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# BULLETIN



**PONTIFICIUM OPUS A SANCTA INFANTIA**  
**SECRETARIATUS INTERNATIONALIS**



**WITNESSING JESUS TODAY**

**CHARLES DE FORBIN JANSON  
A MISSIONARY BISHOP**

**THE VOICE OF THE CHILDREN**

**LITTLE MISSIONARIES IN...  
TOGO**





**MISSIONARY NEWSLETTER  
N.7 - JANUARY 2021**

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**Cover picture:** Archives PSMC, National Office  
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### 42 LITTLE MISSIONARIES IN...TOGO



**D**ear readers,  
 Our best wishes for a new year full of the hope and joy that spring from the birth of Jesus, the Son of God, which we have recently celebrated. The Christmas season is a special and propitious period for the Missionary Childhood, because numerous countries celebrate the Missionary Childhood Day around the Feast of Epiphany. Many children and young people, as well as adults and families, are involved in this event. The theme proposed for it, and on which we want to reflect in this first issue of the Bulletin, is **WITNESS**. With Baptism we are called and responsible to proclaim the Good News, first with the testimony of our lives and then with words, to bring the light of Christ to all.

Last January 6, 2021, during the Angelus, Pope Francis stated: *“How does Christ’s light shine in every place and at all times? It does not do so through the powerful means of this world’s empires... No, the light of Christ spreads through the proclamation of the Gospel. Proclamation, word, and witness. And with this same “method” chosen by God to come among us: incarnation, that is, by drawing near to the other, encountering the other, assuming the reality of the other and bringing the witness of our faith, each one. This is the only way that the light of Christ, who is Love, can shine in those who welcome it and attract others.”*

Witness is the distinguishing element that characterizes the mission of the baptized.

A witness is a person who can speak about an event or a person, because he was present at the event or knows the person in question. Therefore, in order to be a witness of Jesus, it is first necessary to know Him, that is, to have met Him, to believe in Him, and to believe that He is alive. It is necessary to have had such an attractive and involving experience of Him to desire that others might also Him and thus find true happiness.

The Christian witness must reflect the life of Another, Christ, because he participates in God’s mission. With his own life and existence, he commemorates the life of Christ, presenting it in a concrete and relevant way. Thus, through our witness, we offer others a gift: the Good News of Jesus, the Son of God, who became incarnate,

died and rose again out of love and for the salvation of all. It is a gift that we ourselves have received.

This can only occur with the help of the Holy Spirit. We cannot be witnesses of Jesus alone; we bear witness to Christ only together with the Holy Spirit and the community.

To bear witness is to humbly share our faith and the joy that accompanies it. Who better than children and young people can teach us this humble attitude of the disciple?

In their simplicity and availability, they are the ones who bring, in the world today, a joyful and convincing witness of the Gospel. They can transmit the beauty of faith in Christ and of belonging to the Church.

The formation and animation activities realized together with the children are therefore essential so that they may become witness of the Gospel.

In fact, it is from the encounter with Christ that the missionary commitment starts.

The Missionary Childhood Day is the culmination of the activities carried out throughout the year, the opportunity to share the path taken, based on prayer and offering, with are the two cornerstones that support the Church in the work of evangelization and in which children participate effectively, with a surprising sensitivity and a universal spirit.

We wanted to dedicate the first pages of this issue to Mons. Charles de Forbin Janson, founder of the Work of the Holy Childhood, witness to the missionary passion and prophet regarding the role of children in the evangelizing action of the Church.



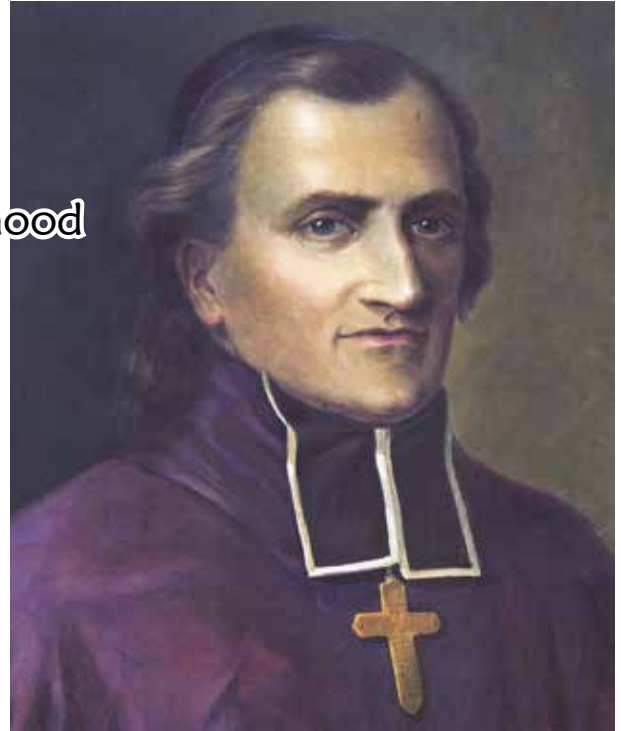
**SR. ROBERTA TREMARELLI**  
*Secretary General Pontifical Society Missionary Childhood*

# CHARLES DE FORBIN-JANSON

Missionary Bishop  
(3 November 1785 - 11 July 1844)

Founder of the  
Pontifical Society of the Holy Childhood

Charles de Forbin-Janson possessed one of those rare characteristics that are inherent in some human natures: a passion for the apostolate and a determined character. It was these two qualities that not only strengthened his missionary vocation but also inspired in him the need to found the Society of Missionary Childhood, an innovative project in the post-revolutionary France of the 19th century, created for and by children.



**C** Charles was born in Paris on November 3, 1785, into an aristocratic family. Both of his parents held titles of nobility. At the age of 21, he was appointed auditor/inspector in the Council of State by Napoleon himself. His future was very promising, since, besides being the heir to a large fortune, he had an excellent administrative background. Nevertheless – and against his family's expectations –, Charles gave up his occupations and riches and in 1809 entered the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice. He was later ordained a priest in 1811 in Chambéry.

## THE CONSECRATION TO BISHOP

On June 6, 1824, he was ordained Bishop of Nancy and Toul. Nevertheless, Charles felt more the call to be a missionary than to be an administrator. The idea of dedicating himself to evangelization was always in his mind, so much so that he asked Pope Pius VII to be sent to the Far East. The Pope accepted his request, which, however, never

materialized. During this period, he had frequent contact with the missionaries destined to China and, through them, became aware of the great difficulties that children suffered in that country. There, in fact, many children, especially girls, were abandoned by their parents. The poverty of the agricultural workers and the little profit that girls, as females, could bring to the family led to their rejection. At times, they were even killed in the cruelest ways. This harsh reality, which never left the heart of Charles de Forbin-Janson, was the seed from which the Pontifical Society of the Holy Childhood or Missionary Childhood would sprout.

## THE DEPARTURE TO AMERICA

After the revolution of 1830, Charles had to leave France. A few years later, he left for America accompanied by some missionaries who encouraged him to face this challenge. His apostolic work during this period – which lasted



eighteen months – took place mainly in Canada, where he was able to bring together thousands of faithful, enlightening them with the light of the Gospel.

### THE FOUNDATION OF THE HOLY CHILDHOOD

Upon his return from America, after a meeting with Pauline Jaricot – Foundress of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith (Domund) – and following the model of this Society, Charles decided to found the Society of Missionary Childhood, later elevated to the status of Pontifical by Pope Pius XI. The Society's goal was that Christian children, as young evangelizers, might help save unbelieving children throughout the world. To this end, he stipulated that they offer a small amount of money each month and recite a short prayer each day for children in need.

From that moment on, he worked to convince all the Bishops of France of the importance of this project, communicating to them his passion and energy. He dedicated much of his fortune to this goal, as well as a contagious enthusiasm that was very useful in making his proposal well received in the various countries where he presented it.



### A CHAIN OF EVANGELIZATION

The Missionary Childhood was an audacious idea whose purpose was to give material and spiritual support to the poorest children of the world with the help of children who lacked nothing. Their generosity and prayer were the foundation of a courageous evangelizing chain from which future adult missionaries would later emerge. With time, the seed planted in committed and solidary children would bear fruit in formed young people who would be able to carry out their apostolate in the world. In addition, this idea laid the foundations for female Missionary Congregations, which were practically non-existent before then, since evangelization depended almost exclusively on the clergy.

### HOLY CHILDHOOD TODAY

Today, this Society continues to be indispensable, because children continue to be one of the weakest links in society. They suffer from hunger, wars, mistreatment, sexual and labor exploitation, disease and lack of expectations for the future, among many other things. Therefore, the project conceived by Charles de Forbin-Janson is still more necessary than ever, over one hundred and seventy years after its foundation.

Bishop de Forbin-Janson died on July 11, 1844, shortly after dedicating all his efforts to establishing a solid foundation for what would later become the Pontifical Society of Missionary Childhood. When

he died, the Society was already present and active in 65 Dioceses.

Today, there is no other organization or institution that bases its aid on children, on the selfless and supportive cooperation among children.

*Concha Fernández González*

# GUINEA BISSAU NATIONAL OFFICE



My name is **JOSÉ GOMES FERNANDES** and I was born on May 19th, 1999, making me 21 years old. I live in San Paolo – Bissau, in the peripheries of Bissau. I studied at the Brandao Training Center, 12th grade, and have completed my studies.

My father is Antonio Joaquim Fernandes, an

electrician and my mother is Ermelinda Gomes, who works as a domestic. I am the last of four children.

I joined the Missionary Childhood group in 2017 and since then have begun my formation journey. I can affirm to have learned many good things. Following the rich program of formation (human, religious-moral and athletic) that the Missionary Childhood offers, with themes and formation sessions that have helped me to grow humanly and in faith in Jesus Christ. Now I can share that which I received with those less fortunate than me and with the needy. Even the encounters opened my eyes to the needs of others and, above all, I thank God for all that I have, that should not only be for me, but for the good of my poorer brothers and sisters. In 2019 I was called to be an animator of a group of children (aged from 6 to 19 years old). What a joy! It is actually a mission for me. I have been called to give freely that which I have received freely. Parise be the Lord!



Next, I began to share with the children the many human and spiritual values that I had received, especially by celebrating and living the Word of God, by protecting minors and the vulnerable, in order to form honest and generous citizens for a mission among them and beyond our borders. The challenges and obstacles were many:

- Difficulties in the family setting;
- The influence of social media (globalization), in the digital world. . .
- Formation considered as obsolete;
- Lack of acceptance;
- Not accepting council from elders;
- Incapacity to sever some family relations, interpersonal and emotional;
- Widespread poverty, the absence of the state in the area of education, health care. . .

Once more, these challenges were strongly augmented in this period of coronavirus, but our hope in Christ pushed us to live a more committed life and not to stop before the challenges and difficulties of life (pandemic period), but, rather, to bear witness to our faith in Christ Jesus, as we walk with the children, visit families, instructing them to promote good hygienic practices, washing hands, wearing masks and many other things... We are young missionaries of Jesus Christ.



In the name of my friends in the group, I wish you a happy Christmas and a blessed 2021, filled with much happiness, good health and love for all.

*José Gomes Fernandes*

*My name is SUZANA MANÉ of the catholic mission of Cacine in the Diocese of Bafata, in Guinea-Bissau. For a little girl to bear witness to Jesus in Guinea-Bissau means to live the Word of God in the small everyday things: respecting parents, participating in catechesis, in catholic movements and behaving in school.*

*The challenges:*

- *Muslims are the majority in the Cacine area;*
- *Strong influence of tradition according to which children must respect the desires of their parents. Indeed, the role of the elders is very important in our tradition;*
- *Being a minority, we are tempted to conform to the world, to make friends that, at times, don't correspond to what the Gospel calls us to.*

*The obstacles:*

*The greatest obstacle to bearing witness to Jesus is the tradition, sometimes living with parents who do not go to church, makes it very difficult. At home a child is not always listened to.*

*With the Covid pandemic it cannot have been easy to stop all activities, but it was a great joy for me to participate in the celebration of the Eucharist, every Sunday, through Radio Sol Mansi, and to be able to participate in making others aware of Covid. Confronting, in this way, fear and shame, was my greatest testimony.*

*Suzana Mané*

# TANZANIA NATIONAL OFFICE



## **HOW DO MISSIONARY CHILDREN AND THEIR ANIMATORS WITNESS CHRIST IN TANZANIA?**

• The children witness their faith through participation in Sunday or Solemnity liturgy, other Christian celebrations, Small Christian Community prayers, participation in praying the holy Rosary during the whole month of October, and especially, participating in the program of “One Million Children Pray the Rosary,” which is run by PMS national office. This year it took place on the 18th of October when the Holy Childhood children in all dioceses of Tanzania, PMS Directors, animators, and some of the faithful gathered in their respective dioceses to pray the holy Rosary, that was also aired through Radio Maria along with other diocesan radios. This year the

number of children and their animators who showed up for the Rosary increased significantly.

- Participation in the religion class at school. This gives witness that all Christian children should receive religious instructions during religion classes, instead of going to play or doing other activities.
- Receiving the sacrament of reconciliation on Saturday or any day arranged by the parish priest.
- Participation in the adoration of the Holy Eucharist at the parish, be it perpetual adoration or during the Corpus Christ Solemnity.
- Devotion to the Saints such as Our Mother





Mary, St. Joseph, St. Peter, St. Paul, etc.

- Respecting and wearing the sacramentals, such as medals, the Holy Rosary, the Holy Cross, etc.
- Praying before the sacred images, such as the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the statue of Mary, St. Joseph, etc.
- Confessing that one is Catholic and expressing to others that he or she is proud to be a Catholic and even making the sign of the cross in public in witnessing his or her faith.
- Reading the Holy Bible and other Church documents to get knowledge of Christ.
- Celebrating the Holy Childhood Day on the 28th December every year and making contributions for the needy children of the world or participating in other Catholic celebrations such as Ordination day, Vows day, First Communion Reception day, Confirmation day, Baptismal day, etc.
- Wearing Holy Childhood Society Uniform and confessing that “I am the member of the Holy Childhood Society” to other Christian children and non-Christian children.
- Children practicing the Christian virtues such as Faith, Hope, Charity and more other virtues like patience, prudence, fortitude, justice, etc.

*Acts of mercy*

- When the children visit different people in needy and donate something for them. These people include the elderly community, (old

people homes), people with disabilities (both children and adults), children in prison, HIV-positive children and orphans

- When travelling in bus, the children offer their seats to the elderly (old people). When walking on the same road and going to the same direction, the children help to carry a luggage for the elderly.

- The children make their Christian faith by helping other poor children in studies, discussing materials with other children which are difficult at school, sharing meals at school or at home with other children, helping children things like pens or pencils when the other have none.

• Participating in the parish, deanery, diocesan, metropolitan and national congresses. The children get an opportunity to witness their faith to other children, parents, other Christians and even non-Christians. Moreover, an active participation in the liturgy, faith strengthening seminars and a social program, they develop an opportunity to experience a personal encounter with God. The long journeys they fearlessly make, helps them to witness their faith to their friends and their families.

• Furthermore, during the congresses they are always fascinated by these profound witnesses shared by fellow children; for instance, during a seminar in Mbeya Archdiocese (December 2020). The following are examples of their sharing:

- One child shared the power of prayer which helped his uncle break his drinking habit. Under the influence of alcohol, his uncle acted ruthlessly towards him and other people. After praying to God for him, his uncle was able to stop drinking and became friendly and took up responsibilities. Therefore, the child recommended to his fellow children everywhere to talk to God through prayer for anything they needed help with.



- Another child shared her witness. She was walking home from school, all alone on a remote, wooded path. She was getting anxious of what might happen to her when she saw a man from nowhere walking right behind her with a machete in hand. She started praying the “Hail Mary” as she walked along, asking Mother Mary to walk with her. Her heart was beating very fast, but sooner than later, her fear ceased as the man walked past her and took a different path. She persuaded other children to pray, especially, during difficult times.

- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, children could no longer gather at Radio Maria studios to air the Children Catechetical program. Instead, a few children together with a catechist or two prepared and aired the program on Saturday mornings while all other children

stayed home and listened to the program. They could ask questions, give compliments or share witnesses from home.

*Presented by the office of the Holy Child Society  
in Tanzania*

*Approved by Fr. Jovitus Mwijage*





## **DIOCESE OF KIGOMA**

*The children were gathered together to answer the questions through discussion. Then, one of them, was nominated to write them down for the rest*

### **THE MEANING OF BEING A WITNESS OF JESUS FOR A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON TODAY**

It means living according to what is expected of a son and daughter of God in the family, in the church, at school and in the society by doing the following:

-To pray in the family, to respect the parents and others, to go to church for instruction and for celebrations; to care for the needy; to attend at school punctually and to follow what is directed by the teachers; to speak the truth always; to pray for other children and families; to respect animators; to love all people without distinction; to be always active in acts of truth and not lazy and to follow bad example of the parents and other children's, like believing in witchcraft and not practicing religion.

### **THE CHALLENGES, THE OBSTACLES, THE JOYS AND SATISFACTIONS OF GIVING WITNESS OF JESUS AMONG FRIENDS, AT SCHOOL AND IN THE FAMILY**

It is always joyful when opportunities allow us to give witness to Jesus among friends at school and in the family. But sometimes there are challenges and obstacles that restrict the possibilities to give witness, like:

- Temptation from bad friends, parents who do not care about the church and force us not to go to church, and others who prevent us from going to church. Limited economic position in our families; influence of false beliefs; negative side of globalization; parents and animators who teach us bad language. During the pandemic, we could not go for instruction at school and to the church. We missed moment to visit the sick; we could not visit each other and lacked peace. We had to cancel the congresses including the Eucharistic congress at the national level, to mention but a few.

*Fr. Christopher Ndireye*

# UGANDA

## NATIONAL OFFICE



My name is NANVUMA LAURINDA. Am a member of Missionary Childhood in Uganda. I am eight years old.

I witness Jesus by participating Sunday children's Liturgy praying, sharing the word of God with fellow children at school and at church.

I give testimony to Jesus by sharing with the needy my clothes and being thankful to my parents.

Before lockdown, I was very active and able to participate in all church activities but now in lockdown it's not possible. I try to pray the rosary every Saturday via Zoom and Tr. Dorothy hosts us. I also participate in other online child liturgy activities, like on Mission Sunday. I shared a poem with other children which was broadcast on TV.

I pray we get better church programs so we keep learning about God.

My name is SSEKAGYA JOHN MARY, I am a member of Missionary Childhood in Uganda. I am 9 years old.

I witness to Jesus by being God fearing and kind to others.

During the children's Sunday Liturgy our teachers tell us to be generous and listen to them.

I give testimony to Jesus by sharing food and clothes with the needy, during Lent and Christmas. I also support my parents with house work and don't fight with my sister.

When there was no lockdown, I used to go to church with my family, but now in the lockdown only my parents attend but for me and my siblings. We pray at home and follow online mass on children's liturgy program on Uganda Catholic TV. Tr. Dorothy hosts on Zoom to pray the rosary every Saturday.

I pray we have more activities to empower children in the Church.



*Missionary children from the Moroto Diocese*



My name is MARIA, am 10 years old. I belong to Missionary Childhood in Uganda. I witness to Jesus by praying with my family and going to church to pray with other children.

I give testimony to Jesus when I respect my parents. I try to follow the global call for all catholic children to loving, sharing and caring (children helping children). I share with others and I pray for the needy. Before lockdown, I enjoyed Sunday school at church, In the lockdown I participate in Mass on TV. I miss the other children to sing together Christmas carols and play. I wish God gives all of us children around the world televisions so that we may pray together mostly during this lockdown.

My name is JOHN NICHOLAS, I am 15 years old and am a member of Pontifical Mission Societies in Uganda.

I have witnessed to Jesus by attending Children Liturgy classes in my parish where I have learnt to pray, love and care for my family members and schoolmates.

I try through my actions to give testimony to Jesus for example I was inspired to plant a vegetal garden to reduce on food costs my parents meet. And my family is happy with my contribution.

At school, I try to treat others as my brothers and I avoid fights because I see Jesus in everyone.

Before lockdown, I was able to participate in parish activities with other children and follow seminarians where I serve at mass or play drums during mass. But now it's not possible. However with my family, we pray together and try to follow prayers online mostly the children's liturgy programs on Uganda Catholic Television where I sometimes participate.

As a teenager, I wish our church can design more programs that favour us.

Am glad that my family and parish has given me an opportunity to grow and participate in witnessing to Christ as my friend and brother and whom I am able to share with those around me.



# BURUNDI NATIONAL OFFICE TO WITNESS JESUS



## *Being a witness to Jesus for a child today*

Jesus' call is addressed to every baptized child, sent out to become His witness today.

Through baptism, a child receives priceless grace and the privilege of being a child of God, a brother of Jesus, a temple of the Holy Spirit and a member of the Church. The child becomes light of the world and salt of the earth (Matthew 5,13.14).

From early childhood the baptized is raised up to his potential by participating in the three-fold mission of Jesus. The baptized is invited to be a:

a) Prophet: to announce the Good News of Jesus to other children, at home, at school and in his circle. For example: the apostolate of the Singers of the Star group organized by the Missionary Childhood, who bring to families the Good News of the birth of Jesus like the shepherds and the Magi. Children who preach by

testifying through their good deeds, their good conduct and the advice they give to other children.

b) Priest: a child member of the Missionary Childhood regularly participates in the weekly Sunday mass and, above all, in their monthly mass. In the celebration, he or she participates in the offering of Jesus by offering himself or herself along with each one's small sacrifices and offerings, above all for the benefit of poor children, and in prayer for the promotion of the mission throughout the world and for the children of the world who are found in need.

c) King: the baptized child brings Jesus, Savior and King, to the other children, helping them to engage in the Missionary Childhood. Through his or her merciful and charitable actions towards other poor children, so that they can regain joy and peace.



*The joy of bearing witness to Jesus*

I regularly observe a baptized child from the age of 14:

- The joy of participating with others in the Missionary Childhood group in prayer, sacrifice and collections in money and in kind for poor children and other acts of charity.
- There is the joy of participating in apostolic parish groups: altar boys, dancers of liturgical songs, readers.
- The joy of participating in the Feast of the Epiphany, the World Day of Missionary Childhood.
- The joy of participating in the apostolate of the Star Singers to bring to families the Good News of the birth of Jesus.
- The joy of being baptized and being a witness of Jesus.

*The challenges and obstacles that one must confront as a witness to Jesus*

a) In the family and at home:

- The pain of seeing that there are children who do not obey their parents, who do not listen and do not follow good examples and good advice; children who do not want to participate in Missionary Childhood; poor

children who have no sustenance and whom he cannot help everyone.

b) At school:

- The child is not happy to see that there are poor children who drop out of school for lack of money to pay school fees; and children who neither obey nor respect their teachers, nor their animators.

*The child living this witness from the point of view of a missionary*

- Through prayer for the missions: the child contributes to the propagation of the faith and missionary action, as well as to prayer for unity and peace in the world.
- Through daily sacrifice, he or she associates himself with Jesus for the salvation of the world.
- Through collections in money and in kind in which he or she often participates and, above all, on the day of the Epiphany and during World Mission Day in favor of the mission.
- The child member of the Missionary Childhood is baptized and sent to be a witness of Jesus today in word, action and behavior.

*Salvator Rurimwikoma  
Animator of the Holy Missionary Childhood*



### *Being a witness to Jesus for a child today means:*

Love to pray, behave well. That is, being obedient, kind, performing acts of love and mercy, helping vulnerable or sick children, elderly people by bringing them, for example, water or firewood, and being a member of apostolic groups.

Being a witness of Jesus for a child today means belonging to a group of altar boys, to movements of Catholic action or to the choir.

### *The joy experienced bearing witness to Jesus*

As an animator of the Holy Missionary Childhood, I am very happy when the children, members of the group, say that their parents let them freely participate in the meetings and activities provided for by Missionary Childhood. I am pleased to see that children are responsible, that they are a good example to others, both at school and in the family. Among them are some who are members of the apostolic group. There are also children of other religions who like to participate in some meetings and some activities of Missionary Childhood.

### *The challenges and obstacle facing those who bear witness to Jesus:*

A big obstacle is the low number of Catholic children in our schools, where most are Muslims and Protestants and, therefore, some are influenced by the majority and do not participate in the meetings organized for them.

From a missionary point of view, these children pray both at home and at school. At school they meet once a year to pray the Missionary Rosary together (October 18) and help the defenseless and sick children of the world.

In addition, once a month, they attend a mass organized for them to pray for the mission.

**Sr. Béatrice MIRYOZI**  
*Holy Childhood Animator*

### *Bearing witness to Christ as a child today means:*

As a baptized child, for me to be a witness of Jesus means to speak of Him and the Good News to other children. It means behaving like Jesus in actions, in words, at home and at school.

### *The joy I experience in bearing witness to Jesus*

I am happy to obey my parents and zealously complete my homework and schoolwork. I am happy when I teach, as I often do, small children to pray. An elderly person lives next to me and I am happy when, with other children of Missionary Childhood, we get together and, on some occasions, bring them water and firewood.

### *Challenges and problems that I have to confront*

I am not at all happy with the children of my neighborhood, who do not obey their parents or their educators, despite the good example we give them. I am sorry to note that there are poor children who have to drop out of school, and that we cannot help all of them because our collections are insufficient.

I pray from the perspective of a missionary!

**Darlène CIZERO**  
*9 years old - Grade 4 elementary - Member of the Holy Childhood*





*Bearing witness to Christ as a child today means:*

Announce the Good News of Jesus to other children.

Behave like a baptized Christian in my behavior, language, attitudes and daily prayers.

*The joy I experience in bearing witness to Jesus:*

- I rejoice because, as a baptized person, I feel I am a brother of Jesus, a son of God and a member of the Church.
- I rejoice when I set a good example for other children at home, in my family, and at school.
- I am happy when I help other children to love and be part of the Holy Missionary Childhood group.
- I am happy to behave well and not be distracted at school, to obey my educators, to pray the Missionary Rosary and to collect collections for poor children.
- I rejoice in participating in the apostolate of the Star Singers.

*The challenges and obstacles that I have to confront as a witness to Jesus:*

In witnessing to Jesus, I sometimes have to face challenges. For example, when I invite a child to join the Missionary Childhood group, some children cause problems and refuse to come. However, I invite them to join us in praying the Missionary Rosary. But some children categorically refuse. It is terrible that some children do not obey their parents or their educators. I often remember them in my prayers for them to be converted.

From the missionary point of view, I pray for all the children of the world and, above all, for poor children.

**Ange Theddy GATOTO**

*11 years old - Grade 6 elementary - Member of the Holy Childhood*

*What being a witness of Jesus today means to me*

It means living a Christian life of prayer, charity and good works; behaving in a Christian way.

*The joy I feel in witnessing to Jesus*

As a baptized, son of God and brother of Jesus, I am happy every time we meet to pray the rosary for the unity and peace of the whole world, in particular together with the children of the world on October 18 at 9 am. This year it was a Sunday and we gathered in Euyigi Cathedral. I was in seventh heaven.

- I am happy when we visit the children in the hospital, bringing them things we have collected. This year 2020 we brought them 15 bars of soap, 15 kilos of flour, 19 kilos of beans and 6 kilos of rice.
- We also visited children abandoned by their parents, and brought them 6 kilos of beans, 5 kilos of rice and 10 kilos of flour.
- Carrying out this apostolate in the spirit of love and mercy I felt so much joy.
- I am also happy because, as a member of a Missionary Childhood group, I am involved in the parish apostolate as an altar boy.

*The challenges and problems I face*

I am sorry to see that some children do not participate in our Missionary Childhood group. I join all the children of the world in prayer, sacrifice and through the collection to promote the mission.

**Stève NDAYIKEZA**

*10 years old - Grade 5 elementary - Member of the Holy Childhood*

# IRELAND NATIONAL OFFICE

## BEING A WITNESS OF JESUS IN IRELAND DURING ORDINARY AND CHALLENGING TIMES

**S**ome of the children from St Ronan's Primary School, Newry, Co. Down helped the Society of Missionary Children to answer some questions about being a witness of Jesus during ordinary times as a young person in Ireland but also how more difficult (or not) the pandemic made their lives in 2020. All aged between 10 and 11, Emily, Eva, Beth, Lucy, Conlan, Aoife, Kaitlin, Lily and Grace spoke with Julieann Moran (National Secretary of Missionary Children). Julieann shared with the children that Jesus showed his love for God the Father by praying to God, by his actions (his good works), and by telling people the Good News of God's love for them. Before he returned to God the Father, Jesus asked us to do the same thing – pray, do good works, and share the Good News. This is mission! She asked the girls and boys of St Ronan's Primary 7 class:

- *How can we share the Good News that God loves us within our families, with our friends, and in our communities?*
- *What are some of the ways you can do God's work in Ireland today (following the example that Jesus gives)?*
- *Where can you do God's work?*

- *Where and how can you pray to God at home, in school, in the community?*
- *What does it feel like when you have done something good for someone else in need?*
- *What does it feel like when you have spent time in prayer with God?*
- *What do you find difficult about doing God's work?*
- *Where do you find it difficult to do God's work?*
- *Do you have any difficulties with friends etc because you pray/go to Mass/believe in God?*
- *Has the pandemic made it easy or more difficult for you to follow the example of Jesus at home, in school, or with friends?*
- *What do you like about Society of Missionary Children (children helping children)?*

This is what they had to say...



*I share the Good News that God loves me by going to church and telling people about the wonderful things God and Jesus have done for us. I can do God's work at church, at home, in school, and in places of charity.*

*I pray at home before and after I go to sleep. I also pray in school. It's easier for me to speak to God in serene places and hushed environments.*

*When I have done something good and helpful for my community, I feel appreciated and very proud of myself. After I have spent time with God, and shared my worries with him, I feel as if a large weight had been lifted off my shoulders. I find it difficult to do God's work in a loud and highly populated public places. I sometimes find it hard to express God's work because I do not like the focus to be on me. I have never experienced any difficulties with my friends because of my beliefs, which is good.*

*The pandemic has made it harder to follow the example of Jesus because I have haven't been able to go to Mass and pray.*

*I believe that Children Helping Children (the motto of the Society of Missionary Children) is a brilliant organisation because it encourages children to have an awareness that some children don't have as many privileges as others.*

*Today I can do God's work by helping children in need and supporting charities.*



*Eva Watras*



BETH



EMILY

*We share the Good News that God loves us by teaching younger children how to pray, talk to them about God and try to pray at least once every day. We are able to do God's work at home, in school, in church, and by donating to charities like Children Helping Children. Here in Ireland, we do God's work by praying, going to Mass, helping people in need and giving to others through charity.*

*We can pray to God by joining our hands, blessing ourselves, having a deep thought and praying somewhere quiet. We can feel happy, blessed, peaceful, and calm when we have had prayer with God because a huge weight can be lifted from our shoulders sharing our worries with God.*

*It feels amazing to do something good for someone else in need because we can have "made someone's day" that really needed it. It is good to do something good because some people are not as privileged as us.*

*Sometimes it is hard to remember to spend time in prayer with God because we can be really busy and feel we don't have the time. We can also find it difficult to pray to God in a place where it is loud and we cannot concentrate.*

*We don't have any difficulties with our friends because most of them believe in God too and we can pray together.*

*The pandemic has changed how we follow God because we can't go to church and can't be with and talk with other people.*

*The Society of Missionary Children is actually the school's chosen charity and we all donate at least once a year to the charity. We like it because it helps people who don't have as much as do.*

*Beth Lindsay and Emily Jorgensen*



CONLAN

LUCY

*We can share the Good news that God loves us by going to Mass with people and sharing the Word of God with people, and praying with friends and family. We can do God's work anywhere, as long as we are being holy, kind, and caring about other people's space. Some of the best places to pray are at home, at church, and in school. We can pray to God about our problems or if we want to pray for someone else at home, in school or at church.*

*When we do something good for someone else we feel very good about ourselves and think about more things that we can do to help others. This is a way of making us better people. When we spend time with God, we feel very loved; that there's someone watching over us and looking after us just in case I feel sad or get hurt in any way.*

*What we find difficult about doing God's work is being patient and calm and getting the time to pray. We find it difficult to pray in large crowds or public spaces, or sometimes in school, when we are doing work and other*

*people are talking.*

*We don't have any difficulties about our faith with friends because our friends all have the same belief as us.*

*The pandemic has made it a bit easier to take part in church because we don't have to drive to the Mass but can participate through Zoom and other social media, but it is more difficult when someone dies, and people are not allowed to attend the funeral in the church.*

*We take part in the Society of Missionary Children and love that everyone puts thought and care into it by giving some of their money to help other children.*

*We can promote God's work and be his witness by going to Mass, praying every day and doing charity work.*

*Lucy O'Hagan and Conlan McNeaney*

*I share the Good News by informing people and telling them about the sacrifices God made for us. You can also pray with family and friends. You can do God's work anywhere including at Mass, reading the Bible to others, and sharing about the miracles he did. You can pray to God at school and at home before meals and before going to bed. When you have done something good for someone else in need you feel like you've accomplished something powerful and you feel like they will follow in your footsteps of good deeds.*

*It feels good when you pray to God because you can get things off your mind which feels like a weight being lifted off your shoulders, which makes you feel more protected. It is sometimes difficult to be a witness. You can sometimes find it hard to apologise to someone you have had a fight with, especially when you know you did not start the fight. It is also difficult sometimes to be kind at home or in school.*

*I don't find it difficult to believe. All my friends have their own opinions on what people do and think and respect mine. The pandemic has made it easier to follow the example of Jesus by doing good things for others, but it has made it harder to spread the Word as we cannot go to Mass.*

*I like that the Society of Missionary Children are doing something good for children that do not have a lot of money or other things and how we as children can help others this way. Giving a gift to others, can make them happy but it is also doing God's work, as well as praying and donating to charities.*

*Lily McAreavey and Grace McEllerron*



# TESTIMONIES



AOIFE



KAITLIN

*We share the Good News by going to church and telling all our friends and family about all the things God has done for us and how God loves us. We can do God's work by helping others everywhere and being kind; by giving money to charities and to people who don't have the money for things like rent.*

*Whenever we do good for someone else we feel really great about ourselves for helping others and making someone happy and seeing a big smile on their face.*

*We find it difficult to always do God's work, to always be kind to others and not being selfish with our friends, family and everyone else, but we always try to be kind.*

*We don't have any difficulties with our friends about our faith in God and being a witness of Jesus because most of us pray together and all of our friends respect our opinions and what we do.*

*What we love about the Society of Missionary Children is the fact that it helps children to live better and happier lives.*

*We pray to God at home, in school, in our classroom, and in the community with all our friends. We also pray before going to bed and when we get up in the morning. Sometimes, we pray with our friends but sometimes we pray when we are alone. We feel very good after we have prayed to God and we can let go of our worries.*

*The most difficult time to do God's work is at home with our siblings because we are not always the nicest to them. We need to start treating them better.*

*The pandemic has not made it easy because we cannot go to Mass and all the other gatherings in the parish that we use to go to, so this has been very hard.*

*Here in Ireland, some of the ways we give witness and do God's work is by raising money for charities like Children Helping Children, praying and being kind.*

*Aoife Lindsay and Kaitlin Pentony*



# MYANMAR

## DIOCESE OF LOIKAW

### *BEING A WITNESS OF JESUS*



“A missionary is someone who loves and follows Jesus wherever he/she is while showing His love to others in the way he/she lives.” (Jasmine Senior).

I am Mrs. Mandalena, an animator for members of Missionary Childhood association (MCA) in the diocese of Loikaw. In line with the motto of our respective diocese which envisages “A proclaiming, worshiping and witnessing community,” it is a joy and a privilege for me as lay person to be part of the local mission, especially in the formation of faith and morale of the children who are future leaders of the Church and the Societies. I have been involved in teaching catechism to the first communicant children in the parish, and helping the children to recognize and develop their unique talents.

In “ordinary time,” every first Thursday of the month dedicated to pray for ‘More Vocation,’ my colleagues and I try and persuade the MCA children to participate in the Eucharistic celebration. As animators, we guide the children to visit houses of the sick to offer words of encouragement and pray for their quick recovery and healing. We also lead them to go family to family to pray the holy rosary during the months of May and October. The children are encouraged to learn to lead in prayer services and liturgical celebrations in the parish.

While dedicating as animators for MCA children, there are moments of joy and satisfaction, obstacles and challenges for us. It is truly a joy for me to see the children learning to make new friends, collaborating with each other and exchanging their experiences during animation courses. I am very pleased to witness to their openness to others

and their hospitality to guests, and their sacrifice and enthusiasm for the missionary activities. However, I feel unhappy when some parents do not support their children to join other children do missions. Besides, some of the children are not interested and do not get engaged in group works. Sometimes, partisan feelings and individualism are seen in some young persons. Still, it is my pleasure to be a missionary to the children and young persons helping them to discover their missionary identity.

As animators, we also have the chance to be informed and formed by attending annual missionary awareness courses organized by the PMS diocesan director and his colleagues. We are once again enlightened with new ideas and strategy, and strengthened to engage ourselves more with greater zeal. This missionary awareness courses truly become for us the occasions to explore, learn and exchange our personal experiences, our joy, obstacles and challenges in doing missions. We look forward to having it every year and yet due to the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic this year,





large gatherings of people are strictly forbidden. Since last April, all scheduled formation programs for both the children and MCA animators have to be cancelled. It is frustrating to see many children going astray. It is very sad for me and other Catholics as well not to be able to attend Masses and meet the children physically. This unfamiliar and unpredicted situation, however, has something to teach us. It makes us to realize that God is all-powerful whom we could rely on for our safety and our life. He is all-wise and inspires us to see the possible ways to reach out to the children despite the barriers of the deadly virus. We evaluate our plans on how to reach out to the children. As results, we prepare some modules on morale and give some exercise to the children and also hold the competitions in writing short stories, poems, cartoon in honor of World Mission Sunday and have On-line praying the Rosary. Through these activities, I try my best to bring love of Jesus to the children and young persons, thereby, helping them to become missionaries to their peers.

*Mrs. Mandalena  
MCA animator*



My name is Maxi. I am 12 years old and in 5th grade. Our parish is called “St. Lazarus” and I have been a member of Missionary Childhood association since 2016. In time of the global pandemic, I join my family participate in On-line Masses, Adoration, and daily rosary. Our principle intentions are for the quick recovery and perfect healing of all the victims of COVID-19 and for a complete end of this global pandemic. I wish I could help those vulnerable and sick people. I eagerly pray for a termination of this deadly virus for I want very much to go back to regular classes and assist at Masses.

I am Cecilia Snow-white. I am 8th years old. I am in 3rd grade. In ordinary time, I used to frequent to our parish Church and Catechism class. In time of the current crisis, my family is also faced with difficulties and challenges and yet we become more committed to one another. My parents earn their living by selling groceries. This unfamiliar time has inspired us to witness a great outpouring of compassion and solidarity among our family’s members as we all rise to meet the challenges together. I, together with my entire family, pray for all the vulnerable people all over the world. I faithfully offer one “Hail Mary” for all MCA children that God protect them from every evil, especially from this global pandemic.



# THAILAND WAT SONGKHON A TRANSFORMATIVE PILGRIMAGE EXPERIENCE



I am a full-time catechist working in the Catechetical Center of Chanthaburi diocese, Siracha in Thailand. My long intrepid pilgrimage journey begins from the eastern region of the coastal town of Siracha passing through Bangkok to Songkhon in Mukhdahan province located in the upper Northeastern region (known as Isaan region).

The two days (Nov 20- 21, 2020) pilgrimage itinerary is destined in the footsteps of the Seven Blessed Martyrs of Songkhon. A travel journey by car, around 775 km from the Chanthaburi diocesan Pastoral Center and takes about 12 hours journey (including rest stops) to arrive at “Our Lady of the Martyrs of Thailand Shrine (Thai= Wat Songkhon),” Songkhon in Mukhdahan district. It is one of the popular religious tour sites and treasured sacred for Thai Catholics in the Archdiocese of Thare-Nongseng.

## THE ARRIVAL TO THE SHRINE

The pleasant gleaming colors of yellow rice fields ready for harvesting are a welcoming sight on the way passing through the thick forest vegetation and the calm flowing Mekong River being the important source and lifeline of the people living in the area. As we approach







the Church, from a distance the sight of a tall towering metal crucifix captures the attention, which highlights the epitome symbol of the Christian faith. Passing through the main entrance gate of the dark brown stonewall induces an overwhelming inspiring feeling of authentic evangelization. It shares us a glimpse of the simplicity of rural life in the area, and the testimony of profound faith in Christ to sacrifice one's life.

As we proceed to enter inside the Church, a simple modern structural design. To the left behind the lectern stands a huge crucifix while centrally located in the sanctuary's sacred altar table and to the right, the holy tabernacle

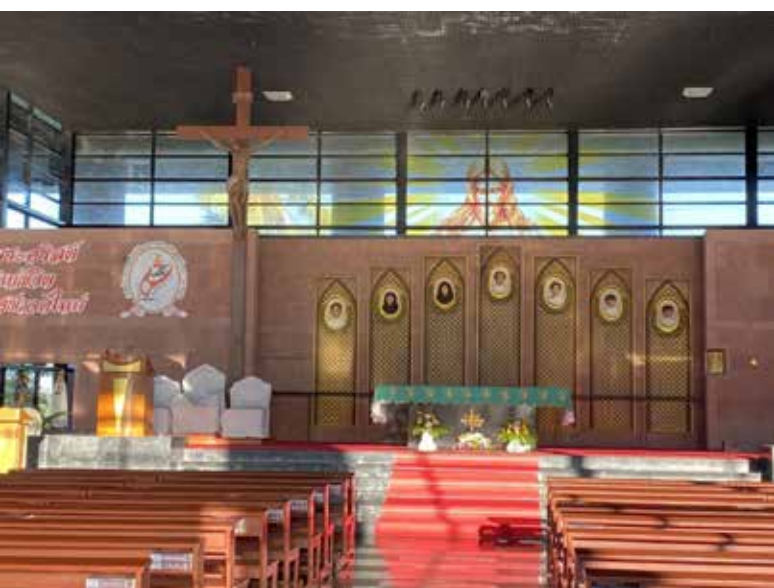
welcomes the attention of the congregation to pray in communion and to celebrate the Paschal mystery. The sacred relic of the Blessed Seven Martyrs of Songkhon below the altar, allows the congregation to touch, feel, and pray for their intentions. Behind the main altar



is the crypt containing the tombs of the seven martyrs of Songkhon. Through the intercession of the Blessed Seven Martyrs of Songkhon, many people receive the grace and answers to the prayers and devotees revisit to render their gratitude. A visitor's center next to the main building also features a dedicated museum featuring the replica of the house of the martyred nuns, collections, and historical information on the life of Seven Martyrs of Songkhon. Not far from the Church is a memorial garden where the martyrs were shot dead by the local police (today it a local cemetery).

### THE STORY OF THE MARTYRS

During the escalating Second World War era in the mid-1930s, the country was facing mounting tensions and threats of foreign invasion and within the country's internal domestic political approach intensified the nationalistic sentiments and anti-western stance. Added with other imperative political situations of the period, Christianity then perceived as an imminent threat and considered a foreign religion. Churches, schools, and Christian families were intimidated to renounce the Christian faith in the local parish. The parish priest at Songkhon



was exiled and local indigenous religious nuns and catechists stood up bravely in their apostolate mission responsibility of assisting in the pastoral care, of visiting the families and sharing the word of God. The first martyr was Philp Siphong aged 33, a catechist who was tortured and killed on December 16, 1940. Following his murder, the next group execution took place after a Christmas confrontation on December 26 1940 commemorating St. Stephen, the first martyr. The Sr. Agnes Phila aged 31 and Sr. Lucia Khambang aged 23 (both from the congregation Lovers of the Holy Cross) along with Agatha Phutta 59, Cecelia Butsi 16, and Bibiana Khamphai 15, went heroically singing in procession not far from the Church (today a cemetery) where they were shot dead by the persecutors and suffer martyrdom for Christ. The powerful letter by Sr. Agnes Phila to the local police chief before her execution is a testimony of her courage and love for Christ. Pope St. John Paul II beatified the Seven Martyrs of Songkhon on October 22, 1989. loc



## THE DEVOTION

Today, it is astounding to witness over 100 children and youth from kindergarten to senior high school walking daily to the Martyr's Shrine and participating in the early morning in the Holy mass at 06:30 A.M. The children pro-actively engage in leading the liturgy (altar service, catechism, choir, readings, prayers of the faithful, praying the rosary, parish volunteering and so on). Through the active apostolate of the Holy Childhood, is today fruitfully empowering the pastoral care of local catechists and especially the young children. Together with the parish community, the Sisters of the Saint Paul de Chartres lead in these commendable untiring efforts in the parish, through their pastoral ministry to instill the value of sound doctrinal formation in empowering the personality development through sound mentoring of maturing in Christian discipleship through dialogue with faith and culture. The synergetic effort is strengthened by the collaboration of the local catechists at the parish of Our Lady of the Martyrs of Thailand Shrine at Songkhon.

These efforts are also stimulating an oasis of vocation for priesthood and consecrated religious



life. This simple rural village of Songkhon alone has gifted the local Church six priests and six religious nuns who are currently serving in the pastoral mission in the diocese. Many youths are studying in the seminary and convents and we pray that God strengthens their discernment of vocation. A few are serving as lay active catechists in the parish and some serving as religion teachers in Catholic schools to build strong Christian communities.

The Church has a greater role and mission on these peripheries.

*Aroonprapha Sukkasee, Office of Catechesis,  
Chanthaburi Diocese, Thailand*

# PAPUA NEW GUINEA DIOCESE OF VANIMO



The Catholic Diocese of Vanimo, northwestern Papua New Guinea, was erected Apostolic Vicariate in 1963 and promoted Diocese in 1966. It covers 26.000 km<sup>2</sup>. The area has a tropical forest climate and the economy is mainly based around the timber industry.

## THE DIOCESES' PASTORAL CARE

The Catholic missionaries of the Diocese have given their lives to assist the people scattered in tiny semi-nomadic groups in extremely difficult terrain. The Diocese helps the government in providing health and education services especially in remote areas. There has been considerable development in the areas of education and health care. However, improvement in these areas is necessary. Education-wise, girls or younger children are pulled out of school as preference is given to the eldest boy especially in rural areas. Although people are growing in their faith, traditional customs, practices and beliefs in spirits, witchcraft, etc. play an important part in the lives of the people. In fact, a substantial scope for development programs and catechesis is aimed at inviting thousands of children in many places of the diocese to embrace the holy childhood values and the missionary spirit.

**M**y name is Sr. Adelaida de Lumen, MCST and I belong to the Missionary Catechists of St. Therese of the Infant Jesus. Our main apostolate is catechism in the public schools. Before volunteering as missionary in PNG, I have been catechizing some of the scholars of Caritas of the Diocese of Pasig, in the Philippines. Afterwards, the Bishop of the Diocese requested me to prepare the children and the adults approaching him for confirmation.

## A PROGRAM TO TEACH CATECHISM TO THE POOR CHILDREN

Once arrived in Papua New Guinea, Vanimo Diocese, I proposed a program for the Catechetical instruction of poor children in resettlements areas, in line with the charisma of our Institute. The aim of the project is to train children in developing their missionary spirit in mind and in their hearts to become committed catechists or prayer leaders in the future. As part of the catechesis, the children





will also be taught about the importance of caring the environment based on the missionary spirit, to become good stewards of God's creation and pass on this awareness to their families and peers in the local community.



*Kappiak community*



*catechesis on creation*



*review of the sign of the cross*

# BANANA CAMP



TESTIMONIES

# INDIA

## DIOCESE OF PALGHAT



The Eparchy of Palghat was erected in 1974 and it is now a suffragan of the Archdiocese of Trichur. It covers an area of 4.480 sq. km. At the time of the inauguration of the Eparchy, it had a total of 16 parishes and 8 stations, while the number of Diocesan priests was of 14 for 20.810 faithful. Today, these numbers have increased to 59.560 faithful, 155 priests, 89 parishes and 28 stations.

The Eparchy is flourishing, however, when compared to other Dioceses in Kerala, the Diocese of Palghat is a “Mission Diocese”. The people are mainly settlers from other parts of the state, the district is economically backward and the majority of the population is made of agricultural workers and small-scale farmers.

The Holy Childhood Association has 2.669 members and a central office in the Diocesan Pastoral Centre, with qualified staff. The Diocese is divided into 11 foranes and they organize a forane council for conducting training programmes in forane centres, sending later information to each unit of Holy Childhood. A calendar for Holy Childhood activities is planned, along with an inaugural day with the Bishop. Each child member of Holy Childhood is given prayer books and badges. On Sundays, there are catechism classes and once a month literary activities in the parishes and there will be training for Bible making, writing, storytelling, music, drawing etc. that will enable children to develop their talent to use it to proclaim Jesus.

The Diocese organizes every year retreats for the spiritual formation of children.

For 2021 the Diocese has developed a program for the spiritual uplift of the children and to remind them of their missionary vocation.

### SING WITH JESUS

One of the first means to proclaim the joy of the Gospel is through music. Thus, the Holy Childhood members are taught two Bible-based songs per month, while best songs will be recorded and sent to the Diocesan Office to be uploaded on the YouTube channel of the Diocese. Talented children will be promoted to the Diocesan Music Academy.

### GOOD SAMARITANS

A further objective is to develop in the children a charity attitude. The Diocese gathers the Holy Childhood members every third Sunday of the month in all units of the Diocese. This day is meant for study, prayer, preparation and activity. On such occasions, the unit members may collect their contribution of the month to help the



### A STORY A DAY

The children learn about the life of different saints, in order to motivate them, with the help of parents and animators. Saints' storybooks will be distributed to parishes and made available on the internet. Children should study them and record a presentation to be sent to the Diocesan Office. Excellently presented stories will be edited and uploaded every day, on a common platform, the Catechism You Tube channel of the Diocese.



### PARENTING WORKSHOPS

The Diocese plans to conduct a workshop for parents twice a year in each forane to enable the parents of the children members of Holy Childhood. This workshop is an invitation to the parents to renew their personal encounter with Jesus. With the skills and strategies learned during the workshop, parents can help their children grow in confidence and resilience. They learn how to get children cooperate more, communicate more, try new things and persevere.

needful children irrespective of the caste and creed, in orphanages, hospitals, villages, etc. The program includes visits to orphanages, contribution to help them, distribution of cloths, books, edibles etc. collected by the members and the performance of cultural programs to share the love of Jesus.

# SOUTH AFRICA

## DIOCESE OF UMZIMKULU



The Diocese of Umzimkulu, South Africa, was established in 1954 and it comprises of 15 parishes that each have from 5 to 14 outstations - chapels to serve by the missionary. It covers an area of 15 275 sq. km and has got a total population of 509 830 people, 82 761 of whom Catholics.

The Diocese is located in a rural, poor area of western KwaZulu Natal, and the local income is limited. Funding for the pastoral formation of lay leaders, especially young people and children to become missionary disciples of Jesus in their communities, is a great challenge.

Missionary Children Association is thriving in the Diocese, guided by the motto “*children helping children*”. The children in the parishes are learning how to become little missionaries in their local communities.

To involve more children in the Church life and formation, the diocese also has another Association called “The Soldiers of Christ the King”, that works together with the Missionary Children Association in the children’s mission in the communities. They all meet at their Annual Rally on the first Saturday of October, to celebrate the Feast of St. Theresa of Child Jesus and launch

the Mission Month. The children are encouraged to celebrate Mission Sunday in their parishes and make a collection for the PMS, to fulfil their motto “Children Helping Children”. Since they are missionaries, as they pray for others, they should provide for them materially offering according to what they can afford. They are fostered in their lessons to sacrifice to give up sweets and/or any other thing that is not of need so that they can offer for those who are in need. Those parishes whose children have collected the largest amount receive certificates to stimulate the better involvement in the mission of the Church.





### PANDEMIC AND ANIMATION

The coronavirus pandemic disrupted regular Church's life and pastoral care in general of the children, as they were not allowed to attend Holy Mass and any other activities for long months. This affected the commitment and activities of the animators taking care of the children. As now with the virus present in the communities for coming years, new animators shall be recruited and re-trained to know how to deal in the present situation as well as in the Child Protection Policy of the Diocese. This training should happen in Zulu language, which is used by the children, especially in rural areas.

### GIVE VOICE TO THE CHILDREN

The Diocese encourages parishes to give the children opportunities in the liturgy celebrations so that they may have chance to put into practice their logo and mission. The children receive material in Zulu language for different liturgical

activities, especially related to Child Jesus and Mary. Thus, for each Sunday, from Palm Sunday during the pandemic lockdown, the parishes and families received the prayer Services in Zulu and English to use them in the Family prayers, involving especially children in the liturgy of the Domestic Church.



# KENYA

## DIOCESE OF NAKURU



The Catholic Diocese of Nakuru is one of the 26 Catholic Dioceses in Kenya, and covers Nakuru and Baringo Counties in the Rift Valley Province, with an estimated area of 18.203 km<sup>2</sup>. There are 56 parishes clustered in 11 deaneries, with over 120 local and Missionary Priests as well as Sisters and Brothers Congregations working in different sectors.

The main activity in the Diocese is agriculture, with the situation varying from one area to another according to climatic conditions and with some arable areas and other arid or semi-arid. The landscape profoundly influences economic activities and opportunities of earning income through cash crop production, subsistence farming and or livestock keeping.

In human development, the Diocese has pioneered in establishing healthcare, education and other institutions geared towards promoting the evangelization mission of Christ through human, social and economic development.

The spiritual wellbeing of the children of the Diocese of Nakuru is entrusted to the Bishop, the Diocesan PMS Directors and coordinators, priests, religious men and women working in parishes and institutions and a team of lay animators.

### PANDEMIC TIMES

In this time of covid-19, there has been a tremendous growth of faith, due to the pastoral care organized by the diocese. Since the children have been out of school for a long time and the Churches were closed by the Government in March, the care givers made home visits. In this difficult period a pastoral support was especially needed, since many families lost their livelihood and

have disintegrated due to the effect of the virus.

Yet, despite this, the general situation of childhood is vibrant and new every day. Each year more children participate in the celebration of the Eucharist (Mass) and in meetings and sharing forums meant to allow them to witness and evangelize other children.

### SPIRITUAL AND MORAL FORMATION OF THE CHILDREN

A part from solidarity with the universal Church, the aim of Pontifical Missionary Childhood (PMC) is the faith, spiritual and moral formation of children in order to make them Christ's witnesses and His little missionaries in their socio-cultural milieu. This involves a deepening of catechetical formation, prayers and pilgrimages, games, picnics and other interesting activities that make learning enjoyable to the young growing minds. They also get an opportunity



to exercise charity by visiting the sick in their homes and hospitals, visiting the old in shelters of the aged, exchange visits to parishes and most importantly, contributing to local and universal church needs.

**THE PROTECTION OF THE MINORS**

The Diocese has a special care concerning the child protection policy. The Coordinator, on several occasions, takes lead in creating awareness to PMC animators and leaders (in case of new leadership) on the existence of the policy document highlighting what is required of them in regard of its implementation.

**HOLY CHILDHOOD’S ANIMATORS**

At the beginning of the year, the general meeting of Holy Childhood animators from all parishes in the diocese had as aim, among other things, to find ways of nurturing the fruits of last year’s theme “Baptized and Sent”. The Holy Childhood animators are adult male and female Christian leaders who have formerly read and been instructed on Child Protection. Formation and training of animators were conducted before the spreading of the pandemic, followed by the rite of commissioning and enrolment of more than 100 Holy Childhood animators.

**A YEAR OF DOMESTIC APOSTOLATE**

In order to reach children, prayers were led and lessons delivered on the Diocesan radio (Radio Amani) by Holy Childhood coordinators and the PMS Director with the assistance of the animators. Due to the precautions taken to reduce the spread of Covid-19, this was done without the direct involvement of the children. For the same reason, meetings took place on the online platform. Some of the main challenges that has to be faced were the lack of proper internet connectivity, limited radio coverage,

the little knowledge of computers of the adult animators.

Unlike other years in the past, when children freely interact and evangelize, this year was marked by a kind of domestic or home apostolate. Children were encouraged to live their Holy Childhood spirituality at home. They were urged to offer prayers and sacrifices to God to obtain the end of the pandemic and the lessening of the sufferings of others worldwide. They reported doing the same while making phone calls during Children’s radio program. The lockdown brought with it some forms of hard, cold and harmful economic, social and moral effects experienced by all members of the society with the brunt of it being borne by children.



*Pontifical Missionary Children visit the sick and the elderly*

# UGANDA

## DIOCESE OF KASANA-LUWEERO



The Diocese of Kasana-Luweero was erected in 1996. It is 60 kilometres north of Uganda's capital Kampala, covers an area of 8,539 km and comprises of three Civic Districts of Luweero, Nakaseke and Nakasongola. The soil of the area is rich but there is a need to develop sustainable practices in agriculture to help the population to gain skills and to alleviate poverty. The Diocese has a high number of children, mainly belonging to families in difficulty. There are also orphaned children and children affected by HIV/AIDS, by lack of good health and lack of education due to poverty. The outbreak of covid-19 has worsened the poverty because of four months in total lockdown and, up to now, there are some areas of operation, which are still closed.

In the Diocese, an estimated number of one out of eight children does not go to school for a number of reasons such as death of the parents, poverty and negligence, among others. Thus, to many children, religious education in form of catechism classes, and children holiday camps received at their parish centers is the only formal guidance they get to ensure that they turn out to be good Christian as well as citizens.

As upholders of the values of the Missionary Childhood Society, Kasana-Luweero Diocese has arranged over the years different activities to support the core values of the society, for example engaging children in activities that help deepen their faith and love for Christ, guiding them into deciding upon their vocations at an early age among others.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic occurrence, there is an extra need for animation to be carried out. Many children lost their loved and hence need comforting. They can get this comfort from interacting with their age mates during the various religious activities as well as from the adult animators of these programs. The closure of churches has

created a religious gap among many and so the young children need activities that will awaken their religious values. Moreover, also the closure of the schools implies that many children can only get moral support and guidance from religious activities.

The Diocese organizes a Sunday Oratorium to help the children to know more about their apostolate in the Church. It is a vital school of animation for them and the Diocese has to promote it in all parishes. It helps the children to grow in faith through the regular activities carried out like Bible sharing, praying together and catechesis and strengthens their life spiritually and socially. The Agenda of these weekly meetings implies an opening prayer, the children's Anthem, a



reading from children's Bible, meditation, reflection and sharing of the word of God from the Bible, shared prayers, Mission Rosary, assigning of "duties" to members for the following week, concluding remarks and the closing prayer (Holy Childhood prayer). Further, the Diocese also organizes holiday animation camps, which help children in their socio-cultural growth too.

On January 31st 2020, Training of Trainers workshops (TOT) were conducted at a Diocesan level, whereby all the 20 Parishes were represented. Those who attended went back to their respective parishes and trained their fellow animators. The intention of this training was to teach the basics of the Pontifical Mission Societies, emphasizing Missionary Childhood, to animate the children at all stages and to enkindle a Missionary Spirit among them at a tender age.

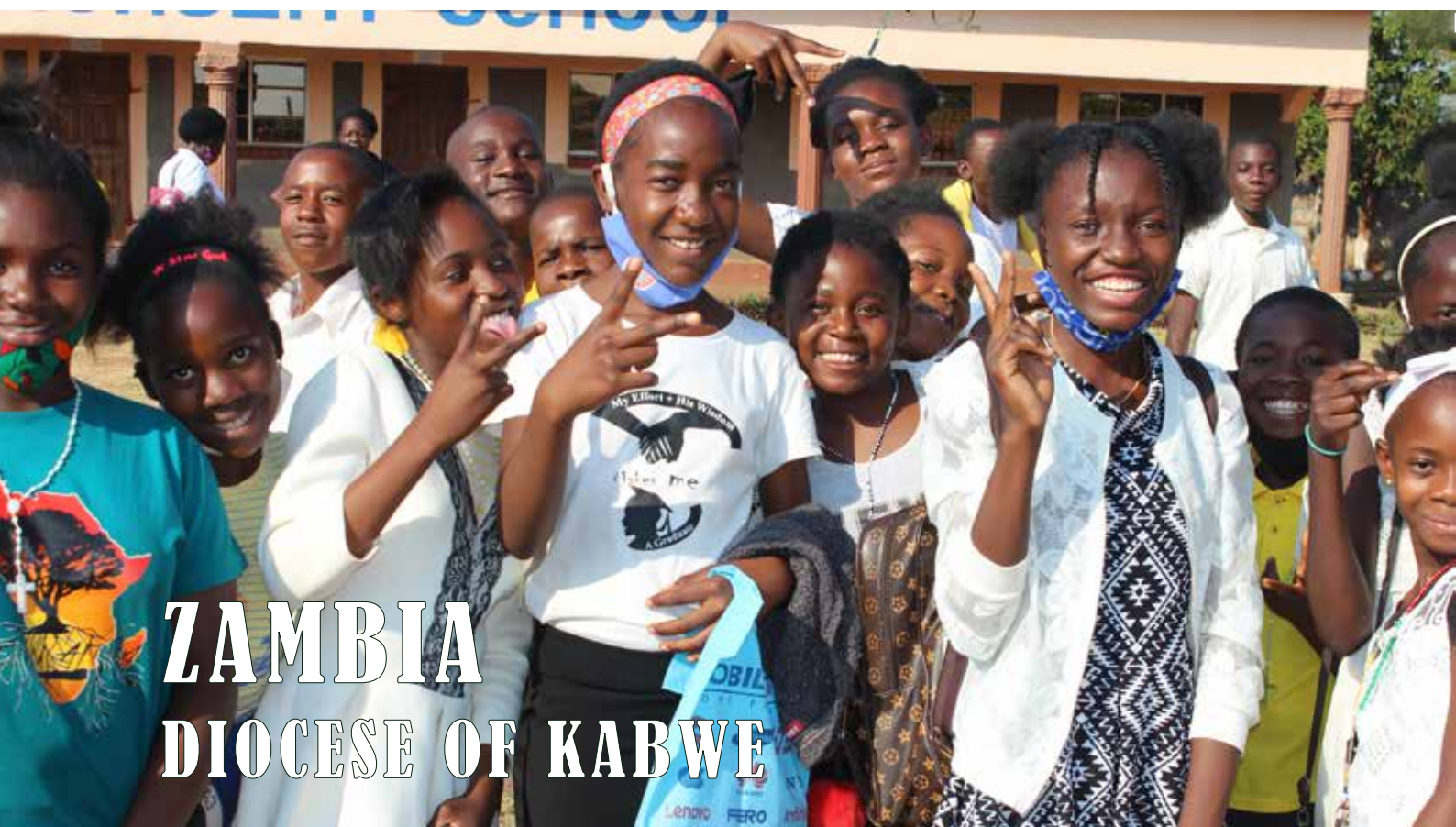
Unfortunately, the planned focus on the

formation of animation Teams in the various parishes had to be postponed due to the pandemic. Thus, in 2021, the Diocese hopes to form animation teams that will be tasked with creating more awareness about the Pontifical Mission Societies. As usual, the teams will also undergo training as far as child protection policy is concerned, since the Diocese is very active in the protection of vulnerable children.

Due to the pandemic, also the Missionary Childhood Day, which was planned on July 12th, could not take place. Through the local radio station "Radio Musana", the Diocese arranged radio programmes to animate the children on that special day, along with articles in the diocesan monthly bulletin "Kasana".



*The Most Reverend Paul Ssemogerere, bishop of the Diocese, conducts a ceremony within his development program (2019)*



# ZAMBIA DIOCESE OF KABWE

This year, although, most of the Holy Childhood activities were reduced especially during the lockdown, we thank God that some initiatives were made so that children were not abandoned completely.

Usually the Holy Childhood program of activities takes place in the Parishes, Deaneries and on Diocesan level. We help the children to grow in faith and to feel the solidarity with other children from all over the world. This builds unity among children at parish

and diocesan level and the world at large. The proposals fill them with the spirit of belonging to the family of God as they participate in the life of the Church. The children are encouraged and motivated to contribute money and other little things that they have towards the Universal Solidarity Fund to help other children.

## MARIAN RALLY FOR HOLY CHILDHOOD

In 2020 two Marian Rallies were conducted, for the first time, in East and West deaneries in the month of February and October respectively. The first rally for Holy Childhood was before the Covid-19 lockdown and the second was after the lockdown on 11th October 2020. The purpose of the Marian Rallies was to enrich our Holy ones in the understanding of the Blessed Mother. The goal was to help the children to learn more about our mother Mary. The program was outlined as follows: Marian Poetry, Marian prayers, Marian feasts, Biblical /Catechetical competitions, Litany of Loreto and the drawing /painting competitions. It is amazing to see how much knowledge the children have attained and how easily they can talk about Mother Mary.





### MY EXPERIENCE AS A HOLY CHILDHOOD MEMBER

*The Marian rallies have opened the doors to the children about Mary Our Mother. Mary occupies a special place in the community as truly a member of the church founded by her Divine Son Jesus. Mary communicates the life of Christ as the head of the church; as such, she is the model of the church. Mary's example of complete openness to God is a constant source of strength and growth to all people in the church. But in the eyes of us children she becomes a Mother totally dependable.*

*When we recite the Marian Prayers, as the Holy Childhood, we come closer to her and to Jesus Christ. We find in our Mother Mary a deep life of faith, humble obedience, perseverance and hope. This is something that we would want to emulate. In Mary I see a mother of Divine Grace most lovable, and who protects me.*

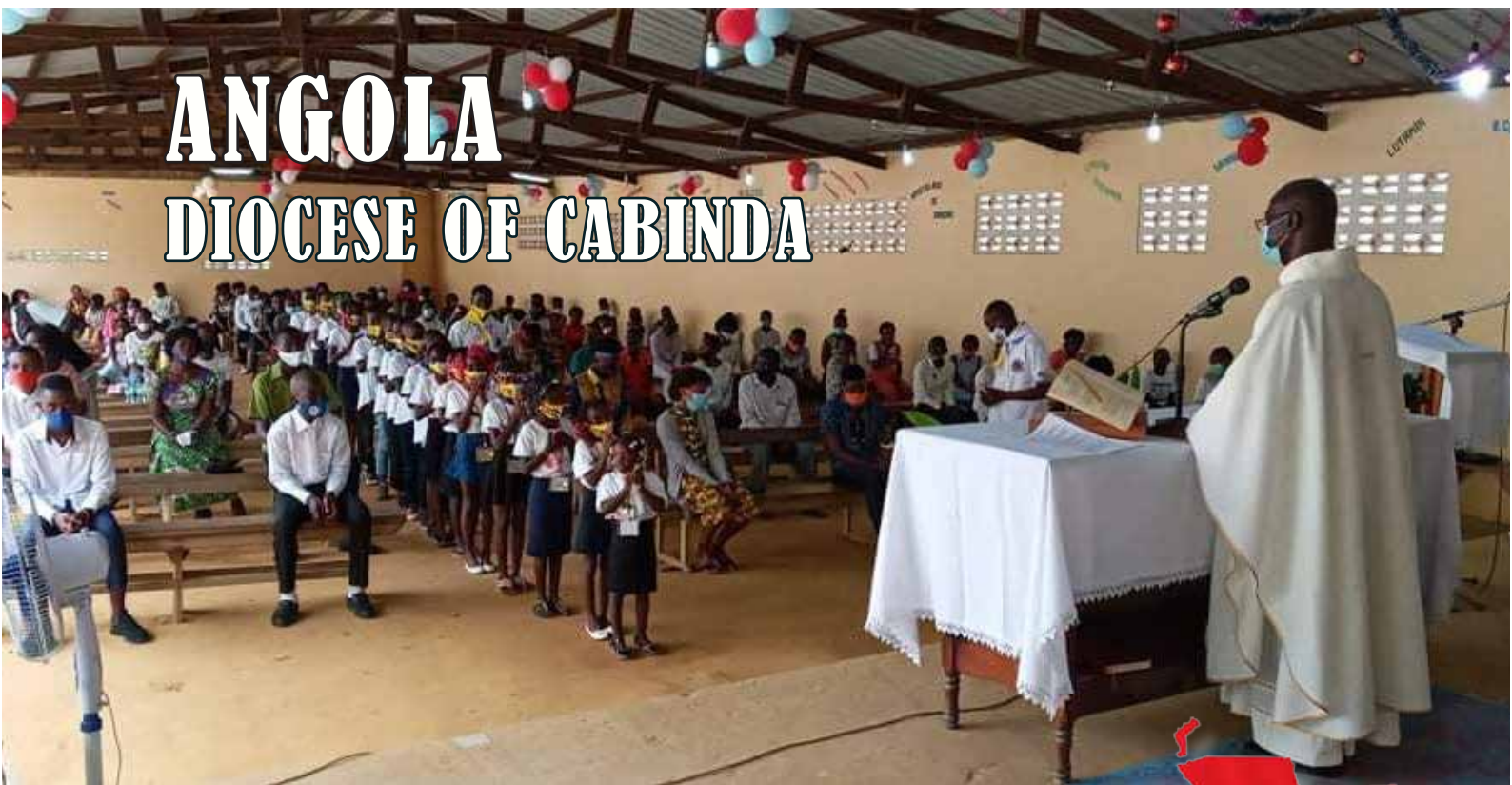
*The Memorare (a prayer seeking the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary) is recited imploring us to remember "that never was it known that anyone who fled to your protection, implored your help or sought your interception was left unaided". It is a source of inspiration for us children, who testify that Mary helps us in our needs when we ask.*

*The prayer of the rosary also helps us contemplate the mysteries of the life of Jesus Christ. It is an outpouring of love. In the rosary, I see Mary acting as a mother, teacher and guide. I think that she sustain us with her intercessions. All in all, we the children find everything in Mary as a source of inspiration, something hard to explain. The Missionary Rosary is a treasure to us. And we pray for each other as children.*

Matilldah Musonda



# ANGOLA DIOCESE OF CABINDA



## COMMITMENT OF THE MEMBERS OF THE MISSIONARY CHILDHOOD (AND ADOLESCENCE)



*We are always friends of all of the children of the world*

Christmas 2020 in our diocese of Cabinda, and especially in our parish of St. Joseph, had a strong missionary emphasis. We are living, as is the entire world, the reality of the coronavirus with due attention to confront the invisible enemy. Even in the midst of this reality, the group of animators of the Missionary Childhood did not sit still. During the pandemic there was a short interval in activities; then they were taken up again in small groups of three or five children, reunited according to the required security norms. The objective was to be with the children so that

they do not suffer too much from the situation that has touched all of society: distancing from friends, playing only in one's own yard, closed churches, and every type of restriction imposed by this reality.

Thus, our missionaries were engaged in the mission – the great challenge proposed by Pope Francis to be a church “going out” – continuing the formation of children belonging to the Missionary Childhood. The formation had a strong family character because, with the obligation to remain at home,





the children's families began to participate actively in various formation encounters. As a result, many families came to know up close the proposals of the Missionary Childhood: Promise, Obligations, Symbols, Colors, Hymns, Patron Saints... This methodology has contributed to better prepare the children to engage in the journey and to complete the tasks before them as missionary children who are proclaiming Jesus and helping other children to follow the same path.

During the celebration of Christmas on the 25th of December, the Feast of the Missionary Childhood in Angola, before the Christian community, families and friends and to missionaries in other parish communities, the missionary children bore witness to the joy and the decision to be part of the Pontifical Mission Societies. Even in this time of pandemic, the challenges have not limited the missionary action of the so-called thirty-three children engaged and welcomed as new members of the Missionary Childhood, and

a group of nineteen children that publically expressed the desire to continue the formation journey in view of future tasks.

We rejoice with these new members, who will be the future of our local Church in Cabinda. We rejoice in the mission undertaken by the animators and we rejoice in the presence of the families and friends at the celebration. We rejoice and express our affection to the parish priest, Francisco Nionge Capita, for welcoming every child with paternal affection and for motivating the families to help their children enter the Missionary Childhood, a motive for much hope for the Church, for a secure and promising future for the work of evangelization.

*Sr. Sirlei de Oliveira, FIMA  
Diocesan Coordinator  
of the Missionary Childhood in Cabinda*





## TOGO NATIONAL OFFICE

This is a summary of the animation of the Holy (Missionary) Childhood that was carried out in the seven local churches in Togo, whose Bishops compose the Episcopal Conference of that country.



*Fr. Donald C.D. FADAZ  
National Director PMS - TOGO*

**F**irst of all, during the course of the pastoral year each diocese organizes the animation of the Holy Childhood following the instructions of the National Direction of the PMS and adapting it to its own context. The high point takes place in January, around the Feast of Epiphany. Subsequently, periodically, once every three years, a national meeting is organized. However, since 2017, due to the socio-political unrest that is sweeping the country, for reasons of child safety, no national rallies have taken place.

During the 2020 pastoral year, which culminated on January 3, 2021 (solemn feast of the Epiphany in Togo), the activities related to the Holy

(Missionary) Childhood suffered the consequences of the restrictive measures and confinement due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, last January (Epiphany 2020), before the anti Covid measures, the celebrations for the Holy (Missionary) Childhood took place peacefully at the parish and diocesan level with the theme "Children and young people in the footsteps of Jesus towards holiness". Therefore, starting from the month of March 2020 the implementation of courses, sessions and camps for children and young people (under 15 years old) was hampered during the pastoral year 2020-21.

Since November 2020, we are experiencing a timid and fragmented recovery of activities. This is what was carried out from Christmas 2020 to Epiphany 2021.

### **THE CELEBRATION OF HOLY (MISSIONARY) CHILDHOOD DAY 2021**

#### *THEME AND METHODOLOGY*

The first phase consisted of what in Togo we call "Children's Christmas" which





took place in small groups and in compliance with health regulations against Covid-19. These involve playful activities that allow children to understand and integrate the "Christmas spirit" as an expression of God's love for humanity and inviting us to love, concretely expressed in actions. Subsequently, the second phase celebrates the "Feast of the Holy Innocents", always in groups of a reasonable number and in compliance with health measures. This phase consists of catechesis on the theme of the year, in relation to the stories of children and missionaries and their testimonies in the Holy Scriptures and in the Church's Martyrology.

*THE HIGH POINT OF THE CELEBRATION*

The high point of the celebration takes place on the weekend of the Epiphany. In normal times, this Day (world and national) brings together various movements of Catholic Children's Action at the diocesan and national level. The children prepare and animate the Eucharistic celebrations under the direction of their chaplains, nuns and lay animators. *This year the activities were carried out in each parish in small groups, in compliance with the obligation of wearing a mask to prevent the spread of the virus.*

To conclude, notwithstanding the pandemic and all of the restrictive measures, resulting in reduced and simplified celebrations for Holy (Missionary) Childhood Day (from Christmas to Epiphany), the educational supports for animation (posters, brochures of exhortation to prayer) that were printed and distributed by the National Directorate made it possible to experience the events and to pray in communion with the universal Church. In addition, the radio broadcasts conducted by the National Director and the Diocesan Directors made it possible to give wide resonance to the celebration and, above all, to pray every day for children and young people, the future of the Church and society.



PROGRAM

- At the end of each liturgical encounter and meeting of Movements and Congregations, from December 25 to January 12, one shall recite the prayer of the occasion (see following pages). This is to be followed by 1 Our Father, 1 Ave Maria and 1 Glory be.
- Everyone is encouraged to participate generously in the collection on the day of the Epiphany or the day chosen by the parish.
- Encouraged to visit the PMS National or Diocesan Directorate to make an offering for the benefit of children and young people (ask for a receipt) or use the account of the national office.

## The Togo children's prayer

*O Infant Jesus, model of Holy Childhood,  
Grant to all the children of the world  
to grow up in a family like the Holy Family of  
Nazareth.*

*Like You, may they rejoice in love and affection of  
parents and relatives.  
May they receive human and religious education in  
order to grow in wisdom, maturity and grace  
in the presence of God and within the human  
community.*

*Allow them to be duly accompanied by loving  
adults,  
so that they be worthily prepared  
to take on their role in the Church and in society.*

*We ask you through intercession of the  
Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph.*

*Amen.*



**PONTIFICIUM OPUS A SANCTA INFANTIA  
SECRETARIATUS INTERNATIONALIS**

