and resilience. It helps teenagers to make safe, informed decisions and avoid peoples and situations that can destroy them.

It is important for teenagers to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance from their peers. Friendships can be a network of great support and can offer protection against negative peer relationships such as bullies, drug abuse, lack of respect for parents, lack of fear of God and lack respect for other people. Learning positive friendship skills can help them socially so they feel happier and more confident. It is therefore good for teenagers to have a group of good friends supporting them. It's also important to understand that during their teenage years, teenagers are figuring out who they are beyond their family milieu. Shared interests, attitudes, social struggles and being in circumstances that may resemble their own are some of the reasons young people will reach out and find comfort in close connections with friends. These connections can help teenagers learn about trust, respect, acceptance and intimacy, which will be important concepts for them to understand as they enter adulthood.

CONCLUSION

Everyone has the responsibility to support the adolescents in their struggle for self identity and self realization. They have to be motivated to embrace positive friendship because it will help strengthen their personalities and be a recipe for success in the future as they realize their vocations (Marriage and family, ordained ministry and consecrated life) and profession (teacher, artisan, doctor, farmer, etc). The Church's mission promotes the dignity of all people created in the image and likeness of God. She gives all hope. This hope is founded on Jesus Christ himself who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.



FOOTNOTES

1. Francis, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, n. 23.
2. *Ibid.*, n. 134.
3. Pope John Paul II, *Christifidelis Laici*, n°15.
4. Cariello Bruno, *Don Bosco, A Voce Bassa: La vita del santo dei giovani tra sogni, teatro e passione educativa*, Gruppo Iuppiter, Napoli 2013, P.77.

FRIENDSHIP - A LIVELY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN REAL PEOPLE WHO WANT TO WALK TOGETHER



SR. GABRIELLA MARIA IANIERI, CSSF
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Friendship - needless to say - is a precious gift! And not only for teenagers who, in search of their identity and personality, seek a comparison and comfort in their friend, but for "children" of all ages. The need for friendship is specific to human nature and accompanies the person throughout life. In fact, human beings are relational beings - we are an I for a You - created in the image and likeness of the God, One and Triune, Divine Persons in relationship.

And friendship is one of the deep relationships that human beings are capable of: with one's friend we want to share good and bad moments and events in life; a friend is the confidant of our most intimate secrets, of our frailties, of our successes and failures. Popular wisdom expresses the value of friendship in different ways: "friends are the family we choose", "whoever finds a friend finds a treasure", "few but good friends", "tell me who you go with and I will tell you who you are", and so on.

WHAT IS FRIENDSHIP

But what is friendship? in particular, what is friendship for young people and in youth groups today? Has the meaning of friendship changed in

the social age? The term "friend" and the related noun "friendship" show in Latin etymology the same root as the term "love": a friend by definition is the one you love and friendship is a relationship of mutual affection and esteem. The classical philosophical tradition identifies three forms of love: *eros*, *filia* and *agape*, love of desire, friendship and communion. Aristotle (385-323 BC) in books VIII and IX of *Nicomachean Ethics* gives us a systematic "narration" of love as a *filia*. The *incipit* of Book VIII sets the tone for the discussion: "Without friends no one would choose to live; [friendship is not only] radically necessary for life ... but it is also a beautiful thing".¹ Friendship is beautiful and necessary for life! Then like today.



ARISTOTLE

The *Nicomachean Ethics* is a moral book, whose object is the supreme good to which all men strive, happiness, and offers a way, a path to reach it, or at least to try, walking in the right direction.² After analyzing the nature of happiness and the means for achieving the goal, in the penultimate two books Aristotle deals precisely with the theme of friendship, as it is necessary for all human beings both in good and bad times.

For Aristotle, friendship is “a virtue or is accompanied by a virtue”³ that is, a stable attitude or disposition of the soul that can originate from benevolence, but does not stop therefrom. Friendship, in fact, requires reciprocity and shared time and is made of presence, concern for the good of the other, shared experiences, consolidated trust, intimacy, whereas instead benevolence does not necessarily require reciprocity and sharing.⁴

FRIENDSHIP IN THE GROUP

We know: many are travel companions, but few (and rare) are true friends. Within a group, the feeling of friendship is perhaps more similar to a feeling of benevolence that binds each other within a shared framework of values (which, by the way, can be of the most varied!). In youth groups we walk together sharing experiences, feelings, emotions and we grow together, experiencing solidarity, generosity, the richness of diversity, the community, the sense of justice. For this reason,

sometimes benevolence can be transformed into friendship of predilection. Indeed, friendship is chosen and requires reciprocity; “One’s best friend” is the one I keep in my heart and at the same time he/she is the one who keeps me in his/her heart.⁶

FORMS OF FRIENDSHIP

But is there really only one form of friendship? that is, either the feeling of benevolence, which is a little too general, or best friend, which is so selective and exclusive? Once again Aristotle enlightens us by identifying three forms of friendship defined on the basis of the aim towards which a friendly relationship is made: useful, pleasant and good.⁷ These categories span centuries of thought and are still valid for us today. It is easy, in fact, to meet friendships based on interest (“I am a friend of ... in the hope of obtaining a profit, a favor, a social image”, or who knows what else) or on mere pleasure (“friends are the ones that make me feel good, I enjoy myself, I relax”; and who usually disappear in moment of need). Even in these forms reciprocity is given; for example, in the interest to which you yearn and in the interest to be granted, or in shared pleasure. But for Aristotle these are ‘imperfect friendships’, because they are inconstant; in fact, when the desired end is missing - the useful or the pleasant, in fact - end immediately.

Friendship aimed toward good, however, is not inconstant and appears to be the only authentic one.

It should be noted that not only are levels given within different forms of friendship according to a plus and a minus, but that different ends can also coexist in the same relationship. And most friendships are just like that: a mix of utility, pleasantness and goodness, of which sometimes we are not even totally aware. In youth groups (but I would say, in groups in general) these dynamics are easily visible.



VIRTUAL FRIENDSHIP

Today then there is another way to ‘make friends’ even faster and more changeable. With a *click* on *social* networks, in fact, we easily extend our list of ‘friends’ and with a *like* we express our preferences and judge those of others: I like, I don’t like. The quantity - the number of friendships - seems to prevail over the quality of the friendships themselves. We use social media in the fraction of our free time or to inhabit those “non-places” so full of people who are strangers to us - buses, trains, squares, etc. - where everyone is closed in his/her world of virtual relationships, even though in the possibility of real contacts.⁸ The category of ‘virtual friendship’ seems to recall a little the Aristotelian kind of friendship based on pleasure, albeit virtual and radically more ephemeral. However, I believe that the term ‘friendship’ applied to social relationships is inappropriate: virtual friendship is mostly a temporary and non-demanding relationship in which one does not get involved. In fact, to be elevated to the rank of “friendship”, virtual friendship lacks real presence and attendance, the joy of being together sharing time and experiences, the commitment to cultivate and nurture the relationship, the desire to walk and grow together in the path of life.

A sad emoticon cannot replace a friendly - real - shoulder to cry on, just as an emoticon with two red hearts instead of eyes is far from the warmth of an affectionate embrace or from the joy of being together once again.

Aristotle points out that the form of friendship based on useful is usually more present between the elderly and mature men, because as we age, the excesses of the passions

are diluted, and pleasure gives way to concrete needs of life in the time of fragility; instead

*“The friendship of young people [seems to be] caused by pleasure: these, in fact, live under the influence of passion, and above all pursue what is an immediate pleasure for them. But as we age, even the things we enjoy become different. This is why young people quickly become friends and quickly cease to be friends [...]. However, they want to spend their days and their whole lives together: it is in this way, in fact, that they get what they promise from friendship”.*⁹

There is no denying, it is a realistic and always current picture of the human soul! And who like me ‘was young’ can only recognize himself in this dynamic, sometimes dramatic, between radicality and changeability, between the need for absolute and insecurities. Precisely in the critical age of adolescence, in which there is the certainty of having concluded a phase of life - we will never be children again - and at the same time the uncertainty of what we will be, it is essential to learn how to choose the right friends, to desire for oneself the true good, to cultivate and love the originality and uniqueness of his/her own person, rejecting the temptation to conform to the models proposed by society. Belonging to a group, by under the framework of reference values adopted, can be supportive or can make these transition phases even more difficult. Pointing the way and passing down the “weapons” for the journey is the task of educators.¹⁰

TO WANT THE GOOD OF THE OTHER

In the third Aristotelian form of friendship, a friend is the one who wants other’s good for the other him/herself, and not as a means for a profit or a pleasure. Friendship between good and virtuous people is perfect. Wanting each one the good of the other - sincerely and concretely - in this way, friends enjoy each other’s company and also have





an interest in being together precisely because they benefit from each other.¹¹

Thus, this third form does not exclude the previous two - useful and pleasant - but includes and elevates them, since the dynamic of the good is conscious, intentional. Intertwining this type of friendship is at the same time a goal - it requires commitment, time, care - and a path that can truly accompany us throughout our lives.

Easy and nice to say! but one knows, nobody is perfect. In fact, we bring into friendship what we are, our beliefs, our perception of reality, our expectations: the story of what we are. But - thank God - everything is also perfectible, always! Friendship is not an abstract category closed in our mind, but a lively relationship between real people who want to walk together. What is required is not perfection, but the desire to improve, to help each other on a journey of virtue.

We need to reflect on the quality of our personal friendships, on the time and care we dedicate to friends, on our expectations and needs. And remember to constantly look upwards, always daring to tend towards the highest goods, in order to be able to credibly and effectively indicate the path to others.¹²

FOOTNOTES

1. ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VIII, 1155a 5, 29.

2. For an excellent manual of ethics that, drawing on the perennial truths of philosophical reflection, addresses the moral question about the meaning of life with clarity, depth and completeness, see: ALDO VENDEMIATI, *In first-person. Outlines of General Ethics*, Urbaniana University Press, Vatican City 2017.

3. ARISTOTELE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VIII, 1155a 5.

4. "Therefore, metaphorically, it can be said that [benevolence] is an unproductive friendship, but if it lasts over time and reaches intimacy it becomes friendship"; *Ibid.*, IX, 1167a 11.

5. For Aristotle friendship "seems linked to the virtue of justice [...] When you are friends, there is no need for justice, while, when you are right, there is still need for friendship and the highest level of justice is believed to consist of an attitude of friendship"; *Ibid.*, VIII, 1155a 26-29.

6. "It is not possible to welcome each other as friends, nor to be friends, before each has manifested himself to the other worthy of being loved and before each has obtained the confidence of the other. And those who quickly exchange signs of friendship with each other want, yes, to be friends, but they are not, if they are not also worthy of being loved and if they do not know it: in fact, the will to friendship arises quickly, but not friendship"; *Ibid.*, VIII, 1156b, 28-33.

8. Today due to the pandemic we keep with a bit of nostalgia the memory of the crowd (from which to estrange ourselves) and perhaps in the future we will inhabit these 'non-places' in a different way, with a greater desire to meet, as an opportunity for contacts - remote but real. *Ibid.*, VIII, 1156a 32-1156b 6.

9. *Ibid.*, VIII, 1156a 32-1156b 6.

10. I would be tempted to say that it is the task of adults in general, because every adult is an educator, precisely because of the fact that he is an adult; but the psychological age does not always correspond to the chronological age and for some the adolescent phase - if not pre-adolescent of eternal children - seems to stretch indefinitely over time.

11. "The friendship [...] of virtuous men is virtuous, and grows with seeing each other. It is also believed that they become even better by implementing friendship, that is by correcting each other"; *Ibid.*, IX, 1172a, 11-12.

12. "[If] everyone competed for what is morally beautiful and endeavored to do the most beautiful actions, from a community point of view, everything would be as it should be, and, from a private point of view, everyone would have the greatest goods, if it is true, as it is true, that virtue is a good thing"; *Ibid.*, IX, 1169a, 8-12.



MADAGASCAR



The Malagasy people have been experiencing a health emergency since March 22. The Malagasy government has taken the necessary restrictive measures to guide the people on this path. Church leaders also immediately aligned themselves with the new directives, in solidarity and collaboration with the State, to protect and save the people. All the churches have been closed and the planned religious meetings have been suspended. Those responsible for children informed us, for example, that the meeting of children scheduled for the last two Saturdays of Lent, for the Via Crucis, with the guide of the booklet “Children pray during the path of the Cross” by the National Direction, was canceled due to quarantine. This did not stop the children from continuing their missionary commitment in the family. We have received various testimonies from children and young people who lived in the family during confinement.

NOMENJANAHARY NY AINA FITIA is a 9 year old boy, a member of MEJ Madagascar, who tells us how he experienced the arrival of the coronavirus in Madagascar and what he did during the quarantine period.

“When I learned that the coronavirus arrived in Madagascar I was scared and started to tremble. On Sunday morning my mother accompanied me to the countryside (the boy is studying in the city) for the Easter holiday period and for the quarantine.

What I did with my friends during confinement: I played football, I swam, I went over the lessons, I read and every night, before going to sleep, I pray. In the family we follow the Sunday Eucharistic celebration on television.

To protect yourself from the virus you must:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water*
- Put on a face mask and one must not spit everywhere*
- When you sneeze and touch things, you have to protect yourself with your elbow*



MADAGASCAR



Another boy, Noah, aged 6, deepens his catechesis in the morning, in the family. He read a book on the Resurrection of Jesus and asked his parents and his elder sister Célia, 15 years old: “will we also be resurrected like Jesus in these photographs?”.

Mianatra katesizy vao maraina Noah, namaky boky mikasika an'i Jesoa Kristy nitsangana tamin'ny maty. Dia hoy izy hoe "isika koa zany mitsangana @ Maty ohatran'i Jesoa amin'io sary @ boky io? 😊"



MOZAMBIQUE

News from the DIOCESE of XAI-XAI



TESTIMONIES

*São João Baptista de Xai-Xai Parish
30th April 2020*

This letter was written by 4 members of the same family, who are part of the Holy Childhood group:

JÉSSICA NHAVOTO, 21 years old, who is doing graduate studies (4th year) at the Save-Chongoene University;

19-year-old **JENIFA NHAVOTO** who attends the 2° general nursing training at Health Training Center in Chicumbane;

15-year-old **ANACLETA NHAVOTO** who attends the 11th grade at the Secondary School of Xai-Xai;

14-year-old **EDILSON NHAVOTO** who attends the 7th grade at Coca-Missava Primary School.

We are practicing Catholics belonging to Saint John the Baptist Parish in Xai-Xai.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, we were subjected to home quarantine and in this period we followed classes on online platforms (Jessica and Jenifa), on television through the Telescola (Anacleta and Edilson) program and by complementing our studies through home exercises and reviews of the various subjects, although it is not an easy task.

We were upset by the closure of Churches. This affected our religious life and challenged our faith, but we recognize that this measure is to safeguard our health.

Faced with this situation, the HC group began to have daily meditations on the Word of God through Whatsapp. We also pray, meditating on the Word together in the family, to strengthen our faith and give spiritual support to those who tirelessly fight to save the victims of the coronavirus.

This pandemic did not come to destroy the Church, much less to weaken our faith, but rather to teach us that even if we are far away, there is one thing that unite us: prayer. It is through prayer and meditation that we renew our faith every day.

This is the moment more than ever we need to stick together and seek our refuge in God.



MOZAMBIQUE



ENGLAND AND WALES



As the COVID-19 pandemic took hold, schools in England and Wales shut down on 20 March and all pupils, except children of key workers and the most vulnerable, faced the prospect of life in lockdown for the foreseeable future.

While schools and parents came to terms with ways to home school the children, Mission Together, as Holy Childhood is known here, acted in response to support them. We set out to provide free, downloadable resources to help children at home and for staff caring for children in school.

MISSIONARIES AT HOME

By providing simple tasks, crossword puzzles and word searches to cover English, Maths and Geography, children could continue to learn in a fun and informal environment. During this unprecedented time, Mission Together's message of solidarity with children around the world was more important than ever, so the mission stories, prayers and Scriptures we used reminded children that there are others living overseas who were already struggling with hardship.

Children like those living at Nazareth House in South Africa, whom schools in England

and Wales helped during Advent. Abandoned or orphaned and living with HIV/AIDS, the 40 children and babies are cared for by religious sisters. The Sisters pray with the children daily and assure them that there are children elsewhere who pray for them too. It is this exchange of love and friendship that makes Mission Together unique.

ENCOURAGE THE CHILDREN TO PRAY

To encourage children to pray, we created new Prayer Worksheets. One popular download is the **Five Finger Prayer**, said on the fingers and thumb of one hand. Each digit prompts children to pray for others before they finally pray for themselves. They discover how, through God's love, we are connected to one another, even to those far away and whom they may never meet.

For May, the month of Mary, we adapted and added to our Marian resources to encourage children to ask for Our Lady's intercession. Just as the child saints, Jacinta and Francisco, prayed during the dark days of the First World War, so, too can children bring hope to the world by praying the Mission Rosary. Our **Pray with Our Lady Chart** makes the prayer more manageable for younger children, who are invited to draw the face of a child from the continent they are praying for.

Many diocesan schools promote Catholic character education, based on



Nazareth House - Sud Africa



POLAND

The pandemic situation surprised us day by day. Suddenly we were unable to come to the office and our contact with the animators and children became difficult. Fortunately, we managed to meet again in a new situation.

First of all, we started working at a distance thinking about how to help, support and bring hope in this difficult moment. In addition to working at a distance in the office, one of the POSI nuns was part of a team that was shopping for the elderly in her neighborhood.

PRAYING AT HOME

Since the beginning, we started the #zostanwdomu (#stayathome) project in our social networks (www, FB, TT, INSTAGRAM), encouraging ourselves to stay at home.

We have underlined PRAYER a lot! On our social media we have published reflections for the daily prayer of the rosary for the sick and those who take care of them.

We also publish the Holy Father's messages



and invite people to pray for him and in solidarity with him, we inform the children about the situation in the world and encourage solidarity with the Pope. We have launched an online fundraiser for the Pope's solidarity fund.

INTERACTIVE LENT

In Lent, we encouraged to pray with the suffering children of the world on the FB profile every day. Every day a station of the Via Crucis was published, which was prepared in collaboration with the catechists, in a virtual and interactive way. It was presented to all animators and catechists who could send it to children as part of remote animation.

OTHER INITIATIVES

For several weeks, we have published bedtime stories "Missionary tales from beyond the seas and oceans" on our social networks. POSI formation, that is, the meetings of the little missionaries take place online.





We invite the children to work and play at home in a missionary way, we present proposals and share ideas.

THE CAMPAIGNS

Since the beginning of May, we have been promoting the Children of the First Communion for Children of the World campaign. We teach Polish children to pray for missions one day of the week after Communion and, if they can, to donate a material offer as well. For several weeks we have been organizing the *ECO-TUESDAY* campaign on Facebook, preparing for the *LAUDATO SI'* papal week. We teach responsibility for planet Earth in the face of poverty for so many children around the world.

TOWARDS "NORMALITY"

Although the situation is slowly returning to "normality", we still animate the prayer, we are working on the formation of POSI, we are sensitive to the Holy Father's requests for solidarity and, above all, WE MAINTAIN HOPE.

*Sr. Monika Juszka RM
National Secretary*

W czasie pandemii



*Spotkania
Bezcerne !*

TESTIMONIES



MISJONARZ ON-LINE





ARGENTINA

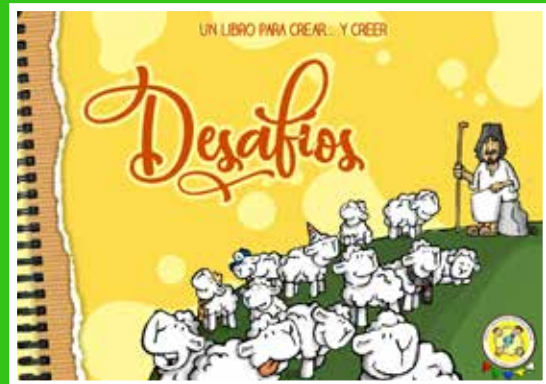


The National Secretariat of Holy Childhood (HC) in Argentina is working virtually with diocesan Delegates, so that each diocese can share material, resources and information on how children and adolescents are living the HC in each community. A Whatsapp Group – already in use for two years - has been very useful at this time. As a gesture of communion and accompaniment during the pandemic, the National Secretary has made a special effort to communicate with the Delegates. Dioceses, for their part, are organizing meetings using the various networks and virtual resources (Zoom, Whatsapp, challenges on Instagram and TikTok, among others).



In March we launched “Challenges: To Create and Believe”, a book with activities and proposals for HC children, with resources to be drawn and / or printed, depending on the resources and access that each family has. In April we launched “Challenge Sri Lanka”, for children, adolescents and animators, as a way of continuing to strengthen missionary communion with the country for which we offered our Missionary Cooperation in 2019 (the book was sent to Sri Lanka, which was well received by the National Director of PMS there).

Together with the National Director of PMS, we are currently developing a material about Holiness, the topic that we will deal during this year. It has testimonies of holy children and adolescents, but also of those called by Pope Francis "saints next door", that is children and adolescents of each country who, while not elevated to the honor of the altars, are currently talking to us about holiness. This book, which gathers testimonies from countries of America and the World, will be offered to all countries of the Americas as a contribution to the Holy Childhood Society on this theme of the year.



We will collaborate with the Communication Team of PMS in Argentina, in the production of the Journal Iglesia Misionera Hoy, with resources on how to live the School with Jesus from home, adapting it and taking advantage of the applications and access to the virtuality that the pandemic proposes.

We're working! We're still in touch.
De los niños y adolescentes del mundo... ¡Siempre Amigos!

*Ezequiel Rogante
National Secretary*



HONDURAS



We thank God for the life and mission that has been entrusted to us, especially in this time of pandemic, during which we have contemplated the presence of God in our country and in the life of each family. As members of the Missionary Childhood we have lived the mission from our homes, using social media such as Facebook and WhatsApp to transmit in text and audio messages, programs and the missionary rosary. We are taking advantage of all that modern technology offers us in our responsibility for animators, children and parents. We have worked diligently in the midst of this pandemic and have maintained faith, hope and much communion by uniting in prayer for all who suffer during this reality. With the grace of God, we tried

to support children and adolescents to keep a heart full of love and prayer.

From Honduras we stand in solidarity with the most affected countries by this pandemic: Italy, Spain, France and the United States.

The missionary children pray for the children all over the world.

Sr. Yaneth Díaz mm
National Secretary



I.A.M. - HONDURAS

My name is Eda Brond

I am from the village of Obraje, and Our Lady of Suyapa parish, Danli el Paraso. I began my missionary walk in "Semillitas misioneras" when I was four years old. I went every Saturday to our meetings where we prayed the missionary Rosary with great joy; sang the hymn of Missionary Childhood and grew up together in faith and missionary commitment. I feel that the Lord has accompanied me throughout my life and I have felt His presence. I am very grateful for everything that I have learned in the Church that has allowed me to give incredible advancement in my spiritual and human growth and missionary commitment; I have a dream: to be a missionary beyond our borders one day, to experience other cultures and with God's grace to be a great woman.

I have had to live this hard experience of the pandemic. We have been deeply moved by what we see and experience, surpassing our expectations. For me, being locked up and not being able to leave my home has touched me deeply, but in an emotional moment I realized that it was a means to further intensify the prayer of children, teenagers and young people around the world, especially for all those who have lost their parents and grandparents in this pandemic. This is also an opportunity for closeness and sharing with my family, to appreciate more fully the value my parents and brothers. I only ask God to end this pandemic soon so that we can meet our companions and other family members.

It is only worth giving everything to the Lord because He gives everything to us. Let us not be afraid to follow Jesus the great missionary.

With love and prayers - a missionary greeting from Honduras.

Thank you so much, God bless you.

"De los niños y adolescentes del mundo, siempre amigos".





BOLIVIA

SAN RAFAEL PARISH

ARCHDIOCESE OF COCHABAMBA



The missionary childhood began in the Parish of San Rafael on April 17, 2004 and the coordinator was Gregorio Condori, a young man attending a school run by the religious of the Pisia Schools. There were 35 children from the different schools of our parish.

During the past 16 years, many children and animators participated in the Missionary Childhood at San Rafael. Today the group has 12 animators and 25 children, as well as the support the group of the parish priest, Fr. Alex Sousa Schp. He, too, is a missionary animator and is part of the Calasanz Movement. In fact, the Missionary Childhood is the first stage of the Scolopio Movement. We meet on Sundays at 9:30 a.m. in the chapel of our parish.

Greetings to all dear friends of the Missionary Childhood. My name is Alvaro and I am 38 years old. I have been animating the Missionary Childhood in my parish, in the Archdiocese of Cochabamba, for about 16 years.

Our group is characterized by joy and service. We are very cheerful and we try to transmit the Gospel in a joyful way. Sometimes we use puppets or we prepare a circus (we act as clowns, magicians, etc.). Sometimes we tell a story and then we act it out. We pray and learn many things through the School with Jesus. Naturally, we also want to be of service to others by taking Jesus as our model. He came to serve and not to be served. We participate in the activities of our parish and of the Archdiocese. In fact, the Missionary Childhood coordinator of our Archdiocese is a young woman named Adriana, who started as a child in our Missionary Childhood group many years ago. She continues to support us as an animator and does not hesitate to reprimand us when we are late for a meeting!

In our country, we were caught by surprise by the quarantine due to the corona virus pandemic. It is very strict. The children cannot go

out on the street and adults can go out only once a week. I am in quarantine with my beloved wife Carol and Sarah our seven month old daughter. But the Missionary Childhood does not stand still. The Archdiocese's mission team organized several online activities for children and animators. These include preparing and sending a photo of the missionary altar we were asked to prepare in our home; recording and sending videos of different activities and videos explain one of the topics related to the Missionary Childhood National Day.

For our part in the parish, the animators decided to make better use of the time for our training through video calls. We began by learning more about the history of the Church and now we are learning more about our dear mother Mary.

At first, we thought quarantine wouldn't last long and we were preparing to meet the children again soon. However, since it has lasted for a few months, we want to prepare Missionary Childhood meetings for the children on video and pass them on social media through their parents.

Let us be courageous missionaries, let us not allow anything to take away from us the joy of knowing that God the Father loves us so much, that Jesus died and rose for us and that the Holy Spirit accompanies us. Let us be the light of Jesus that shines before men.



Alvaro Sejas (group animator)



Hello, I am Alejandro and I am 8 years old. I want to say that I feel happy, but also a little sad and sometimes distressed in this quarantine. Happy, because I am with my family. Sad because I cannot see my friends and I cannot do what I would like to do as I did before.

I miss the meetings of the Missionary Childhood, with my friends, learning and playing, but I am happy to have participated in the videos that we prepared for the different activities because I like to make videos and I love that others see them. I was proud to have helped.

To all my friends I say, I miss you so much and please take care of yourself. I look forward to meet the animators and rejoice, play, share in activities, learn about Jesus, about his Word and many other things. Let us not lose joy and let us be reassured that everything will pass and we can still organize many things to live this moment better. Do not feel sad or bored because you are with your family and you can do a lot of things, and don't forget to practice what they taught us.

*Miguel Alejandro Vargas Villca
(missionary child)*



Hello, my name is Bruno and I am 5 years old. I am not so happy, because I cannot see my friends or my cousins and I miss the Missionary Childhood meetings where we play with other children and in the church I can be to feel God closer. The good thing about this time is that I can be with my family.

I really enjoy making the videos for the Missionary Childhood but I felt a little uncomfortable that a lot of people are going to see them.

I would like my friends to take good care of each other and to be nice to each other. I want them to remember to stay home and to wash their hands with soap and water.

*Bruno Aguilar
(missionary child)*





ITALY



The following proposals were published by Missio Ragazzi on its social media: institutional website www.missioitalia.it, Facebook pages, Instagram and sent via Newsletter.

I STAY AT HOME CONNECTED WITH THE WORLD #ALL WILL BE WELL

Relaunch of various activities of Missio Ragazzi to live with creativity the time at home, with the family, with a look at faith and the world. The invitation is this: to create a drawing, a job with recycling material and a prayer with a message of hope. Aim and target: let us circulate throughout our beautiful Italy a message of hope, together with a heartfelt thanks to those who immediately dedicated themselves to treat the sick affected by the virus.

Some examples:

"MISSIO lab" labs-game; the activities of the GREMISST, a proposal for the missionary summer oratory; the readings of IL PONTE D'ORO and more.



La bacheca delle belle notizie

Ricominciamo con una notizia musicale: **Tommaso Paradiso ed Elsa** hanno scritto un brano sul momento delicato che tutta la Terra sta vivendo. Il brano è stato scritto e composto in una diretta Instagram tra i due cantanti, dinanzi a migliaia di followers che hanno assistito e contribuito alla stesura del pezzo. Una bellissima iniziativa ed una bellissima canzone, vi riportiamo di seguito una frase significativa del testo:

"Ritournerà, l'abbraccio tra la gente, il sole sulla pelle, tornerà la libertà, di correre per strada baciarsi alla fermata e a un tratto guardarsi negli occhi per poi dire ANDRÀ TUTTO BENE".

#andràtuttobene



THE DASHBOARD OF THE GOOD NEWS

Every morning, a "Beautiful News" was posted on the Facebook page MISSIO RAGAZZI. We thought it was appropriate, never as in this critical moment, to begin the day with news of hope and joy. Beautiful things keep happening in the world and it is important to spread them.



SETTIMANA SANTA #acasa ma #connessiconilmondo

ATTIVITA'

In un angolo ben visibile della casa, bimbi e genitori realizzano l'angolo della preghiera: una fovaglietta, un Vangelo aperto e un vaso con un ramoscello di ulivo realizzato da tutti i componenti della famiglia.

RAMOSCELLO DI ULIVO FAI DA TE

- Prendete un cartoncino verde e tracciate la sagoma delle mani di ogni componente della famiglia;
- Ritagliate le sagome e avvolgetele intorno ad una cannuccia o ad una stecca di legno con del nastro adesivo o della colla;
- Mettete il vostro speciale ramoscello di ulivo in un vaso, accanto al Vangelo aperto, nell'angolo della preghiera.

N.B.: Se non avete un cartoncino verde, potete usare dei normali fogli bianchi per la realizzazione delle sagome; ovviamente dovete colorarle prima di assemblarle. In alternativa, si può semplicemente disegnare un ramoscello di ulivo.



PREGHIERA IN FAMIGLIA

Cerca: Gv 12, 12 - 15

La lettura del Vangelo è eseguita da un genitore

Pregiera insieme

Gesù sei stato accolto con gioia a Gerusalemme. Anche noi, con il ramoscello d'ulivo che abbiamo realizzato insieme, vogliamo lodarti e dirti: Osanna a te, che porti gioia e pace a chi ti accoglie con cuore sincero. Benedici la nostra famiglia. Amen



L'ANGOLINO DELLA PREGHIERA



DOMENICA DELLE PALME



THE HOLY WEEK OF MISSIONARY CHILDREN

Five animation and prayer cards have been produced for the Holy Week: for the Passion Sunday, for GoodThursday, GoodFriday, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday.

Each card suggested, day after day, the realization of a "Corner of Prayer" in the house, involving the whole family: the invitation is to read and pray the Word of God.



TESTIMONIES

"A HAIL MARY FOR..."

THE PRAYER NETWORK OF THE MISSIONARY CHILDREN

The aim is to involve children and adolescents from all over Italy in living the Marian prayer for all the countries of the world. The proposal is an invitation to pray the Hail Mary with an intention during the five weeks of May. Every Monday the intention to pray for a continent is published on the website, with the invitation to share it and pray at 5.30pm through a live stream on the Missio Ragazzi facebook page.



INDIA



HOLYCHILDHOOD MISSIONARY SCHOOL (VIRTUAL)

With Google Classrooms and video conferencing facilities School is no more a building and physical infrastructure and class rooms need not be brick and mortar. Virtual class Rooms can help children learn and grow in spiritual and missionary formation. There is virtually no boundaries with combination of technologies like WhatsApp, Google Classrooms, Video Conferencing, Emails, etc. This would not cost us much, quick to setup and help our Animators get organized and be mission ready anytime. Hope and pray that we do not miss out on this rare opportunity and reach out to our little missionaries trapped in isolation due to lockdowns around the world. There may never be a better opportunity as perfect and a situation as compelling as today in reaching out to our little missionaries.

WORLD MISSION ROSARY



There was never a time as compelling as today for us to join our hands together and intercede for the whole world in the grip of pandemic.

Bearing the brunt of the full or partial shutdown all our global citizens need our

prayers today. Praying with Our Mother Mary for five continents and for countries and people in those five continents would help end the pandemic and work wonders in our present world. This could be an eye opener for us to explore the geographies and demography of 5 great continents. We live in a world that is connected like never before and as if a person living in one country sneezes and the other living in different parts of the world could catch a cold. It is prudent to pray for countries and continents around the world. And with World Mission Rosary, it is as simple as remembering the 5 continents with 5 different colors. A lot of good will happen by just offering a decade of Rosary for each continent.

“We must pray, and not for ourselves, but for the world. To this end, I have designed the World Mission Rosary. Each of the five decades is of a different color to represent the continents”

Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen

24X7 CHAIN ROSARY PRAYER

Taking advantage of the different time zones in our present global (follow-the-sun) model, it perhaps





had never been this easy to pray the Rosary without breaking the 24 hours chain. The easy way would be to circulate our prayer intentions, bible reading and meditation on a daily basis in a dedicated Facebook/WhatsApp network groups. Through this rosary prayer network, we would not only be energizing Holy Childhood Association but also spiritually upholding our brothers and sisters throughout the world who otherwise suffering without access to church and sacraments during this pandemic.



BIBLE READING AS GROUP {MARATHON}

With video conferencing technologies like ZOOM available for free or costing only few bugs, It is high time we leverage this virtual setup to bring our team and brethren together in reading bible and for prayer and discussions. It may take only 60 hours to complete reading New Testament as a community with 30 minutes or an hour slot for each reader.

STORY TELLING FROM BIBLE

Our little missionaries will self learn Bible, Heroes and History of salvation by participating in Bible story telling events or competition. With the lockdown presenting an opportunity for our little missionaries to learn more about our

faith, we shall facilitate regional events with attractive prizes for telling stories from Bible.

SAINT COSTUMES

In a world fascinated by celebrity cult, it is important that we project saints and their holy life as a model for our little missionaries to follow. With social media platforms and virtual possibilities saint costume fashion show or competition can be arranged. Children can participate by sharing either their videos of appear in live shows.

Craft Workshop - HolyChildhood

1. Scissor
2. Blade
3. Scale (metal or wooden)
4. Pencil
5. Colorful polished sheet (like calendar)
6. Any thread or Nylon
7. Air-Dry Clay Paste (or any Clay)
8. Tooth pick or any stick of same thickness
9. Fevicol or Glue

MALAWI



CELEBRATION OF THE MISSIONARY DAY FOR CHILDREN IN LILONGWE

Children in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe have been called upon to read the Bible, pray with the Bible and preach the Word of God in their daily life.

This call was made by the Most Rev. Tarcisio Ziyaye, the Archbishop of Lilongwe on 11 January 2020 at St. John's Msamba Parish when the Archdiocese was celebrating the Missionary Day for children as part of the Epiphany celebration.

The Archbishop told the children that the Catholic Church is celebrating the Year of the Bible and the Holy Father wants every Catholic to spare some time to read and pray with the Word of God so that they can get God's light for their life and find content for preaching in the word.

"You children, the Catholic Church wants you also to participate in the celebration of the Year of the Bible. We ask you to read the Bible together with your fellow children, with your parents and teachers and understand what God is speaking," Archbishop Ziyaye urged the children.

Over three thousand children from all the parishes of the Archdiocese gathered at St. John's Parish on a long-awaited Missionary Day for children in the Archdiocese. To a child in Lilongwe Archdiocese, this is one of the

memorable days in missionary celebration.

Together, they prayed the Missionary Rosary, celebrated the Eucharist, sang and danced together, offered gifts from their homes. Following the motto, 'Children helping Children', they brought their offerings from their parishes to assist their needy friends and support of the work of the Holy Father in the evangelization.

The presence of the Archbishop, the PMS National Director, Fr. Vincent Mwakhwawa, PMS Diocesan Director, Fr. Francis Lekaleka, Priests, the Guest Speaker, Sr. Rebecca Mathole, the Religious Sisters, the Lay leaders and Animators of the children, on this auspicious occasion, colored the day.

A motivational speech given by Sr. Rebecca Mathole stimulated the missionary conscious in the children. Working for the Association of Women Religious Institutes in Malawi (AWRIM), she emphasized the need for the Church to put much effort in giving holistic missionary formation to children.





Sr Rabeca encouraged the animators, parents and other pastoral agents to pay attention to the spiritual, physical, social and emotional needs of children so that they grow with dignity as desired by the God the Father. She also encouraged the children to continue attending missionary catechetical lessons at their Church communities.

The National PMS Director Fr. Vincent Mwachwawa encouraged the children to read the Bible every day in their families so that they become proclaimers of the Word of God. He urged them to take up the role given them by parents in their families, of reading the Bible

during the Bible and prayer family sessions.

Patricia Kanyumbu, PMS Animator, Lilongwe



EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

CHILDREN, GROW IN CHRIST, DON'T BELIEVE IN WITCHCRAFT

Catholic children in the country have been advised to accept the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, pray together and offering services that preach the Gospel so as they grow into fully formed citizens.

Rt. Rev. Martin Mtumbuka Bishop of Karonga Diocese said this when he presided over the celebration of the Solemnity of the Epiphany of The Lord, a feast for children as missionaries to the whole world.

During the event, the Bishop Mtumbuka encouraged children to let the practice of praying together, reading the Bible and serving others grow in them.

“Epiphany of The Lord is of great significance for us as it confirms that the Church loves and cares for you our dear children. Jesus was revealed to non-Jews and he has also been revealed to us. As children, you should learn to open your hearts, pray together and contribute the little you can together with all the people of good will. The Holy Father Pope Francis uses such contributions to continue preaching the Gospel to the whole world through various pastoral and humanitarian endeavors,” said Bishop Mtumbuka.

He also condemned the bad practices that are commonly happening in the surrounding communities

of the Diocese and the country at large, citing the killing of old people whom the community members allege to be witches.

“Beliefs in witchcraft are a result of ignorance and poverty. People who believe in witchcraft are often not educated enough and so they lack critical thinking. I urge each and every parent to properly take care of their children by giving them good education and guiding them spiritually so that they grow into fully formed citizens of the country,” continued Bishop Mtumbuka.

On his part the Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS) National Director, Rev Fr. Vincent Mwachwawa said children should grow in true faith and never be carried away by harmful practices and beliefs.

“We want children to grow in and with the love of God. That is why this year is declared by our bishops ‘The Year of The Bible.’ The Church wants to help children to grow in love and concern for others, emulating the example of our Lord Jesus Christ,” said Fr. Mwachwawa.

This year’s Epiphany of the Lord was celebrated under the theme Children Are Baptized and Sent to Preach the Word of God.

National celebrations were held at St. Joseph The Worker Cathedral in Karonga Diocese. Children prayed for fellow children, offered services and contributed money for fellow children who are in need in various parts of the world.

ECM’s Stella Kaferapanjira



MISSIONARY CHILDREN OF THE DIOCESE OF CHILAW

THE PRESENT SITUATION OF THE CHILDREN

During the last year we were able to concentrate on the lives of the children. The struggle to uplift the moral and human values continued. There has been a serious breakdown of religious, social, educational and discipline values in the country. There is a growing sense of secularism and consumerism swallowing the day-to-day life of children. They are exposed to the effects of tourism which is promoted by the government. There is a remarkable decline in discipline in the schools are all of which are government schools in the diocese. The Catholic Schools were vested by the government in 1960. The Church suffered severely during this situation. The Missionary Childhood has helped preserve at least some of the positive values and fight against the evil which our children are being exposed. Parents send their children quite willingly to take part in the activities organised by the Holy Childhood. They know that the children are in safe hands and they profit a good deal, in Christian formation.

There is also an overall lowering of standards of security and welfare regarding children. This situation has been aggravated as a result of migration. In some families both parents have gone to other countries for work mainly due to poverty. The children of such families are left behind and neglected. They often grow up with relations and are vulnerable to various social evils. In addition to this the country is not stable politically and economically and consequently the children are adversely affected. Due to the civil war which was there for 30 years the children are the worst affected. Although our diocese is not directly in the war zone there are many border villages and islands in the diocese where people and specially the children were living in fear. We have paid a special care for these children.

Hundreds of Life Education and Self-awareness programmes were conducted in schools and Sunday schools. The biggest children were met individually by the team of qualified counsellors appointed by the diocese. The children were very appreciative of these programmes.

The existing Holy Childhood groups are animated and upheld during the year by the Diocesan Director. An annual children's day was held in the diocese to bring to a climax all the animation and formation work of the children. The annual Marian Rally too was organised by the children, and it was held on deanery level, which was a meaningful event to create missionary awareness. Animators play a major role, since they have to form the young and in the diocese of Chilaw the animators are very committed and they are sure to be the future lay leadership of our communities.

Under the watchful supervision of the Diocesan Director much attention is being paid to the moral and spiritual formation of the children.

Every year, an Annual Holy Childhood Day is organized and nearly 2000 children gather for this event. The priests are always encouraged to build more cells and to motivate the children to join the Holy Childhood groups. Their response has been satisfactory.

We make a serious effort to inculcate in the children a personal faith in Jesus Christ. They are meaningful children's songs (hymns) which are helpful in the animation. They speak of Jesus without any self-consciousness or artificiality. Love for Jesus seems to come naturally to them. It is one of the major achievements of the Missionary Childhood. Children are taught to pray and make sacrifices. It is our experience that, and like adults, our children take more easily to genuine prayer



TESTIMONIES

and sincere self-sacrifice.

The collecting of monies is given an important place (besides of course the spiritual motivation that is always seen to). A vast majority of the people in the diocese are small-scale fisherman and labourers. The people are made aware of this responsibility to contribute. We are doing our best to form them in this regard.

*D. Valence Mendis
Bishop of Chilaw*

No. 250
Vidyala Mawatha,
Wenappuwa
28/12/2020.

God Bless You!

Dear Holy father,

I'm Shayla. I studying in St. John Paul II English Medium College Chilaw Diocese. I'm belonging to St. Joseph parish in Wenappuwa. I'm in Holy child hood about three years. I go want to go to the Holy child hood to find and gain for curricular activities and to be more knowledgeable about my religion. When I was joining to the Holy Child hood I see Jesus in others. When I was joined I change myself and I experienced it very well. My friends also make themselves and they also wanted to join to the Holy child hood. I try to join other students to the Holy child hood.

Thank you
Your sincerely
Udugampalage Shayla Fernando

No. 19 Adapparaawatta,
Lansigama,
Katunerya,
Dhahara
28/02/2020

God bless you!
Dear Holy father,

I am Dhahara. I am studying in St. John Paul II collage. I am from Ihala Katunerya parish. I am a student of Holy Child hood for 2 years. My grand parents told me to join to Holy child hood. I experience Jesus christ by the leaders in Holy child hood. My friend is Buddhist, so I introduce her about the Jesus christ. After I join to Holy Child hood, I attempt to do more good things, I began to be a good child in the school. After few days, my friends also join to the Holy child hood. We all help others in many ways. I feel Jesus christ is with me. I try my level best to call all people to come behind Jesus christ. I thank all the leaders who teach me good things and who enter me to the Holy child hood.

Thank you,
your faithful Dhahara.

God Bless You!
Dear Holy Father,

I'm Ruchini. I am Studying in St. John Paul II English Medium college.

I am from Chilaw Parish. I am a Student of Holy Childhood. I studied 3 years in Holy Childhood. I thought to join Holy Childhood. I receive good qualities from Holy Childhood. I experience Jesus Christ through the leaders of Holy Childhood. After I joined it I learn to do more good things. After I joined to the Holy Childhood I totally changed. I stopped all the bad things. Looking at my changes my friend also try to join to the Holy Childhood. I try my level best to call all the people to come behind me Jesus Christ. I thank all the Holy Childhood leaders who teach me the correct path.

Thank You
Sincerely,
Ruchini Nethan.



MISSIONARY CHILDHOOD IN RAJSHAHI



Childhood program has contributed much in the formation of social leaders for the tribal communities.

Holy Childhood Day in North Vicaria: The PMS of Rajshahi diocese organized “Shishu Somabesh” at St. Joseph’s Church, Rohanpur on 26-27 October 2019 for North Vicaria. Altogether 298 children along with their

animators from different parishes of north vicaria participated on this celebration. The theme for the occasion was “The Joy of Children in Christ”. The motive of this program is to promote inspiration among the children to grow in the love of Christ. Rev. Fr. William Murmu celebrated the Holy Mass for the children.

The Holy Childhood Association of the Diocese is headed by the Bishop along with 2 Priests, 4 Sisters and 15 Volunteers. Education and formation of the children is the main aim of this program. Therefore it takes care of the animation and training of the animators who help in the Holy Childhood activities in the parishes of the Diocese. Besides, there will be Diocesan gathering of the Holy Childhood Association with the children representatives of different parishes. This program gives a boost in the spirit of the Holy Childhood programs, since the majority of our Catholics belong to different tribal or aboriginal communities. The economic condition of the tribal people is precarious, having no or little land properties. They earn very little and so cannot save anything. Thus, they have no education nor medical care and not enough food.

Most of the Catholics live in remote villages where there is no school. Thus, the first priority of Rajshahi Diocese is to give formal education and formation of the tribal children and the Holy

Holy Childhood Animator’s Seminar: A Seminar for the Holy Childhood Animators of South Vicaria was arranged on 17 November 2019 at Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Bonpara on the theme of “Baptized and Sent”. Altogether 55 animators participated in this seminar.





FRIENDSHIP CAMP KEMKOGUI

DIOCESE OF PALA



TESTIMONIES

The diocese of Pala is a very large diocese and includes the regions of Mayo-Kebbi East and West. These two regions have a strong human concentration with a population of 1,500,000 inhabitants, of whom 55% of the total are children under 15 years of age.

These children have no opportunity to meet to live a few days together in friendship, or to share the Word of God and the activities they carry out among them. It is risky to close in one's usual way of doing things and, for this reason, the diocese wants to give to the children of these two regions an opportunity to meet, get to know each other and share the Word of God, reflecting on the social and human values that can help them prepare for a better future. In a few years these children will know how to share their life with other children from their villages. They will respond to the call of the Lord to serve the Church.

The project of the “Friendship Camp Kemkogui” aims to give children a place of teaching and learning, sharing gospel, intellectual, human and pastoral values. It is also an opportunity to sensitize them to the priestly, religious vocation and Christian marriage. For children, to be witnesses of Christ means living their Christian faith daily, practicing charity in their neighborhoods, in their schools, in their villages and in their families. Wherever they are, children are called to be good Samaritans. Our Church is also built with the action of children and they must participate in the life of the Church with their active and missionary presence. Following the example of Monsignor Charles de Forbin Janson, children understood that they are called to lead a missionary life in their different existential contexts.

Before the start of the diocesan camp there was a spiritual, material and human preparation of the participants in each parish. The animators explained the profound meaning and objectives of this initiative. For the camp the children

gathered in one of the parishes of the diocese, with the help of carers, parents and pastoral agents to reflect on the topic “Kemkogi, enlightened by the Christian faith, we are missionaries in our context of life for the protection of our society”. Each area was represented by a delegation of 150 children, for a total of 750 participating children. It was also an opportunity for the children to celebrate together the 175th anniversary of the Society of Missionary Childhood.

At the end of the camp there was an evaluation of its impact on children's lives.



CHAD

CHILDREN HELPING CHILDREN ... IN GOROKA



THE SITUATION OF THE CHILDREN IN THE DIOCESE

The general situation of children in the Diocese of Goroka, which comprise the territory of Eastern Highlands Province of Papua New Guinea, still leaves much to be desired. Health and education have deteriorated even further as political and economic situation of the country is very difficult. The education system that was introduced by the government few years ago of “Free Education” brings more division and disappointments. Most classes are overcrowded with children because of very limited resources to construct new buildings. Limited funds, in many schools, are not enough to supply books, education materials and very basic stationaries and further, in these government schools, the children are not thought religion. Not all children are going to school, since education is not obligatory and some are staying back at home helping parents in their work or looking after small brothers and sisters in the families. In addition to this general situation, the Catholic population of the diocese is very small and this also pertains to the number of the Catholic children in the schools, which might be 30-40 Catholics out of 800. That being the case, one of the best places to bring all children together for religious and faith formation activities are Sunday School programs that the diocese runs in every parish and in many out-stations.

The idea of “Children helping Children” is promoted and thought in the Catholic Schools of the diocese. Even children from other Christian churches and denomination who attend Catholic schools are taking part in promoting and supporting one another. Children are collecting small amounts of money to share and support the Holy Childhood. In the diocese they have a Diocesan Spiritual Director for Children Ministry to guide, direct and coordinate many children’s activities on parish and diocesan level. Small Christian Communities in every parish are encouraged to organize and support early childhood centres to foster spiritual and human growth of children. During the year, on the parish level and in the school programs, children participate in many faith formation activities that build and teach the aspect of sharing the gift of faith and joy. With the help of parents and sponsors they organize gatherings, retreats and sports competitions. The Diocesan

Coordinator for Children Ministry organizes visitations to every parish, bringing children together for spiritual input, prayers and Mass. Four times a year also Rallies and retreats are organized. The collection for Holy Childhood is usually taken when children are gathered for the activities (rallies, retreats and school mass in the parish).

The diocese has 9 parishes.

A new program has been introduced, called Early Childhood Care and Education “ (ECCE) whose goal is to take care of education and Christian formation for small children between 2 and 5 years.





KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

DIOCESE OF ALI WAL



TESTIMONIES

The Diocese is divided in three regions (Sterkspruit, Alial and Indwe) and the children are mainly living in township situations and in rural areas. In many cases the long distances on bad roads affect the coming together in the parishes. The Catholic Church is a minority Church among a few so called main-line Churches and many sects. Many children are born out of wedlock which affects the important role of normal family life would provide for Christian and human socialization. Quite a number of children are orphans due to HIV/AIDS and many of them are in the care of relatives. The diocese lies in one of the poorest areas in the country in the Eastern Cape Province and has a high rate of migration. The schooling situation is often poor and underdeveloped. The animation team and priests provide formation for the catechizers of the children and all volunteers who need on-going formation. This formation happens mainly at the diocesan youth centre, at a regional level, and also locally within the parishes. There is a need to teach children basic catechism, moral behaviour and liturgical symbols of the Church.

The Diocese has annual celebration of Holy Childhood Mission Day in the three different regions and promotes financial contribution towards Holy Childhood collection for the needs of the Universal Church. The Parishes are given envelopes for collection every year, asking the children to make a collection throughout the year.

This year, with the help of the Universal Solidarity Funds, the Diocesan PMS Director will conduct a workshop for children from 8-14 years about accepting and loving foreign national as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Bible is the main source, with the children, in dramatizing biblical stories. The children will be thought about globalization and its' impact in the world. We will link the story of Abraham, Christianity and globalization.

Further, it is important for the children to understand the world map. It opens their eyes to the different realities of other nations. Thus, we will teach about realities and opportunities outside South Africa. This is important to face and challenge xenophobic mentality while they are still young. Knowledge is power, it can liberate people from fears and uncertainty. World Map will discover challenges of different societies and solutions to their problems. We will teach our children to assist other children in need and in desperate situation. World Map will inspire children to be compassionate, considerate, understanding different races and nationalities.





DIOCESE OF MONGOMO

Missionary Childhood is present in all parishes, where celebrations with children take place. Convivial meetings and the training of the animators, who are 16/17 years old, are organized. There is a PMS diocesan delegate. The children organize charitable activities and World Missionary Childhood Day is celebrated annually. The delegate organized initial meetings with those responsible in all our pastoral areas to guide them on the behavior to be followed with children and on the activities to be carried out later. The Day was celebrated here in the cathedral, with more than 1500 children accompanied by many families. After mass activities were organized and sandwiches, juices, biscuits, sweets... were

offered. A real feast with much joy.



PONTIFICAL MISSION SOCIETIES EMERGENCY FUND FOR COVID - 19



Pontifical Mission Societies
INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIATS

An emergency fund for Covid-19

The Holy Father has established an emergency fund at the Pontifical Mission Societies, in order to come to the aid of those people and communities who are being tragically impacted by the spread of COVID-19.

The purpose of the fund is provide aid to support ecclesiastical structures, according to the charism of the Pontifical Mission Societies, in local Churches in the mission territories that are adversely affected by the pandemic.

The Holy Father has designated US \$ 750,000 as an initial contribution for the fund and has asked that those Church entities that are able and desirous to help, to contribute to this fund through the Pontifical Mission Societies in each Country.



The Pontifical Mission Societies is the Holy Father's official channel of support for more than 1,110 dioceses mostly in Asia, Africa, Oceania and part of the Amazon region:

Contributions can be made also to:

VA31001000000040286004 (SWIFT/BIC: IOPRVAVX) (€)
VA04001000000040286005 (SWIFT/BIC: IOPRVAVX) (USD \$)
for: Amministrazione Pontificie Opere Missionarie,
indicating: Fund Corona-Virus



Cardinal Luis Antonio G. TAGLE,
Prefect of the Congregation for the
Evangelization of Peoples

«In her task of evangelization, the Church is often on the front lines of major threats to human well-being. In Africa alone, there are over 74,000 religious sisters and over 46,000 priests operating 7,274 hospitals and clinics, 2,346 homes for elderly and the vulnerable, and educating over 19 million children in 45,088 primary schools. In many rural areas they are the only providers of healthcare and education. The Holy Father is calling upon the Church's entire vast network to face the challenges ahead».

«This fund has the aim of supporting the presence of the Church in mission territories, which also suffers the consequences of Corona Virus. Through the Church's activity of preaching the Gospel and of practical aid through our vast network, we can show that no one is alone in this crisis. In this sense, the Church's institutions and ministers play a vital role. This is the Holy Father's intention in establishing this Fund. While so many are suffering, we remember and reach out to those who may have no one to care for them, thus showing forth the love of God the Father.

I call upon our network of Pontifical Mission Societies, present in every diocese around the world, to do what they can to support this important initiative of the Holy Father».



Archbishop Giampaolo DAL TOSO,
President of the Pontifical Mission Societies

TANZANIA

CHILDREN'S PRAYER TO GOD AGAINST THE SPREAD OF CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

Oh God Almighty and Father,

Your Son Our Lord Jesus Christ promised us saying:

*“Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find;
knock, and the door will be opened for you.” (Mt. 7:7)*

*Bearing these words in mind, we, your children come before
you with great humility asking that you save us from this highly
infectious pandemic caused by Coronavirus.*

*With great faith we join the whole world imploring your mercy.
Keep us from fear and anxiety due to the spread of this disease,
which has afflicted the whole world.*

*We know and acknowledge that, we, alone can do nothing for,
“unless the Lord guards the city, the guard keeps watch in vain.”*

(Ps. 127:1)

*We ask you to heal all the people infected and affected by this disea-
se, and protect all those who look after them.*

*We ask you to receive into your eternal kingdom, all those who have
died out of this Pandemic disease.*

*We Further ask you, to enlighten and enable scientists and health
researchers throughout the world, to discover vaccine and cure for
this infectious and dangerous disease.*

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Mother Mary Health of the sick, Pray for us!

