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BULLETIN



**MESSAGE
OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS
TO MARK THE 180TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE FOUNDING OF THE
PONTIFICAL SOCIETY
OF THE HOLY CHILDHOOD**
THE VOICE OF THE CHILDREN



**MISSIONARY NEWSLETTER
N.15 - OCTOBER 2023**

Editor: International Secretariat
Pontifical Society of Missionary Childhood or Holy Childhood
Palazzo di Propaganda Fide
00186 ROME
posi@ppoomm.va

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

Editorial board: International Secretariat
Cover, graphic design and layout:
Erika Granzotto Basso

Have contributed to this issue:
Enrique H. Davelouis E.
Erika Granzotto Basso
Sr. Maddalena Hoang Ngoc Khanh Thi, A.C.M.

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Archdiocese of Imphal, Archdiocese of Port-au-Prince,
Archdiocese of Accra

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“I would be a missionary, not for a few years only, but from the beginning of creation until the consummation of the ages”

said St. Thérèse of Lisieux, Patroness of the Missions and whose feast we celebrated on October 1st.

At the beginning of every missionary month she is there, the little great Saint who helps us to immerse ourselves in the love of God and in the desire for Jesus to be known and loved by all.

And perhaps this is also one of the reasons why the Pope chose this date to publish his Message to all the members of the Pontifical Society of the Holy Childhood on the occasion of the 180th anniversary of the founding of the Society. He addressed all the missionary children and youth around the world, their parents and animators, reminding and inviting them to persevere in their missionary commitment and thanking them for supporting the evangelizing mission of the Church. Every year, at this time, there is a reminder of the responsibility of proclamation and testimony.

The reason why every year we are animated towards World Mission Day is not a question of being repetitive and boring or even lacking in content, but it is because we humanly and spiritually need repetition, recurrence, cyclicity, because we are often distracted by so many things that the core of our faith and Jesus' mandate risk becoming secondary, forgotten or something we think we know well.

To overcome all this, the Church annually proposes the so-called deadlines (as in the liturgy): in this way we are given the opportunity to verify where we are in our journey as baptized and missionary discipleship. And I believe that in this regard children play a fundamental role: repeating actions and games, but also behaviours allow them to explore and develop the activity they are engaged in and are a tool to understand the world and themselves. It is the amazement of discovery, of what happens each time that is new and unimaginable, while doing something that outwardly appears the same. It is what happens to our hearts every time we listen to the Word of God and allow it to become our way of life.

This is what the children and young people in the articles of this new issue convey to us.

They truly have **hearts on fire and feet on the move**, and we adults are responsible for walking

alongside them to discover and recognize Jesus present in our lives, just as the disciples of Emmaus did. We are pilgrims together, sharing joys, hopes and sufferings, and only by nourishing ourselves with the Word of God will our eyes be opened.

Since its founding, the Society promotes the intimate and deep relationship between every child and Jesus, the friendship with Him, the Only One who can truly warm and set our hearts on fire.

And so 'they recognized Him in the breaking of the bread': from the Eucharist we draw the strength to proclaim and bear witness to Him.

Children and young people who receive this Sacrament for the first time can experience it as an invitation from Jesus, the Son of God, to participate in the cenacle, in what the apostles experienced with Him before the crucifixion.

And this places us, places them again in the community dimension of their relationship with Jesus. But at the same time from this banquet the children are invited to be present in the world, in what the world is for their age: school, friends, sport, and to bear witness to what they have experienced, thanks to the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Those who have met and recognized the Risen Lord in the Eucharist must also become, like the Lord Jesus, fellow travellers of other brothers and sisters to encourage them on the journey of life with the light of the Risen Lord.

From the Eucharist we learn to be missionaries in the sign of charity, justice, peace because it is not possible to break the only bread without then experiencing common charity.

Happy missionary month together with St. Thérèse of Lisieux and St. Francis Xavier!



SR. ROBERTA TREMARELLI

Secretary General Pontifical Society Missionary Childhood



MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS TO MARK THE 180TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE PONTIFICAL SOCIETY OF THE HOLY CHILDHOOD



Reverend Excellency,
dear missionary children and young people,
parents, formators and friends!

Last 19 May marked 180 years since the founding of the Pontifical Society of the Holy Childhood, and many of you are still celebrating this happy anniversary in these days.

Bishop Charles de Forbin Janson of Nancy, a pastor gifted with a great apostolic heart, founded it in 1843, having come to discover, through the letters of French missionaries, that many boys and girls in China were dying of hunger and neglect. This gave rise in him to a strong concern for their salvation, not only physical but also spiritual, since Jesus, the Son of God, died and rose again for the salvation of all.

It is indeed from his missionary zeal, then, on the occasion of this anniversary, that we can draw a first important lesson: that of caring for the salvation of others. As true disciples of Jesus, in fact, cultivating in us a heart similar to his, we cannot help but ardently desire that all be saved. This is how your beautiful association began, which still today, active and vibrant after 180 years, teaches so many children and young people around the world to be missionary disciples.

This year also marks the 150th anniversary of the birth of a very special member of the Society: Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus, patroness of the missions, who was a member from the age of seven. Today, 1 October, we celebrate her liturgical memorial, and it is from her that we can receive a second precious message: with our prayer, even if we are small, we can contribute to making Jesus known and loved, silently, helping others to do good. Prayer - Saint Teresina teaches us - is the first missionary action, and can reach every

place in the world, every child and young person, every missionary. That is why I invite you to grow, through it, in friendship with our Saviour, and in friendship among yourselves and with all the children and young people of the world, so as to be peacemakers.

Dear missionary children and young people, I want to thank you, because with your efforts you help all of us to be courageous witnesses of the Gospel and to share with others, not only material assistance, but what is most precious to us: faith. And I also want to thank your parents and the animators who accompany you, promoting the charism and spirituality of the Pontifical Society of the Holy Childhood.

It is a "Pontifical Society", and therefore universal, of the Catholic Church, of the Pope, and so I consider you my special collaborators. I remind you, though, that this qualification also implies a further important commitment: that of building bridges and relationships, following the example of Christ Himself, and I urge you to do this too.

Continue to work according to the charism that Bishop Charles de Forbin Janson left you, following the "little way" of Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus, faithful to your motto: "Children praying for the children, children evangelizing children, children helping children worldwide".

May the Lord bless you and accompany you always, and please, do not forget to pray for me.

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 1 October 2023

Francis



Eccellenza Reverendissima,
cari bambini e ragazzi missionari,
genitori, formatori e amici!

Il 19 maggio scorso si sono celebrati i centottant'anni di fondazione della *Pontificia Opera della Santa Infanzia* e molti di voi ancora in questi giorni stanno festeggiando questo felice anniversario.

*extract from the
original letter
sent to this
Secretariat*

Continuate a impegnarvi secondo il carisma che Mons. Charles de Forbin Janson vi ha lasciato, seguendo la *piccola via* di Santa Teresa del Bambino Gesù, fedeli al vostro motto: "i bambini pregano per i bambini, i bambini evangelizzano i bambini, i bambini aiutano i bambini".

Il Signore vi benedica e vi accompagni sempre e, vi raccomando, non dimenticatevi di pregare per me.

Roma, San Giovanni in Laterano, 1° ottobre 2023

Francis



*Pope Francis in
prayer in front
of the relics of
Saint Therese
of the Child
Jesus*

GIRL WHO DIRECTED ARMY COMMANDER

Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master and in high favour, because by him the Lord had given victory to Syria. He was a mighty man of valour, but he was a leper. Now the Syrians on one of their raids had carried off a little from the land of Israel, and she worked in the service of Naaman's wife. She said to her mistress, "Would that my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy". So Naaman went in and told his lord, "Thus and so spoke the girl from the land of Israel." And the king of Syria said, "Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel." So Naaman went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God, and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean."

(2 Kings 5:1-14).

The story of Naaman the leper, being healed by Elisha the prophet, is propelled by an unnamed Israelite girl. Naaman was a captain of the army of the king of Aram, which was a nation to the north of Israel with a border roughly equivalent to that of modern-day Syria. Naaman is described as a great man



P. Dott. Yesu Karunanidhi
Executive Secretary,
CCBI Commission for Bible

who was highly respected (cf. v.1) He had honour, valour, recognition, victories, respect, and status. But! Yes, there is a 'but'. He had everything that a man longs for, but he also had a very serious problem: Naaman had leprosy. None of the other successes or positives in the rest of his life could outweigh this or deal

with the disease that wrecked his life. There would come a day when he would be forced to withdraw from public life, leave the army, lay down his authority and position, remove himself from the service of his king and country and ultimately be separated from all those whom he loved, including his family. And all this because he was sick. All because he was Naaman the Leper.

Down throughout history there have been, and still



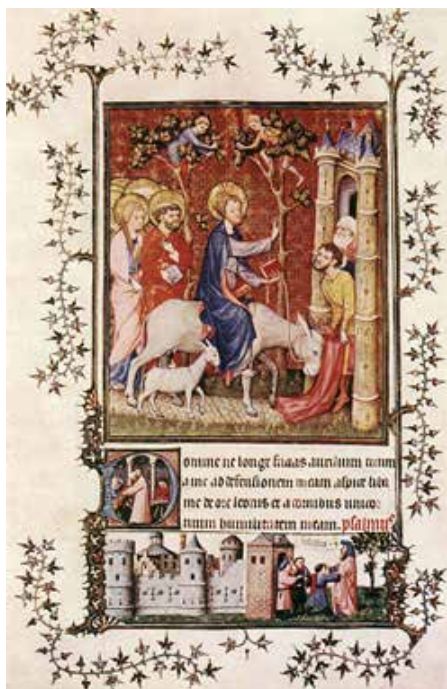


there are, border disputes. The Aram-Israel border was no exception and the Arameans sent bands of soldiers across the border to raid towns, villages, and settlements in the vicinity of the disputed border (cf. v. 2). It was in one such raid that the girl in this passage was captured. She was an Israelite, and she was young. That is all we really know about her. She was captured for reasons that we can only guess at. Maybe her parents were killed. Maybe one of the raiders thought she would provide some form of entertainment for the men. Maybe her whole family was carried off into captivity. We don't know. What we do know is that she was pressed into service and became a servant to Naaman's wife (cf. v.2).

The little girl is presented in contrast to Naaman:

- (i) Naaman was the commander of the army; the girl was in the service of Naaman's wife;
- (ii) he was a man of might, she was fragile and vulnerable;
- (iii) he was in his own land, she was in a foreign land.

We don't know how old this girl was. She was clearly old enough to work as a servant but young enough to be described as little. What is clear is that, over time, she became aware that all was not well in the household of the Commander Naaman. She was presumably able to communicate with her mistress despite her forced service and as she went about her work, she would have pieced together the



facts: her mistress's husband had a disease called leprosy and he was not able to be cured from it.

Seeing the dilemma and knowing she can help, she speaks out. Less than 20 of her words are recorded for us but they are dynamite!

MOVED WITH EMPATHY

This little girl has been captured by enemy soldiers, removed from her home, family, village and country and is now dwelling as a slave in a foreign land. She could have been bitter and resentful. She could have wished the worst

for her master. But instead, she sees a very real need and in empathy offers a solution. 'I wish that my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria.' (cf. v.3) Why? Because, 'Then he would cure him of his leprosy' (of. v. 3). The desire of this slave girl is to see her master made well. To see him healed. To see his skin restored. To see him freed from this disease. She speaks out of an overflow of compassion: 'I wish...!' Her compassion did not remain as

a mere emotion 'sympathy,' but turned out to be an action showing 'empathy'. This girl challenges us. When we are wronged, do we not become defensive or indifferent or reactive? Do we not wish our enemy be punished? Do we not secretly hope that some misfortune will befall our offender? Not so this little girl. Out of a heart filled with empathy, she speaks hope. Even to her enemy.





ANIMATED BY FAITH

When she speaks she doesn't simply tell of how much better it is back home. She could have said, 'Back home we have someone who cures this disease.' Instead, she states a fact: 'I wish that my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria!

Then he would cure him of his leprosy' (v. 3). These are words full of faith. These are words that reveal how big this little girl's God is. In her mind there is no question that God would (i) heal, (ii) heal a 'foreigner' and (iii) heal an enemy foreigner.

She has grasped something of the depth of the grace and mercy of God. Her God can and will heal. Social standing, ethnicity and merit are not factors that are in any way relevant to the outpouring of His mercy. Her view of God echoes the promise God Himself made to Abraham centuries before when He said that though Abraham (and his descendants) all nations of the earth would be blessed (cf. Genesis 12: 1-3). This girl believes that promise to be true. This little girl takes God at His word and believes that He will do as He says.

SHE SPEAKS OF WHAT SHE KNOWS

Although little when removed from her home, it is obvious that her early years must have been filled with stories and accounts of how good and faithful God is in His dealings with human persons. She must have heard stories of the history of God's people. I am certain that she would have known about the way God dealt with Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as well as the accounts of the rescue of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, the inheriting of the Promised Land, the glory years of King David and King Solomon and the exploits of the prophets Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha. Out of this knowledge of her rich heritage she spoke words of compassion and faith. The credit goes to her parents. They must have told again and again of the things of God to their daughter. They must have helped to till her mind with the history of God's dealings with His people. They must have faithfully communicated the attributes of God. They must have explained that God has not forgotten them, despite the victories that Aram seems to be having over them at the moment. Her parents' God is faithful, merciful, gracious, reliable, real, and involved in their lives. This little girl's God is too!

A RESILIENT HEART

Resilience refers to the ability to adapt and bounce back from difficult or challenging situations. It is the capacity to withstand, recover, and even grow stronger in the face of adversity, trauma, or stress. Resilience involves mental, emotional, and psychological toughness and flexibility.

Resilience is not about avoiding or denying the existence of hardships but rather about effectively navigating and overcoming them. It is a dynamic process that allows individuals to maintain a sense of well-being and functionality in the midst of challenging circumstances. The girl in the story has developed resilience on her own. This is revealed in her courage to speak her mind to her mistress. She attempts to something which is beyond her grasp. Today war and



violence cause a lot of traumas on the children who escape them. It is very important that these children develop resilience.

HER INTELLIGENCE VS KING'S IGNORANCE

The author of the text in a subtle way makes fun of the King of Syria. Upon hearing the words of the little girl through his wife, Naaman goes to his lord (the king) and reports verbatim. The king seems not to have heard completely. Naaman talks about the prophet. But the king writes a letter to the king. Maybe this might have been a protocol. What surprises the reader is that the girl was brought in forcefully when the army

went on a raid. To kill someone, a raid is enough. For someone to be healed we require a letter.

THE FLESH OF A LITTLE CHILD

At the end of the healing story, the author writes that Naaman's flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child (in Hebrew, *na'ar qaton*). At the beginning of the story the little girl (in Hebrew, *na'arah qatanna*) directs the army commander. At the end, the commander's skin becomes like that of little child. Hence, the little anonymous

servant girl is the protagonist of the story. Her empathy, faith, charity, resilience, and intelligence have made the army commander clean.

The little girl of the story offers us the following lessons for our life and mission:

- We need to be proactive towards others despite their enmity towards us. This proactive attitude emerges when we take responsibility for our life.
- An action with empathy is more than a mere feeling of sympathy.
- Our deep faith in God may not move mountains, but it will surely move an army commander to action.
- Storytelling is a good way of inculcating faith. Faith comes through hearing.
- Resilience makes us survive hardships. Through resilience we become master a negative situation, not its victim.
- 'We often say we can do only this much. We must at least do that much' (Albert Camus). The little girl did what she could. And that made a difference to Naaman, to his family, to his army, to his country, and to the entire salvation history.



ELISHA
Pietro Lorenzetti
ca. 1329

FATHER THÉOPHILE VERBIST

HOLY CHILDHOOD AND MONGOLIA

The Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (Missionaries of Scheut), whose principal house is located in Rome, was founded by Rev. Theophile Verbist, a Belgian priest. Appointed National Director of the Association of the Holy Childhood in 1860, he began to follow the missionary work among the Chinese attentively and with special interest



On June 12, 1823, Théophile Verbist was born in Antwerp (Belgium) into a large family of seven children.

With his twin Edmond were, they went to the Jesuits' school in Antwerp.

Théophile wanted to become a priest. He had first two years of philosophy and then, he went to the major seminary of Mechelen to study theology for three years, as it was the custom in those days.

On September 18, 1847, Théophile was ordained priest in Mechelen by Cardinal Sterckx.

In 1860, while Chaplain at the military school and Chaplain of the sisters, Théophile Verbist was appointed National Director of the Association of the Holy Childhood in Belgium. He probably accepted this appointment because it matched with his missionary vocation that he had been “nurturing for a long time.”

CHINA OPENS TO THE MISSIONARIES

In the beginning of the *Annales de l'Œuvre de la Mission belge en Chine*, we read that a “happy event” decided on Verbist’ missionary vocation. This event refers to the news reported in the papers that the doors of China had been opened.

An English-French military expedition, called the Second Opium War by the Chinese, ended up in the Tianjin Treaty of 1858. It was ratified by the Beijing Agreement between the Chinese Emperor and the French Emperor on October 25, 1860. This treaty also opened the doors of China to the missionaries. This news aroused great



hopes among the missionaries in France and elsewhere. It also stimulated Verbist's missionary vocation that he had nurtured "for a long time." He soon mentioned it to Aloïs Van Segvelt, Frans Vranckx and Remi Verlinden, and together they got in touch with the Church authorities. In 1866, thinking about his missionary life, Théophile Verbist wrote from Xiwanzi to his sister:

"Here I am in China, dear Éliisa (Élisabeth); the dream of so many years has come true. Every day I thank the good Lord for it, because I believe that here at least I shall be able to attain the goal I had in mind when becoming a priest: for love of the good Lord to work successfully for the happiness of his creatures."

INSTITUTION OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY

As a member and sympathizer of the Holy Childhood and later as its national director, Théophile Verbist knew about the lack of orphanages in China and planned to found an orphanage there. He planned to do together with some Belgians priests. By strenuous efforts, he overcame numerous obstacles, until his Belgian Mission in China was finally established.

On November 28, 1862, Engelbert Cardinal Sterckx established canonically the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. After he consulted the other members, he appointed Théophile Verbist as the Superior General.

On November 14, 1863, Propaganda Fide granted "the decree of praise" to the new Congregation and so it passed from diocesan right to pontifical right. This decree was the first degree of pontifical approval. Rome granted a temporal approval to the Congregation in 1888 and the final approval in 1900.

On September 12, 1865, Théophile Verbist is appointed Apostolic Provicar of Mongolia by the Propaganda Fide.

THE MISSION IN MONGOLIA

In 1865, Théophile Verbist and four other zealous companions made their final preparations for their mission in China. On December 6, they arrived in the village of Xiwanzi, in the Province of Inner Mongolia, north of the Great Wall.

There they set up a base, getting to work immediately on plans to administer the vast territory that lay before them: organizing small Christian communities, attending to an orphanage and school, and training seminarians. "It's difficult. Such a pity that we are so few," Father Verbist used to say to himself whenever he considered the vast task ahead of him. But guided by the Holy Spirit, he and his team were able to overcome the obstacles - notwithstanding the harsh terrain, the severe weather, the immense distances to be covered, and the local language. These missionaries also faced many critical situations, including famine, sickness, accidents, and martyrdom. Father Verbist himself died of typhoid fever at Laohugou, China on February 23, 1868, at the age of 44, less than three years after arriving in Inner Mongolia.



**P. Théophile Verbist
before leaving for
Mongolia**

LETTER FROM MONGOLIA OF FR. THÉOPHILE VERBIST TO THE DIRECTOR OF THE HOLY CHILDHOOD IN PARIS, MR. CANONICAL DE GIRARDIN

Mr. Canonical,

We arrived at Sy-Wan-Tze, the centre of the Mission of which the whole has been given to our charge by the Holy See, only a few days ago, after a most favourable voyage, and I already feel the necessity for drawing your most serious attention towards this portion of the Lord's Vineyard. The Rev. Fathers Tagliabue and Bray, the Superiors of the Mission, have already told you of the sad condition of the finances of the Society, and the great demand there is for pecuniary assistance. I add my voice to theirs to ask you to use all your influence to obtain the subsidy they have asked us for, intended to settle the accounts before we take over the administration of this dear Society. Imagine, Mr. Director, how painful it would be for us to start by having to make up for the deficit of our predecessors. I assure you that their example is very admirable. You yourself, Mr. Canonical, wrote to me, two years ago, that the Mongolian Mission is the poorest in the entire Far East. All it takes is one missionary who listens too much to his good heart to ruin the accounts of the Society.

The numerous institutes of the Holy Childhood that we visited during our trip, with all the interest we have had in the Society for a long time, filled us with wonder and admiration. As for me, I am happy to be able to tell you that I felt such sweet emotions, that I feel largely rewarded for all the efforts I have made in

the past to spread the Society and make it loved in Belgium. Suffice it to say that it will still be the object of all my concern in my adopted homeland. The Vicariate already has six Holy Childhood institutes, located in districts very far from each other. Doubling or tripling the population is a matter of a few days. The cost of caring for each child amounts to 19 cents per day, using all available economic resources. Certainly, this is not an exaggeration. I think, therefore, that it is useless to ask the Central Council for a specific sum for the Mission in Mongolia. .

These data will enable it to decide upon the number of souls which we may save in this province, without depriving other Missionaries in China of the means of similar work. At least we hope we shall be permitted to keep the 550 little orphans who have been assembled in our refuges, and who are taken care of by young, unmarried Chinese women with a tenderness which would draw tears from the most insensible, and has caused us to shed many sweet ones.

As we have no representatives either in France or in China, Mr Aymeri, Procurator of the Lazarist Missions in Shanghai, has kindly taken charge of the interests of our Congregation to send us the funds that will arrive from Europe. Therefore, I hereby authorize Mr Bax, Director of the Seminary of Mission 2 Chaussée de Ninove in Brussels, to deliver on my behalf, to Mr

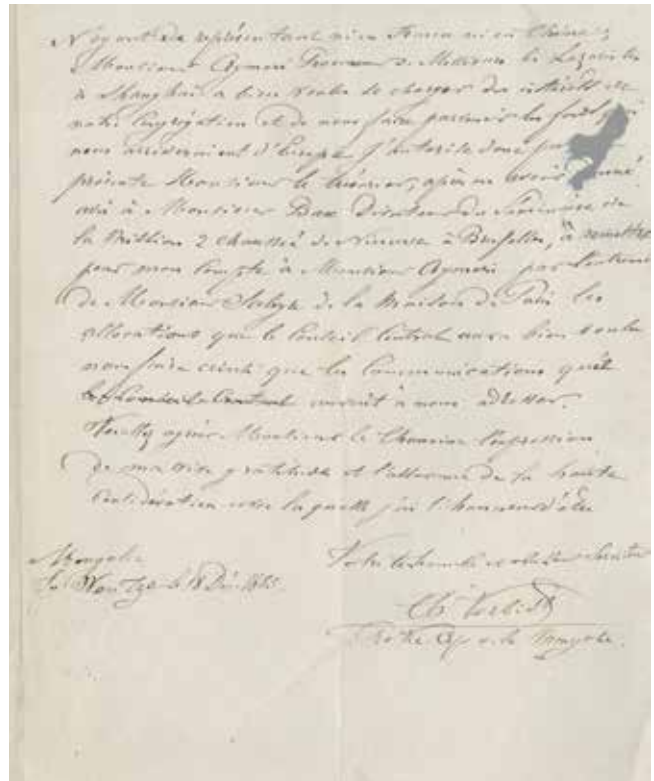


Aymeri, through Mr Salvyte of the House in Paris, the appropriations that the Superior Council will have wished to grant us, as well as the communications that he will send us. Please accept, Mr Canonico, my heartfelt gratitude and the assurance of my high esteem.

Your humble and obedient servant in the Lord,

Fr. Th. Verbist
Ap. Vic. in Mongolia
Mongolia

Sy Wan Tse, 18 December 1865



Pope Francis during his recent visit in Mongolia

GHANA

ARCHDIOCESE OF ACCRA



CHILDREN'S SERVICE - DEVELOPING LEADERS FOR THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH

As part of the annual program of animation and capacity building of the Parish Missionary animators, the Archdiocese of Accra organized their School of Missionary Animators (SOMA) for their Missionary Animators on 24th June 2023 at the Holy Spirit Cathedral Parish Hall.

The seminar focused on the growth and development of children in the parishes. Two topics were treated.

The first topic was "Children's Service – Developing Leaders for the Future of the Church. The second was on: "Knowledge of Child Protection Policy: Protecting the Child and the Animator". The topics were treated by Dr. Mary Anane-Mensah, Missionary Children's Animator and counseling Psychologist, and Fr. Wisdom Larweh, a civil lawyer.

The participants were from eight (8) Deaneries of the Archdiocese of Accra. The total number of participants was 348. Participants were very much enlightened and expressed their gratitude to the organizers.

HERE FEW POINTS FROM DR. MARY ANANE-MENSAH FOR OUR REFLEXION:

RAISING CHILDREN AND STUDENTS AS LEADERS WILL ESTABLISH FUTURE GENERATIONS OF CHRISTIANS

We've seen that children who serve in the church become students who serve and lead in the church. Students who lead in the church eventually become adults who lead the church. They see the church as the place where they find "their people" and the place they go to continue to grow in their faith.

Raising children and students as leaders will establish future generations of Christians.

1. Children will not always remain children but will also grow and assume their place and responsibilities now and in the future.

2. Many celebrations in our Church are about adults....only on a few occasions do we consider the children. Make available to children and Animators the best opportunities (space, materials and on-going formation) they require for effective, efficient and fulfilled ministry.



3. Prepare for the Sunday liturgy personally as an Animator... Be familiar with the readings, read commentaries, read the Church doctrines and documents, bread down the Word of God and make it easily consumable for our children.

4. Develop the interest of children in Catholic hymns and liturgy: encourage a love for Catholic identity and culture. Minimise the needless exposure to pentecostal-charismatic styles and models.

5. Collaboration between Priests and Animators at the Parish-level: It is encouraged that Priests see themselves as co-working with Animators and not as competitors. It is the interest of Priests to support the work of Animators. Are priests and Religious becoming increasingly reluctant in working harmoniously and collaboratively with Animators?

CREATING A CULTURE THAT EQUIPS CHILDREN

How can your church encourage a culture where children are contributors to the church? Where children are equipped to be the leaders of the church?

Ways the church can develop children as leaders:

- Make children feel known.

What do you know about the kids and families in your ministry? How many kids can you call by name? How many do you really know?

- Celebrate children.

Children know when something is intended for them, and they are attracted to celebration! Celebrating children corporately and individually communicates value to families. We also communicate corporate celebration in church services and from the pulpit.

How do our parishes include and celebrate the next generation in our services?

Individual celebration comes from knowing the children and encouraging them to do things worthy of celebration.

- Give children opportunities now.

Children are not just the next leaders of the church; their leadership starts from now. Children have

spiritual gifts to use for God's glory, and we need to encourage them and design opportunities for them to serve and lead.

- Help children know they can trust the Church.

Children need to be able to trust the church to see them and not give up on them. They need the church to be a place of love. Offer them safety and protection opportunities. Animators should look out for each and should not take advantage of children. Offer fraternal corrective support to any Colleague-Animator who engages unethical and indecent behaviour.

- Children are worth the investment.

Discipleship comes at a cost to the disciple-and there is often a cost to the disciple as well. The Church can do more.

- Mentor children.

Some of the children, who show traits of teaching others, can be mentored to start helping out at the Children's Service as they grow older and move to senior schools.

- Validate children's callings.

Finally, in order to raise up leaders in the church, children's calling needs to be validated. They need to be prayerfully guided to become clear about their calling or vocation. The Church needs to partner with parents to develop the next generation of leaders of the church!

SEEING THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH IN THE CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Our Children are the Church. They are a part of the Body of Christ, and we should treat them as such! Consider what could be done to promote children to be leaders in your parish.

Look for the potential in each child in your parish. Call out and encourage that potential in them. Communicate the potential you see to their parents, and then partner with them to develop these future leaders of the church.

May the children we groom for the Church today become better than us. If they do not become better than us, then no progress has been made. May they start from where we have ended and do better than us.

HAITI

ARCHDIOCESE OF PORT-AU-PRINCE

FOYER OF HOPE

*FOR AN UPDATED AND RENEWED SOCIAL
PASTORAL MINISTRY*



The Foyer of Hope is a socio-pastoral work of the Congregation of the Holy Cross in Haiti. It was founded on 21 December, 2012 by a religious of the Holy Cross, the Reverend Father Baudelaire Martial CSC and is located in the poor neighbourhood of Bizoton 53, in the southern part of Port-au-Prince.

Its purpose is none other than to support children and adolescents in difficulty. It is frequented for recreation, to participate in the many educational, socio-cultural, pastoral activities, etc.

The Foyer of Hope welcomes children and young people of different religious denominations. In this space, we respect and protect children, adolescents and all vulnerable persons against all

forms of abuse.

The Foyer of Hope seems to have become a reference point within the Church in Haiti. The different programs are open to children and adolescents. In the district of Bizoton 53, it embodies great hope for this population in crisis and is very encouraging for the children and adolescents in the region. We use all possible means to educate them and allow them to develop in a healthy way, respecting the rules of ethics. In the Foyer we carry out a range of initiatives, educational projects, health services. We introduce them to a trade, share with them the principles of family and social ethics, reveal to them the beauty of the country, provide



psychological support and spiritual and pastoral animation, and so on.

The work carried out in the Foyer since the day of its inauguration is in line with the Gospel, lived out in its radicality: feeding the hungry, clothing them, educating them, and so on.

“Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.” (Matthew 25:40). Our commitment to the Foyer enables us to enter into the process of deep and serious questioning about the meaning of our consecration and our mission.

As always, after a year of catechism preparation, the Foyer has organized, for Sunday, 30 July 2023, the celebration of the First Communion of 25 children (boys and girls), including three teenagers (who did not have the opportunity to receive this sacrament during their childhood). Despite the insecurity in the region, the ceremony in the Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel was held. The children showed their gratitude and also expressed through their actions, gestures of love and compassion towards the poorest of the poor. They also explained, through simple but very meaningful sentences, their understanding of the sacrament of the Eucharist, source and summit of all Christian life.

The balance of this activity is more than positive.

Many were registered on the same day for the preparation of the next catechism class (2023-2024).

This liturgical event allowed many children and adolescents from this neighbourhood, in the grip

of

terror from armed gangs, to overcome their trauma and, above all, to become more committed, to become rooted in their faith in Jesus Christ who says “Let the children come to me” and, even more, to go to all nations, to make disciples and baptize them, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

In the midst of all these socio-political and economic crises, the Foyer allows us to get closer to others, to make us more sensitive to certain realities. It also represents the face of the Church’s compassion in this environment of popular ferment, and allows us to concretely live “contemplation in action and action in contemplation”.

F. Baudelaire Martial CSC

Director and Founder of the Foyer of Hope



INDIA

ARCHDIOCESE OF IMPHAL MANIPUR STATE

LITTLE MISSIONARY

*"LIKE NEWBORN BABIES, CRAVE PURE
SPIRITUAL MILK, SO THAT BY IT YOU MAY
GROW UP IN YOUR SALVATION, NOW THAT YOU
HAVE TASTED THAT THE LORD IS GOOD"*

(1 PET 2:2-3)



Catholic faith in the State of Manipur in India began in 1952 and so is just over 70 years old. It is a Mission territory with comparatively young faith history. The simple tribal people of Manipur were introduced to the Catholic Faith through zealous missionaries from Europe and from South India mainly Kerala. Since the people did not understand the language, faith was built through blind popular devotion in the initial stages. In short, the depth and beauty of Catholic faith and practices are yet to be relished by the faithful in the true sense of the term. Popular catholic practices such as novenas, devotions, pilgrimages, etc., which are the means of strengthening and enlivening the faith of the people are yet to become popular as it should be.



to maintain prayerful family atmosphere and encouraging children to be part of such a family.

The children are very enthusiastic and actively participate in all the programmes of Little Missionary. Every child is given special badge and medal of Child Jesus. Every Sunday these children gather together for prayer, special prayer book is being prepared and printed for them with prayers, prayer songs, action songs, quotations from bible, ejaculations, and some common prayers and each one owns a book.

Some activities and approaches in instilling values of devotion and faith in the little children include, teaching them

With strong conviction that grooming children in early stages to introduce them to devout way of life the concept of Little Missionaries was proposed. 'The Little Missionaries'- the association of Little Children began in the Archdiocese of Imphal, Manipur in 2022. It was aimed at molding the children in Christian faith, values and wisdom after the model of Jesus. The movement has been welcomed wholeheartedly by the people in every parish. Every parish one animator is appointed mostly sisters takes care of these children association.

The response of the local communities has been very encouraging. Wherever Little Missionaries have been formed, the people have expressed joy and happiness on seeing the little children devoutly participating in worship. At a time when children are exposed to different worldly distractions such as mobile phones, internet, etc., the endeavor to encourage faith activity from early stages of life has been received by the parents with appreciation. From the part of the animators they are encouraging families

to participate in the Holy Mass prayerfully, participate in bible quiz, keeping discipline in the church, respect for the elders, narrating to them lives of saints and bible stories, etc. Children are also motivated to contribute towards charity in order to instill in them a sense of responsibility towards the suffering children of the world.

The Archdiocese intends to carry forward and popularize this very crucial movement among Catholic children. We thank the Pontifical Society of Missionary Childhood (Holy Childhood) for extending crucial sponsorship in order to implement this activity for the formation of children.

Sr. Jolly Thekkinedath Kurien SJSM

ITALY

DIOCESE OF RIETI

THE FEAST OF THE GIFT



The 'Feast of the Gift' was born in the early 1970s on the initiative of the then Director of the Missionary Office, Father Americo Maioli, under the name 'Feast of the Presentation of Gifts'. The 'Feast' took place in the cathedral church, where the various groups of children were accompanied by the Nuns, Teachers and, in many cases, their parents, and was presided over by the diocesan Bishop. All the parishes in the city and some from neighbouring towns participated. The 'Feast' consisted of bringing toys, stationery and clothing items, which were offered by each child into the hands of the Bishop. The offering of these materials by the children was preceded by a sensitization of the latter to help their poorer brothers and sisters in need. The collected items were then

transported to Rome to premises belonging to the PMS. The latter would then send them to the various mission areas in the world. There are many testimonies, which we still preserve, of Missionaries scattered throughout the world who thanked this Missionary Office for the materials they received. Over the years, given the cost of shipping the various materials, the PMS stopped collecting them, specifying that it would be more appropriate to collect in cash, which is much easier to send to mission lands. With the advent of COVID, the celebration of the 'Feast' in a single place was also discontinued, and so this Missionary Office organized itself to celebrate it separately in the various diocesan Catholic parish schools, where the Bishop, in turn, meets the various groups



of children and offer him the fruits of their small sacrifices to be destined for their poorer brothers and sisters. The 'Feast of the Gift' takes place every year in the first fortnight of February.

THE DAY OF THE GIFT 2023

Also this year, the 'Day of the Gift' was celebrated in the Diocese of Rieti. On 20 February, the Missionary Office and the new bishop, Monsignor Vito Piccinonna, visited all the diocesan Catholic parish schools to receive gifts and offerings for missionary children.

"Thank you because the fact that you exist is wonderful news!" this is how Bishop Vito greeted each student from each Institute, adding *"You are a beautiful light and just like the sun, you must be able to look at everyone without excluding anyone"*.

A very heartfelt event that every year renews its tradition with a view to making even the youngest child feel like a 'gift' for others. In each school, the protagonists were the children, who were the first to take the floor with thoughts addressed to the less fortunate or to all those who are currently experiencing a difficult time.

"Today we celebrate the day of the gift", concluded Bishop Vito, "so that, while we think of ourselves, we can also broaden our gaze

to those who cannot afford what we have, following the teaching of Pope Francis, who invites us not to become indifferent". "Your offerings will be donated to the Pontifical Missionary Societies and will be destined for all the poor children in the world," the bishop emphasised, without forgetting "the inhabitants of the earthquake areas, along with those who suffer from wars and economic crises. An act, that of the gift, with a high moral and pedagogical value, which allows pupils to feel part of one big community".

*Domenico
Diocesan Missionary
Office
Rieti*



RWANDA

DIOCESE OF RUHENGERI

THE MAGAZINE

THE VOICE OF CHRISTIAN CHILDREN



The Diocesan Commission for the Pastoral Care of Children of the Diocese of Ruhengeri is well structured in all the parishes of the Diocese, and missionary children's groups are operational and organized everywhere in the Christian Base Communities (CEB), with missionary children's committees and their educators.

A few years ago, this Commission began the regular publication of a Children's Magazine called "The Voice of Christian Children".

The project was born out of the need to evangelize children and for Christian children, in turn, to evangelize other children through the quarterly magazine. To promote the Christian and missionary education of the children, the articles published are written by the children themselves and deal with Catholic topics. The magazine is distributed to children in all the parishes of the Diocese, who are its direct beneficiaries (readers). Children's missionary experiences and testimonies are also published in the Magazine, to form and inform Christian children.





CHILDREN, LET US BE ROOTED IN THE LOVE OF GOD'S CHILDREN

Dear Christian children, friends, readers of our Magazine "The Voice of Christian Children", may the peace of Christ be with you! My name is Ineza Gabriella, from the Parish of Murama and I am 11 years old. Dear children readers, in the previous issue, our friend and colleague urged us to grow in love. You will remember that he told us about what they did in his parish during the "Children's Charitable Activities Week". I liked this article very much and it encouraged



me to read the first letter of John, chapter 4, verses 7-21 (1 John 4:7-21). After reading it, I understood that we should love one another, especially we should love the children near us who are in difficulty. I would like to thank the authorities of the Catholic Church in Rwanda who have set up Caritas schools in Catholic schools, where they encourage us to help each other, despite our limited possibilities, and

where they remind us that if our parents give us extra school material that we do not need, we should not forget to share it with our brothers and sisters born into very poor families. They also remind us that when there are children who are very poor, we must remember to tell our parents and ask them to help us help our classmates in need.

Dear friends, brothers and sisters, the month of August is "Charity and Mercy Month" in the Church of Rwanda. We celebrate this month during the long holidays, and I encourage you to help parents wherever possible. This will encourage them to offer us something to share with our poorer peers. If we do this, we will show that we love God as God Himself reminds us in His Word: *"If anyone says, 'I love God,' but hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. This is the commandment we received from him: that whoever loves God must also love his brother."* (1 John 4:20-21)

My name is Uwase Janvier from Bumara Parish. I would like to thank the authorities of the Catholic Church in our diocese, especially our chaplain Father Jean de Dieu NDAYISABA, chairman of the Diocesan Commission for the pastoral care of children, as well as the benefactors who have helped us to publish this magazine. I would now like to explain how important this magazine is to me. It has helped us to inform and share with other missionary children what we do in our mission in the Parishes, also sharing our missionary experiences and testimonies. For example, in the first issue of the Magazine, I really liked a child who shared the story of Saint Dominic Savio - he told us a lot about him and this made me love him.

Here are the five most important things I appreciated about him: love for Mass, Eucharist, Jesus and Mary, and school. Ever since I read the story of Saint Dominic Savio, I too have begun to feel inspired and to have attitudes that can help

me to be a saint like him, and also encourage my close friends to reach holiness. To conclude my testimony, I turn to the authorities of our Diocese, begging them to continue to help us publish this Magazine, because it helps us grow in faith, educates us and informs us children.

May God bless you all.
Saint Dominic Savio,
pray for us.





ECUADOR

NATIONAL OFFICE



My name is Janica Zambrano and I am the coordinator of Missionary Childhood and Adolescence of the Cathedral Parish of Machala. We, as a missionary family, have felt the serious need to pass on and responsibly take care of the lives of each of the children, as well as to value and contribute to the development of Missionary Childhood and Adolescence, considering it as an essential mission of love and peace on our part towards God.

We feel the need to remain united through the means and activities at our disposal, such as meetings. Even if we do not have in-person meetings at the moment, we do them via Zoom and try to make them pleasant, so as to awaken missionary interest and love for the mission. As animators, we commit ourselves to continue the mission that Jesus has entrusted to us, so that it becomes a personal commitment of each one of us. As missionaries of the Church, which is Catholic by nature, we must ensure that the action of evangelization spreads and develops among us continuously. We must therefore invite people to participate in these meetings, so that JESUS and the HOLY SPIRIT may guide us and give us the necessary formation and strength to persevere day after day in this mission. Let us not forget that,

as missionaries, we must be vigilant so that the action of evangelization within the Church is not dispersed. It is a primordial commitment of each one of us, especially because of the contribution that the PMS makes to the entire region to which we belong.

We must not forget that World Mission Sunday and the mission must be maintained because, as Catholic Church, these Christian values must be an opening, a first step on the path to mission. It is a path where pastoral action relies on the advice, guidance and direction of a religious leader like Pope Francis. As missionary sisters of Mother Teresa of Calcutta, we must ensure that the consecration of members is not lost, that missionary work is maintained day after day. We cannot abandon or put aside what is being done so that the Lord's grace can work: we are the shepherds of these sheep that are part of the mission. It is a pleasure for me to share through this means, to communicate and describe the evangelizing action. I thank all those who are part of the Missionary Childhood and Adolescence.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

TESTIMONIES

ECUADOR

SCOTLAND

NATIONAL OFFICE



***PRAY THE MISSION ROSARY,
FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE!***



A PRIMARY 3 pupil in the Archdiocese of Glasgow was recently able to supply some 1600 pupils in schools in the city's east end with their own Mission Rosary and has set his sights on expanding his faithful mission.

John Ewing, a pupil at St Paul's Primary School in Tollcross was gifted a Mission Rosary previously during a visit from Missio Scotland to his school and was so taken with it that he wanted children from his school to each have their own.

Having successfully achieved that last year—as well as providing the children of St Timothy's with a Mission Rosary too—John has now set his sights on widening his campaign out and has enlisted the help of Archbishop William Nolan of Glasgow in providing more Mission Rosaries to pupils so that they can pray The Rosary to help make the world a better place.

The letter that John wrote to the archbishop, outlining his own personal mission and even explaining the poignant slogan he devised for his campaign reads as follows:



Dear Archbishop Nolan

I hope that you can help me. I need you to support my children's Rosary mission. I don't need any money, just a letter of support.

Two years ago, I used my pocket money to buy Rosaries for all the kids in Primary 1 in my school, St Paul's in Tollcross. Last year, we bought 400 Rosaries and shared them between St Paul's and St Timothy's. St Barnabus and St Mark's parish helped me raise the money last year. This year, I had enough money to buy 1600 Rosaries from Missio Scotland in time for the Month of Mary in May.

The big plan is to give all the children in Glasgow's primary schools a Rosary eventually. This year, we will have enough for St Michael's, St Anne's, St Denis and maybe one more school.

Our slogan is 'beads are seeds, help plant the seed of prayer and let Glasgow flourish again.'

St John Ogilvie gave his Rosary to the crowds in Glasgow and we can do that too. Can you support us with a letter to give to the schools asking the children to pray the Rosary to make the world a better place?

Thank you,

John Ewing
Primary 3B,
St Paul's Primary School.

Dear John, thank you for writing to me about your initiative to provide all the children in Glasgow primary schools with a Rosary. Congratulations on raising enough money this year to supply 1600 Rosaries.

"I would urge the children in all our schools to pray the Rosary during the month of May to make the world a better place. With all my prayers and good wishes,

William Nolan,
Archbishop of Glasgow

John's dad—also called John—couldn't hide his pride at his son's efforts and hoped that it would reiterate, to young Catholics throughout the archdiocese, the power of prayer.

"The Rosaries are now making their way into the hands of the schoolkids," he said. "Fr Liam [McMahon] read out John's letter to Archbishop Nolan to St Michael's Primary School pupils recently and he told me it went very well. The kids loved the Rosaries and the service.

"It's a great thing to have all the kids praying the Rosary together. It's about making memories for them, it builds their Catholic community identity and introduces them to the power of prayer, which will serve them well throughout their life and will lead them towards Heaven."

The prayer unites us with our brothers and sisters whom we have never met and who are praying for us too in an exchange of love and friendship.

John also informed Archbishop Nolan that he had designed a poster for the campaign, a copy of which he shared with him.

Archbishop Nolan wasted no time in replying to the faithful young man and pledged his support for the campaign stating:

BRAZIL

NATIONAL OFFICE

ON THE OCCASION OF THE NATIONAL DAY OF MISSIONARY CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE WE CELEBRATE THE 180TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SOCIETY



The Missionary Childhood and Adolescence (IAM) celebrated its 11th National Day, in its almost one thousand groups scattered throughout the country, celebrating the 180 years of its existence. This celebration, which took place on May 21, invited children and adolescents from all the dioceses of Brazil to reflect on the theme “Mission is carried out in communion” and the motto “Burning hearts, walking feet”.

During the National Day, IAM groups came together to reflect on the theme and to prepare to experience the celebration of their consecration to the Society in community. In Missionary Childhood and Adolescence, the consecration symbolizes, in a public and solemn

way, the decision of the children and adolescents to be missionaries. At the time of the celebration in the community, the children receive the scarf, symbol of the IAM, which identifies each member, and hand over the missionary piggy bank, a gesture that testifies to solidarity with the poorest children on the planet.

The day can take place in different ways: community, parish and diocesan. It is an opportunity to celebrate the journey and offer children and young people the chance to be protagonists in a wide variety of activities. Many groups organize activities that involve the community, such as treasure hunts, marches, cultural festivals, theatre and musical performances. Groups also

carry out missionary experiences that involve the community in actions such as visits to retirement homes, health facilities, kindergartens and city neighbourhoods.





POSTER - BILLBOARD

“Mission is implemented in communion” is the theme of this year’s National IAM Day and inspired the artistic production. The picture shows the IAM mascots building a jigsaw puzzle in the shape of the world. They symbolize children from different continents, and the main message is that every person, ministry or movement can represent one of these tiles, despite their differences, recognizing the importance of each one and knowing how to make their own missionary contribution.



DIOCESE OF HUMAITÁ (RO)

The Diocese of Humaitá (RO), in the North West Region, celebrated the 11th National Day of Missionary Childhood and Adolescence (IAM). The celebration took place on May 21 in the three deaneries: Humaitá (St Francis of Assisi Parish, Immaculate Conception Parish and St Dominic Savio Parish), Apuí (St Sebastian Parish) and Manicoré (Mary Help of Christians Parish and Our Lady Help of Christians Parish, Uruapiara).

Under the theme “Mission is carried out in communion” and the motto “Burning Hearts, Walking Feet”, the Day gathered 455 participants, including children, adolescents and animators. Families also participated in the event, and 56 children and adolescents and 12 animators were consecrated. According to teenager Maria Linda Lira, coordinator of the group of teenagers from the community of St Clare of Assisi, parish of St Francis of Assisi, “we were very happy to see the children, teenagers and animators renew their commitment and consecrate themselves to the

continuation of their mission within the beautiful Society of Missionary Childhood and Adolescence.”



DIOCESE OF SÃO MIGUEL PAULISTA

The celebration of the XI National Day and the 180th anniversary of the foundation of the Society also involved the groups present in the Diocese of São Miguel Paulista, in São Paulo (SP), who gathered in the parish of São Francisco de Assis dos Pequenos, in the Artur Alvim neighbourhood.

The Day began with the celebration of Holy Mass, during which the participants renewed their consecration and offered their missionary piggy bank, which, this year, will be used to help the Society of Missionary Childhood in the African continent. Subsequently, the children and adolescents, with their animators and parents, walked the streets of the neighbourhood in procession, proclaiming Jesus Christ and the joy of belonging to the Society of Missionary Childhood and Adolescence.

30 YEARS IN THE DIOCESE

This Sunday's event also opened the celebrations for the 30th anniversary of the launching of the Society of Missionary Childhood and Adolescence

in the Diocese of São Miguel Paulista. The Society began operating in the Diocese following the participation of two lay people in the First Latin American Meeting of Missionary Childhood, which took place in Colombia in 1993.

Leonor Onishi, who had participated in the Congress and had been one of the first animators of the Society in the Diocese, participated in the Day, contributing with her testimony: *"At the beginning, we did not really know what Missionary Childhood was, but we returned to Brazil with the mission of encouraging the communities and beginning to work. In 1993, we organized the first meetings, concrete gestures and missionary meetings between the groups. To participate in this initiative today means concretely to see the fruits of the seeds planted thirty years ago"*.

Actually, the Missionary Childhood in the Diocese of São Miguel Paulista has 14 groups, active in five parishes.

CURRENT SITUATION OF THE SOCIETY IN BRAZIL

The Society of Missionary Childhood and Adolescence (IAM) in Brazil has more than 1400 groups, spread across 26 states and in the federal district. The Society keeps its charisma alive, which has been present in Brazil since 1858, when it was officially created. There are documents in the general report of the Society of the Holy Childhood of 1851, which indicate that Missionary Childhood and Adolescence arrived in Brazil thanks to Father Monteil, a Lazarist, in 1850. Today, more than a thousand groups in Brazil continue the history of this Society with great enthusiasm and determination, making the charisma a lifestyle, in which prayer, sacrifice and gestures of solidarity are realized by living the Gospel.



At present, IAM continues to develop in the country with a well-defined organization and structure: it provides training, exchanges experiences with other church ministries that collaborate in the formation of other groups and interaction with the dioceses, within the framework of jointly conceived activities. In this way, a missionary awareness is increasingly formed, from children to adults, and Christians are encouraged to assume their role as a living and active Church, in a permanent state of mission, constantly on the move. "If the heart does not burn, the feet do not walk."

Sr Mari Inês



“Take me there where children need your words...there where they need the meaning of life!”

I dare say that IAM is my first ‘yes’. At a very young age, IAM appeared to me as a shining light, that shines and attracts, the light of the world that the Lord has asked us to be. First my eyes fell in love, and soon after, my heart was won over. I started as a child in a group, then became a coordinator and, finally, a counsellor. In all these moments I never hesitated to say yes, because it was a call from my Lord and I had to listen to it. In IAM, when we are children and adolescents, we are at the centre of everyone’s attention, both as protagonists of the Society and as people to whom care and attention are directed. I, who was a child and teenager in the IAM, know what it means. IAM won my heart to such an extent that I could not leave the Society because, even if you can leave IAM, IAM will never leave you, and this is probably my biggest ‘yes’. Because as a counsellor, I was no longer the lamb, but the shepherd. As a counsellor, I began one of the most beautiful missions of my life: accompanying children, guiding them on the path of the Father, awakening love in their little hearts, awakening love for the mission, love for other children and adolescents. The Lord says that we must all let the children go to him, because the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to them. I am very grateful to be part of this mission. The children have pure hearts. It is nice to see children and teenagers praying for other children and teenagers, to see the love of God in their hearts at such a young age, and to see that I, as a counsellor, with all the other counsellors, have a fundamental role to play in this, because we are instruments of the Lord, for

evangelization. Being a counsellor means more than accompanying a group, is making all the proposed activities possible. It means being close to the child, the adolescent, being a guide, a companion, but leaving them free to trace their path towards the Father. I cannot say that it is easy, but I can say with all certainty that it is a unique, incredible, gratifying emotion that warms my heart when I see my children and teenagers who are happy to be part of IAM, to pray for other children and teenagers, to have the desire to go on a mission to help others, and to overflow with energy. As we said, IAM is a lifestyle, we are IAM and we live IAM. IAM has brought me closer to Christ, to the fulfilment of the mission, and I, just as I was conquered by this beautiful Society, I want IAM to conquer the hearts of as many children and teenagers, so that they can experience, live and share the love of the Father. Missionary Childhood was born in France with letters sent by missionaries from China. Missionary Childhood and Adolescence started in my life in the Castel Branco neighbourhood, with a group that caught my attention and won my heart.

Raissa Maria Silva Da Conceição
counsellor of the messengers of God group
Caxias-ma



“We are all Church and we can evangelize”

Good morning, my name is Sofia, I am 10 years old and I come from Teresina/Piauí, from the community of Nossa Senhora de Aparecida (Our Lady of Nazareth Parish). In this year 2023 I will celebrate my six years in IAM, six years in which I have learnt a lot.

I started at the age of four and many things have happened, but only good things. I have many good memories, like travelling, for example. Being an IAM child is a mission, a mission to transmit the Word of God to the whole world.

When I say I’ve been through a lot, I really mean A LOT. Unfortunately, the year I was coordinator I contracted Covid-19, but if those were God’s plans, I could not interfere. We were isolated for this period (holding online meetings) and, unfortunately, we lost some coordinators. However, I know how I feel about IAM and my mission and I continue to remain strong and steadfast.

Finally, I became the coordinator of my group and I really hope to be a good coordinator and contribute to the regional coordinators’ group and the parish group. I hope that this will be a source of pride for my parents and my councillor and that I will be able to keep my promise to take care of the regional coordination and, who knows, become national coordinator in the future. I really hope to be a missionary example for future IAM children.

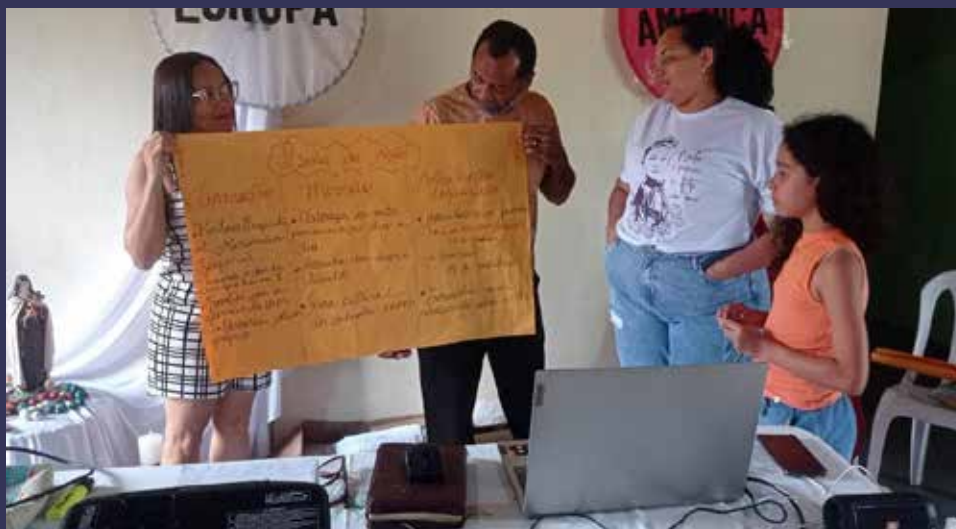


group of children and teenagers from the IAM regional coordination in Piauí

Well, we are all Church and we can evangelize especially those who need the Word of God most. Belonging to IAM is one of the most beautiful feelings, the greatest of which is the faith to evangelize those in need. “Of all the children and adolescents in the world, always friends!”

Sofia Loranny Carvalho Silva
Archdiocese of Teresina – Piauí

Contextualization: during the Covid-19 pandemic, to which Sofia refers, although the meetings continued, taking place online, she was never able to adapt to this means of communication, failing to actively participate. This is why she says in her testimony that there was this distancing and that, when she returned to the church meetings, she started to actively participate in the meetings again and proposed her candidacy for the coordination of a group, and was elected. She is currently a member of the IAM parish and regional coordination groups, having been elected in their respective assemblies.



Presentation of proposals to the IAM Regional Assembly 2023



Weekly meeting with the group in the community



Sofia with the group she coordinates in her community

My name is Antônio Elias Meires de Ribeiro, I am 7 years old and I was named after a friend of my mother's who was a priest and had the same name as me, Antonio Elias. Like him, I also want to become a priest one day when I grow up. I am only seven years old and have been a member of IAM for three, in my parish in the city of Biritinga- Bahia. My sister Maria Clara was already attending the meetings and that is why my mother signed me up too.

I think IAM is a great thing for me. I attend meetings with other children in the parish hall. It's great, because they teach us many things, to be good people and to talk about Jesus, OUR KING. We do many things! We pray the missionary rosary, I read the readings at Mass and I like the IAM prayer, I know it by heart, can you imagine? Ah, I was also consecrated and received my scarf. "Of all the children and teenagers in the world, always friends!"

Antônio Elias Meires de Ribeiro



THE DIOCESE OF BOUGAINVILLE

PAPUA NEW GUINEA



The Diocese of Bougainville comprised 6 deaneries, 35 parishes, 16 Sub-Parishes, 69 Mass Centres, and around 1300 Small Christian Communities. The Catholic Education agency provides and takes care of 80% of Bougainville's entire education system with 102 Early Childhood Education Centres, 327 Elementary Schools, 159 Primary Schools*, 4 High Schools, 2 Secondary Schools and 6 Vocational Schools. Catholic Education Agency of the diocese provides education, formation, and spiritual support to 41 thousand of children and students on all levels of education supported by more than 2 thousand teachers.

The ordinary subsidy will be distributed to the diocese parishes, which have planned various activities to benefit children. The priority will be to support 102 "Early Childhood Education Centres" around the diocese. They need some help, especially with education and faith formation materials for 230 teachers and approximately 2.800 children. Some parishes already have Sunday school programs, where children learn the basic catechism, prayers and songs. Introducing and supporting the Sunday school program in other parishes and Mass Centres is necessary. Several parishes organized children's rallies or camps so that kids could enjoy and play games and learn through competition to get a nice prize. A couple of Elementary Schools will receive help, too, for sports and teaching equipment, especially



Sr. Maddalena Hoang Ngoc

Religious Instruction materials. In all, these programs and activities benefit many children in the diocese.

To help children grow spiritually and physically, the parents, church leaders and pastors of the Diocese carry out various program in the parishes promoting missionary spirituality and nurturing the faith of children and young people.

* Elementary schools in PNG have a three-year program consisting of a preparatory year and grades 1 and 2. Primary schools in PNG have a six-year program consisting of grades 3–8.



THEME 2023

COMMUNION IS THE FRUIT OF SACRAMENTAL LIFE

(Luke 24:17)

THE PONTIFICAL MISSIONARY CHILDHOOD ANTHEM

(Kenya)

*We are the little friends of Jesus
Let us make more friends for Jesus
We are missionary children,
Come let us follow Him friends.*



*We are called by Jesus like Apostles
We are sent by Jesus to all people
We live and work for Jesus
Come let us follow Him friends.*

*We love Jesus so we are Baptized
We love Jesus so we pray
We love Jesus so we forgive
Come let us follow Him friends.*

*We have no fear Angels are with us
We are strong we have the saints
Our Mother Mary guides us
Come let us follow Him friends.*



PONTIFICIUM OPUS A SANCTA INFANTIA
SECRETARIATUS INTERNATIONALIS