



JANUARY 2025 - N. 18

# BULLE IN

PONTIFICIUM OPUS A SANCTA INFANTIA  
SECRETARIATUS INTERNATIONALIS



THE VOICE OF THE CHILDREN

ANGOLA  
ITALY  
CHILE  
GUINEA BISSAU  
INDIA  
MADAGASCAR  
PERÚ  
CAMEROON  
RWANDA  
CAMBODIA

**SPECIAL**

XAVERIAN MISSIONARIES  
OF MARY

MISSIONARY CHILDHOOD  
REDEEMING BAPTISM

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SANCTA INFANTIA  
SECRETARIATUS  
INTERNATIONALIS



MISSIONARY NEWSLETTER  
N.18 - JANUARY 2025

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Cihle, National Office Cambodia, Diocese  
of Cabinda, Diocese of Bissau, Diocese of  
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# GO AND INVITE EVERYONE TO THE BANQUET...

(Mt 22,9)

A warm greeting from the International Secretary of the Pontifical Society of the Holy Childhood.

I am Sr. Inês Paulo Albino, ASC, of the Congregation of the Sisters of Adorers of the Blood of Christ, Secretary General of this Pontifical Society, and I am very happy to share with you my gratitude to God for belonging to the Universal Church of Christ and for having had the experience as National Director of the PMS, in Guinea-Bissau.

They were wonderful and very happy years and I learned a lot about the universal mission of the Church and not only that, they also helped me in many ways; for example, to realize the richness of the diversity of ethnicities, cultures and peoples of my homeland, and subsequently in the other services I carried out in my Congregation and now with the Pontifical Missionary Society of the Holy Childhood.

But first of all, on behalf of POSI and myself, I would like to express my immense gratitude to Sister Roberta Tremarelli, AMSS, former Secretary General of the Pontifical Missionary Society of the Holy Childhood, for who she is and for the countless things she has accomplished in these seven (7) years at the head of the Pontifical Missionary Society of the Holy Childhood.

The truth is that she is a true, unstoppable missionary with a big heart, ardent and full of apostolic zeal, following the model of Jesus Christ, who welcomes everyone without judgement, especially children and adolescents.

The theme of World Mission Day: **GO AND INVITE EVERYONE TO THE BANQUET...** (Mt 22,9) celebrated on October 20, 2024, reminds us of the urgency of mission, of going out of ourselves and reach out to others to invite them to the banquet.

The Church is missionary by nature and, consequently, all the baptized participate in the three-fold mission of Christ: *Prophet, King and Priest*. Therefore, the mission of proclaiming

Jesus Christ is the task of all the baptized who are called to witness with their lives our adherence to Christ the Saviour. Pope Francis reminds us that *the disciples-missionaries must carry out their 'with joy, magnanimity and benevolence that are the fruits of the Holy Spirit within them; not by pressuring, coercing or proselytizing, but with closeness, compassion and tenderness, and in this way reflecting God's own way of being and acting'.*

I address you, children and adolescents, because your age is significant, because at this age you are generally very generous and fervent towards everyone, committed, joyful, full of enthusiasm and virtue, not to mention your incomparable vivacity, capable of changing your lives and that of others. *You are the hope and the awakening of the life of the Church*, therefore WHISPER with your desire to live, with prayer, with sacrifice and with the sharing of what you are and what you have, that is, with your concrete missionary life and the witness of your Christian life, the **GOSPEL OF CHRIST** in the hearts of peoples and cultures to continue to create a new world, using all the means of communication (more modern, more open and more universal) at your disposal to announce Jesus Christ, our Friend and Guide. Finally, I would like to thank all those who support us and work for this newsletter, and I would like to emphasize the beautiful and wonderful thing it does for us, for you and for the world, because it is a silent presence for the readers, but fruitful, to provoke, especially in children and adolescents, the enthusiasm for the missionary vocation, in an attempt to involve our families and parish communities in **'inviting everyone to the FEAST'**.



**SR. INÊS PAULO ALBINO, ASC**

Secretary General  
Pontifical Society Missionary Childhood

# MISSIONARY CHILDHOOD, REDEEMING BAPTISM

Over the last few years in Spain the Missionary Childhood Association has moved closer to the Pontifical Society of the “Holy Childhood”, the latter being the original name- still in use today - given by its founder, Msgr. Charles de Forbin-Janson (1785-1844), bishop of Nancy, France. Recalling that the “Holy Childhood” is none other than that of Child Jesus, who the Society’s little ones can join to partake in His mission is - evidently - transcendental to grasping the essence of this Church initiative.

However, alongside the Society’s official name there was - from the outset - another commonly used one which described its function: thus, the Pontifical Society of the Holy Childhood immediately became the “Society of Redemption”. And, just like the passage of time has blurred among us the true meaning of “Holy Childhood” - to the point where it was seen as an old-fashioned, mushy name to call children

holy - the meaning of “redemption” is equally unclear.

This recent rediscovery of the depth underlying the original name, the Society’s baptismal meaning - as it had to - manifested, and one can intuitively link it to the aforementioned “redemption”, in a spiritual sense. However, this above-mentioned baptismal aspect, appeared destined not to receive much more of our attention until a providential coincidence - which will subsequently be discussed - provided us with the opportunity to reconnect to that “redemption” dimension, crucial to the Missionary Childhood. A “redemption” which, historically, has taken on “bodily” forms of assistance, of human promotion, and which is often presented today - in a dualistic perspective - in contrast to the other, “spiritual” aspect.

This article aims to attempt to recover the significance of the Missionary Childhood as the “Society of Redemption”, to see what it can reveal to us here in the 21st century. Although we will begin by retracing the origins of the “Holy Childhood”, it will soon become apparent that the interest in this topic is anything but “archeological”. On the contrary, this itinerary will reveal a pressing, three-pronged question: redemption (saving) of the body (no organism watches over and



**Rafael Santos Barba**  
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**Spain**





has watched over children more than the Church, as much as they would have us believe otherwise), the question of spiritual redemption (the ordinary need for baptism - which is fairly undervalued today - and its missionary transcendence) and that of the relationship between these two levels.

Our starting hypothesis is as follows: by presenting itself as the “Society of redemption” right from the start, the Missionary Childhood is teaching us something, something very important. Delimiting and describing it is the purpose herein, leaving open (while also inviting the pursuit of) the rigorous dogmatic foundation of that “something”.

## REDEMPTION AT THE BASE OF THE MISSIONARY CHILDHOOD

### First approximation: “the Society of redemption”

The text which could be considered the “programmatic text” of the Society of the Holy Childhood is dated March 25, 1844 in Paris, that is to say a scant 10 months after the Society’s foundation (May 19, 1843) and three and a half months before the demise of its promoter (July 11, 1844). It is notable that said text, the “Notice from His Grace of Forbin-Janson, on the institution of the Holy Childhood”, includes the concept of redemption in the very first - and very long - sentence, which constitutes a veritable mission statement:

*Saving from death a multitude of children born to infidel parents, who whim and indigence, superstitions and the most*



*repugnant and unnatural barbarities destroy by the millions, by the hundreds of millions, both in river waters and in the abysses of the seas, being devoured by dogs and pigs; most of all opening - by way of baptism - the gates of Heaven to the biggest possible number of these poor creatures, deprived of fatherly love since birth; preparing a safe and efficient means of regenerating idolatrous nations by providing a Christian education to those who can be saved from death, and then make these rescued children instruments of salvation, like school teachers, doctors and obstetricians, catechists and even indigenous*

*missionaries and priests, this is the idea that for many years has been worrying the Bishop of Nancy, an idea he believes to be fruitful, worthy of being submitted to Catholic charity.*

If we only consider the cited text, and still in the realm of our perspective and current parameters, it is likely that the meaning of redemption to which it refers is not entirely clear. Besides an intuitive albeit not very precise interpretation, we would surely wonder if “saving” means “freeing children from death” or “opening - by way of baptism, the gates of Heaven” to them, or both simultaneously, along with a third, giving them a “Christian education”. Contrarily to the relative lack of clarity with which this concept presents itself to us, Msgr. de Forbin-Janson perceives it with sufficient clarity to call his initiative the “Society of Redemption” on three occasions.

It is illuminating to note that these three mentions have the same context. Considering



this, one could conclude that, for the French bishop, said redemption is a “distinctive feature” which makes it advisable to differentiate his Society from the one for the Propagation of Faith (to avoid transforming it into a sort of “youth division” of the latter) by allocating it its own solidarity fund:



*There also remains the necessity not to limit this Society and to create a special, distinct fund, not to be shared with others, not only so the money stemming from the sacrifice may go directly to its object, but also because any Society with which ours were to distribute our pecuniary resources would put the distributors in great*



*difficulty, or rather in a sort of need to attribute everything to the Society of redemption; because, how could they deny a certain sum for the life, for the saving of a child? Like limiting divine mercy itself!... In what way, for any sum, to say: You shall go no further!... No, for the Society of redemption there are no limits aside from those providentially assigned by the special, distinct fund which provides it with Christian charity.*

*[...] we reiterate it, these two Societies [the one for the Propagation of Faith and the one of the Holy Childhood], which must always remain distinct (for the specialty indispensable to the redemption one), seem destined to offer each other mutual support.*

An allusion as specific as that of “a certain sum ... for the life, for the saving of a child” seems

to imply the institution of a charity fund resulting from the sacrifices of the little ones and used for the indicated purpose of redemption, which leads the founder to speak of “Society of *redemption*”, using the term to mean ‘the sum for a *ransom*, or one which has been requested’. To this end, nowadays, we could still harbor doubts as to what this *redemption* really is - the price of a ransom (‘a certain sum’) - which connects, with no solution of continuity, the bodily (“life”, in a situation of grave danger) and the spiritual aspect (“redemption”, as a result of baptism). Let us thus proceed.

### ***Delimitation and permeability of the concept***

Alongside these three precise mentions of the “Society of redemption”, there are other points in the “Notice...” wherein, without expressly using the word in question, we see the three elements we have identified, that is to say price, life and baptism, intertwining almost instantaneously:

*[Father Mouly, Lazarist, Mission Superior to Beijing,] would like to be able to take in many [abandoned children] ... It is only the expenses that prevent him from doing so... He however speaks of a number of children [rescued from the streets] who were presented to him by pious Christians for baptism and who he would adopt ... Because, he adds, after making them children of God, I could never choose to let them die on the streets and let the dogs devour them...”*



*[...] what is still needed to save a great number of dying children who could be easily baptized, and to have as many of them adopted and educated and healthy in Christian families, what is needed, so to speak, is money, sometimes very little [...]*

It is another passage in which *redemption* is not specifically mentioned but as it once again connects the three “ingredients”, it more clearly corroborates the interpretation detailed in the previous paragraph:

*This is our very reasoning; this is our job. Yes, we want to snatch from death the largest number of children born to idolatrous parents, and since they are sold to benefit greed and dissoluteness, we want to buy as many as we can for the sake of religion, for God, for the glory of His name, for their baptism; We also want to ensure eternal bliss to those who die in early age; we want to turn those who survive into instruments of salvation for their brothers.*

The word “*buy*” here takes on such intensity, mostly with respect to children, that it predisposes us to suppose this redemption is actually the salvific purchase and its corresponding price. This conclusion is historically correct, as per an expert in the Societies and in this time period, like Manuel de Unciti, who talks about how the Holy Childhood “made redemption the main chapter of its work in the missions”<sup>1</sup>:

*Redemption was diversified into two types: one was the purchase - excuse the term - of children and especially of girls from parents who, on account of poverty, couldn't feed or raise their*



*newborns. Male and female missionaries would conclude the deal and the child would be entered into the community of orphanages the Society was opening in all the missions.*

*The other redemption was even harder. Missionaries' tales recount the dramatic sight of newborns left on the street by parents aided by the darkness of night ... Many missionaries, especially women, had to develop the custom of leaving early in the morning to collect abandoned boys and girls. This operation to save human lives at the last minute became so important that, in some missions - especially in China - groups of male and female baptizers were formed.*

This very precise explanation confirms the reason for the label of “Society of redemption”. It cannot however be overlooked that, actually, in the second form of redemption mentioned, there are no payments and, as it is described, within it the “redeemers” basically end up turning - on account of the urgency of the situation - into “baptizers”. And the limits between bodily assistance and baptism (apart from the “ransom”) remain blurry, or become permeable, even in Unciti's account. He therefore seems to confirm the distinction when he speaks of “redeemed and baptized children”, but it's a little hazier when he refers to an act that had become commonplace in the Society:

*This behavior gave rise to the creation of godfathers for these children and to the practice of associating children with the Society upon administering the sacrament of baptism unto them. With a donation to charity, the godfather earned the privilege, in the missions, to have*

<sup>1</sup> UNCITI, M. DE, “Incidencia de la Santa Infancia en la pastoral de la Iglesia”, en OBRAS MISIONALES PONTIFICIAS DE ESPAÑA, La misión universal de la Iglesia y la educación de la fe (Verbo Divino, Estella 1994) 29-38; p. 37.

*a poor little Chinese child be named after their godfather at baptism [...]. With such donations the ransom was paid and the life of the Holy Childhood orphanages was made possible.*

In fact, in the Society's Secretariat itself, Sr. Maria Teresa Crescini clearly linked to baptism that donation which Unciti, in vague terms, attributed to the redemption: "Every family did everything possible for their children to be registered with the Holy Childhood on the day of their baptism, making a donation so that another child may also receive the grace of the baptism". Either way, even comprehending that the charity offered by baptizing a child and registering them with the Society was for the redemption (different from baptism) of another child in the mission, this act, promoted from the very outset, would continue to pedagogically suggest that baptism "precedes" redemption (making it possible) and it is undoubtedly the first thing. We will soon discuss the meaning of this primacy.

### ***The three-pronged objective of the Society***

Notwithstanding these ambiguities, whether real or ostensible, it is clear that for Msgr. de Forbin-Janson redemption is followed by the further step of Christian education. This becomes clear in the following lines:

*Members of religious communities that will head our facilities will be mothers and fathers to those many families of redeemed children. There we will teach them virtue, we will give them a solid education, and as they will not have any idolatrous customs, many of them will find themselves prepared for the apostolate from childhood.*



Even though, as it is self-explanatory, we will not dwell on this point, we do not want to neglect to underline its importance in the Society's past and present realization. So important as to become the third constitutive element of its finalities, as stated in the very first lines of its "Policy" dated 1872: "The object of the *Holy Childhood* is baptism, redemption and the *Christian education* of children born to infidel parents in China or other heathen countries".

This is in line with the purpose stated by the founder in the first line of "Notice..."

Interestingly, the above articulation of the objective of the Society opens a complementary door in the search for, or confirmation, of a definition: by elimination, redemption is that which, in the scope of the Holy Childhood's original purview, is *neither* baptism *nor* education. What remains, is thus liberating children from material death, even for a fee, which is in agreement with Unciti's representation. That could however beg another question: why is it then that the "Policy"

opts for the order baptism-redemption-education and not for the redemption-baptism-education order which, in some way, is more expected and, in fact, appears in materials and texts of the Society or about the Society? There are two answers to this which are not mutually exclusive.

The first is that baptism comes first as it is the most important thing, essential. For his contemporaries there was no doubt about that. So Msgr. de Forbin-Janson wondered how to postpone this Society "[...] when thousands of children die every day... and die without a baptism!...". In this regard, independently from how the question of the savior of unbaptized children may have been revisited in subsequent





theology, the faith and ecclesial adhesion of those Catholics in the Founder's time are to us not only exemplary, but point to something that nowadays is sometimes broached very delicately: the real ordinary need for baptism for said eternal salvation. Juan Carlos Carvajal explains this notion as follows:

*Just like the Holy Childhood foundation is conditioned by the political, social and economic context in which it came to life, it was also conditioned by the theological conceptions of the time. There is no doubt: in the minds and hearts of early 19th century Christians was the desire for heathen peoples to get baptized and move closer to faith as soon as possible. According to traditional teachings, they were well aware that the Church was necessary for salvation or, as the Latin saying goes, "extra Ecclesiam nulla salus" (there is no salvation outside of the Church). That is why a Society which collected dying children from the streets and baptized them shortly before death was so successful; it moreover "bought" children despised by their parents, first baptized them and then brought them up in faith. This Society - in which all of Christianity soon became involved - sought not only to save children from death and inhumane conditions; first of all, and foremost, the object was to introduce them to the Church to carry out, through faith and baptism, the salvific will of God, "who wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4).*

The second answer is a practical one: in those

circumstances, baptism had to occur first because, in practice, it was often the *only* possible thing. The situation in which the missionaries found children were so deplorable that there was no time to do anything but baptize them; and this, with the added urgency that this was considered essential for salvation in absolute terms. Going back to the founder's words, it figures that he hopefully dreamt of "how many thousands of infidel children whose life is at risk will be baptized."

### **The voice of Popes**

The time has come to dwell on mentions of redemption with respect to the Holy Childhood by subsequent Popes throughout this Society's first century of life. After **Gregory XVI**, who encouraged Msgr. Forbin-Janson with the foundation with the following words: "In truth, it is a Work of God. It has our blessing", we see that under **Pius IX** (1846-1878) redemption is from material death, but it immediately gives way to baptism:



**Papa Gregorio XVI**

*In fact, whereas on the one hand [the Holy Childhood] is dedicated to the salvation of unhappy children in China and other idolatrous regions, condemned by their parents to a premature end; if on the one hand it saves them from a cruel end and purifies them in the healing waters of the Baptism, on the other it calls on all Catholic children to join forces to save abandoned children and, through the very exercise of this sublime act of charity, to recognize in due time the privileged grace*

with which God has called them to the wondrous light of faith [...].

**Leo XIII** (1878-1903), in his *Sancta Dei civitas* encyclical (3-12-1880), more specifically refers to the price paid by the Society in an attempt to save the soul in any case and, if possible, also the body of a child in peril, in an intervention comprising two nearly simultaneous acts:

*[...] [The Holy Childhood] aims to save and educate to Christian customs those unlucky children whose parents, driven by laziness or poverty have mercilessly abandoned, especially in Chinese towns, where this barbaric practice is more common. These children are those taken in with love by the charity of the faithful, sometimes by way of a ransom, taking care to purify them in the waters of Christian regeneration, so they may grow, with the help of God, as hope for the Church or at least, should they die, that they may be able to gain eternal happiness.*

Following **St. Pius X** (1903-1914), who described the Holy Childhood as a worthy Society “of the Church and of civil society”, we come to Pope **Benedict XV** (1914-1922):

*A simple invocation, suited to the feeble intelligence of little ones who can barely part their lips in prayer, and such modest alms that they could not be conceived as more tenuous, allow the members of the Holy Childhood to save in time, and redeem in eternity, those children born to infidel parents in remote regions.*



**Pope Pius X**



**Pope Leo XIII**



**St. Pius X**

We shall include three mentions, now without the word redemption, in distinct texts of the pontifical magisterium on the mission. The first can be found in the apostolic letter *Maximum illud* (30-11-1919) by Benedict XV himself, where he speaks of the Holy Childhood as a “Society whose purpose is to baptize the dying children of heathen parents.” The second, in the encyclical *Rerum Ecclesiae* (28-2-1926), by **Pius XI** (1922-1939) intertwines the three aspects listed in the 1872 “Policy” as objectives of the Society, stating that it “aims to accustom our children to cooperate, with their help, most of all to the salvation and the Christian education of heathen children saved, thanks to them, from death or abandonment.”

The third allusion, with which we shall conclude this itinerary, appears in *Praeses Consilii* (4-12-1950), the letter with which **Pius XII** (1939-1958) instituted “one day a year to promote the “Pontifical Society of the Holy Childhood” through prayer and almsgiving”. Having the Society turned one hundred years old, Pope Pacelli explained the objectives that drive it:

*Taking in abandoned children very charitably, feeding them and educating them in Catholicism, washing and purifying them ritually with lustral water (from the baptism), teaching them literature and arts, training them in the evangelical virtues, making them worthy Christians and worthy citizens. All these objectives, in the measure in which*



*it can, this Pontifical Society, with laudable commitment and effort, seeks to realize.*

### **A clarifying passage**

To conclude the review of the mentions of *redemption* by the founder in “Notice...” and to attempt to draw conclusions from what has been said, it is opportune to recall a long passage in which the definition of redemption stands, as in the beginning and with the same factors (material life, baptism, more almsgiving to make one or both things possible), a little imprecise, unlike its “spirit” and the global context in which it must be understood:

*Who would dare make the smallest gesture of contempt or disdain, or use the sad trick of holding an arm up to save a child from death... or removing the hand that would open up Heaven to them by pouring baptismal water on their forehead!... God forbid! and, on the contrary, our Society is to count throughout the centuries with the help and effort of every tender and generous heart, of every mother’s heart animated by faith, by charity... because to mothers’ hearts we often entrust rapid success and would happily tell them words similar to those of St. Vincent de Paul, one of our Society’s patrons:*

*Here, yes, here are these poor children to whom we ask you to be mothers. Look at them regardless of the distance, watch them get up and raise their pleading hands towards*



**Pope Benedict XV**



**Pope Pius XI**



**Pope Pius XII**

*you... asking you not only for life in this world, as their holy intercessor demanded for them, but, asking you in our voice, for baptism first of all... If you abandon them, they shall die, forever deprived of the sight of God ... They will die by the hundreds, smothered, drowned, crushed, eaten alive by dogs and pigs. Conversely, if you adopt them, they shall live; if with so little almsgiving you create for them a treasure of salvation and eternal happiness.*

In this telltale fragment, several “clues” attract attention. On the one hand, what is underlined is the need to save these children’s lives “not just in this world” by offering them “baptism foremost” so they may obtain eternal life. On the other hand, the voice of the Society of the Holy Childhood, “our voice”, is readying to defend children. And finally, a new clue of the utmost importance, how redemption intended as “almsgiving” for the liberation of children creates “a treasure of redemption”, as it refers to - as a sign - the ransom paid by Christ, which allows these little ones to access the already mentioned “eternal happiness” which He conquered for all, and whose doors are opened by baptism.

To summarize what has been laid out so far, it is worth quoting Carvajal again at length:

*In our conception - at times too partial and hasty - it comes as a surprise what the bishop of Nancy meant by “snatching from death*





the largest possible number of children" ["Notice..." p. 119]. Evidently, at first the expression has a literal meaning: children are thrown into water, and babies abandoned on the streets as food for dogs and pigs...; it is

urgent to save them (*les racheter*), literally, paying their "price" and saving them from death. But for the bishop this "snatching them from death" has a much deeper meaning: these children need to be redeemed (*les racheter*) by way of baptism; it is about guaranteeing "eternal bliss to all those who die at an early age." [...]

Baptism in particular is the first one and a half means to save children afflicted by the power of evil and death and regenerate them as children of God. But, once regenerated, "these new Moseses" [*ibid.*, p.123], possess divine grace and, in designated centers, are able to receive the Christian education needed to become "instruments of salvation for their brothers". These children, Christian by baptism and training will become those school teachers, those doctors and catechists, as well as the indigenous priests and missionaries that will be able to evangelize their people by speaking their same dialects, and by participating in the same cultures [see *ibid.*, pp. 110, 124].

### Provisional Overview

From what has been seen so far, at least three main conclusions can be drawn:

1. From a historical perspective, redemption is strictly intended as the sum (or the intervention, when no cost is involved) needed to allow the Holy Childhood Society to remove from life-threatening danger those children victim to abandonment, depravation and cruelty, whose terrible situation is denounced by missionaries.
2. Said redemption aids the guardianship of the child in their bodily, physical and material reality, but it is never mentioned without necessarily referring to the spiritual one forthwith, as eternal salvation is the highest good and the definitive horizon.
3. For this very reason, redemption and baptism are distinct, but not disassociated.

Perhaps the second and third point do not catch our eye too much, but their background is surprising, especially if we consider them within the historical coordinates of the 19th century. To state it provocatively, a two-pronged question could be asked with regard to the "attitude" of the Holy Childhood: if the objective was baptism, why did we have to worry so much about redemption, that is, of physical needs?; and if the objective was redemption, why did baptism have to have primacy? It is illuminating how the Society manages to escape this Sadducean trap of sorts by interpreting redemption as a "sign" of baptism, and baptism as an "efficient sign" of eschatological bodily redemption (this will be further discussed subsequently).

The transcendence of this "solution" will be better understood by comparing it with the approach that, in missiological terms, **St. Paul VI** took in his Message for World Mission Day in 1970; with the following quote, again long, but enormously clarifying, this section comes to its end. Keeping in mind what we have analyzed about the Holy Childhood and its finalities, where the Pope speaks of "evangelization" in his text, we will apply his teachings to baptism, and



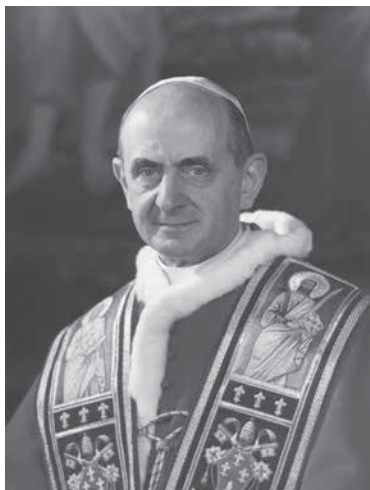
where he speaks of “development”, to salvation:

*The question of dualism: evangelization, development, is to be posed regarding the method: should evangelization or development come first? The answer cannot be univocal, but must be dictated by experience, possibility, by vigilant, patient empiricism, in accordance with apostolic genius and with the needs of the different situations, with unfailing regard for the efficacy and holiness of missionary activity (see Ad gentes, 6).*

*We can envisage three moments: before, during and after evangelization, which always holds its intentional and essential priority, development, that is the deployment of temporal means, can have its pastoral priority.*

*We speak of pre-evangelization, that is approaching future Christians through charity, assistance, by example, through cohabitation and presence. Then we speak of service: where the Gospel arrives, so does charity; it is a testimony - concurrently with evangelization - of its human validity: here come schools, hospitals, social welfare, professional training; it is the end prize that comes after evangelization, that is the new art of living well.*

*In conclusion, we shall observe that, if the question of the “evangelization and development” dualism applies to the doctrinal dimension, in reviewing the respective ends and in the hierarchy of relative intentions, it finds its answer in its Conciliar Decree definition: “The goal of missionary activity is evangelization and the implantation of the Church” (Ad gentes, 6; see Fidei donum: A.A.S. 49 (1957), p. 236). But in practice those*



**St. Paul VI**

*who have taken on the missionary commitment must be convinced that evangelization can also be accomplished through activities aimed at human and temporal development of the peoples to whom it is directed. Such activities can blend with evangelization when, elevated to the dimension of charity, they also have a goal and when, having the means they can - executively - precede or even accomplish evangelizing work.*

## **REDEMPTION AND MISSION: THE SURPRISING CONTRIBUTION OF THE HOLY CHILDHOOD**

### **Msgr. Forbin-Janson’s “new Moseses”**

As we mentioned in the beginning recent circumstances have providentially provided new clues on the aim of the initiative founded by Msgr. de Forbin-Janson and on its meaning as the “Society of redemption”. On occasion of this Pontifical society turning 180 years old, Pope Francis released a message in which he recalled the form for the registration with the Holy Childhood for the little girl that we worship today as St. Teresa of Child Jesus, Patron saint of the missions. This fact encouraged us to ask the Carmel of Lisieux to send us, if possible, a digital file of that memo or registration form, whose existence we learned of from the website of the International Secretariats of the Pontifical Mission Societies.

The picture of the document in question, which we are very grateful to have received from the convent’s archives, shows that little Teresa Martin was registered with the Holy Childhood on January 12, 1882, that is, when she had just turned 9 (she had been born on the second of that very month in 1873). The image on the print shows two missionaries taking in two Chinese children, who are carried over the shoulder in baskets on the tips of a pole; children who will

be joining four other little ones who - on the left - seem to be already tended to and looked after by said missionaries.

In itself the image greatly expresses what we have seen so far regarding the redemption at the base of the Society, but what is truly revealing as concerns our study is a quote in the book Exodus (2:9), which can be found in the recall in Latin and French: “Accipe puerum istum et nutri mihi[;] ego dabo tibi mercedem tuam”, “Reçois cet enfant et nourris le pour moi. Je te donnerai moi même ta récompense”; which means: “Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages.” This quote appears after the Pharaoh’s order to kill all newborn Hebrew boys and drown them in the Nile, in the passage corresponding to the birth and youth of Moses (Exodus 2.1-10):

*Now a man of the tribe of Levi married a Levite woman, and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months. But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him.*

*Then Pharaoh’s daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her attendants were walking along the riverbank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her female slave to get it. She opened it and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him. “This is one of the Hebrew babies,” she said.*

*Then his sister asked Pharaoh’s daughter,*



*“Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?”*

*“Yes, go,” she answered. So the girl went and got the baby’s mother. Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, “Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you.” So the woman took the baby and nursed him. When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh’s daughter and he became her son. She named him Moses, saying, “I drew him out of the water.”*

Evidently, the choice of such a phrase for the souvenir image is in no way random, but also brings light to a powerful expression of Msgr. Forbin-Janson’s in his “Notice...”: therein he refers to children rescued by the Society and “prepared for the apostolate from an early age” as “all of these new Moseses, who, rescued from themselves, will become saviors to their brothers.” Let us try and delve into this journey with the perspective of the Holy Childhood as the “Society of redemption”.

### **Dignity of childhood**

Let us consider some of the details from the







biblical tale in Exodus 2.1-10, connecting it to the highly held vision of childhood that Msgr. Forbin-Janson laid out in his "Notice...". In fact, for the bishop the child (in the book of Exodus, Moses) is a "beautiful" person who deserved to be rescued. If one contemplates the needs and cries of a child and opens their heart to this reality, they "are moved". Seeking an answer to that need is the consequent reaction: it means finding someone who, like a real "mom", will raise that endangered child until, once grown, whoever "drew him from the water" can take care of him; he then "became her son".

What exactly constitutes this child's "beauty"? We can easily understand this by recalling along with Msgr. Forbin-Janson that, "when the adorable boy of the Two Natures was born in Bethlehem, Son of God and Son of man, Son of enchanting *mildness and mercy*", "His nascent humanity seemed to have consecrated even his early life, making His childhood easily and covering it with the *sweet reflection of His glory*". Every boy and girl thus, possesses unique dignity and beauty, stemming from the fact that the Son of God was incarnated "becoming a child to become a man" and- in doing so- saved us.

The founder then details the words and acts of the Lord in His public life which reflect his attitude towards children; "a new language of teachings and examples" which - so to speak - confirms the dignity granted



to childhood by His Holy Childhood, by his incarnation and his hidden life. His evaluation surprisingly even indicates children as a model for adult disciples. Pope Saint Leo Magnus summarized it marvelously:

*Christ loves childhood, which He himself experienced in the beginning in his soul*

*and body. Christ loves childhood, teacher of humility, rule of innocence, model of tenderness. Christ loves childhood; towards it go the lives of the elderly, towards it goes old age. Those who He elevates to the eternal kingdom He recalls to His own example.*

How then not to be "moved" before a child and, most of all, before a child in need who is suffering, unfairly treated? In the dynamics of the incarnation, the consequences of the above mentioned in terms of the French bishop's initiative are evident and explain all the subsequent activity of the Society of Missionary Childhood, in the way we think of it today. Juan Carlos Carvajal explains:

*Thus, because of their dependence, children evoke Child Jesus; they are His younger siblings. But Jesus was not only dependent in childhood, He was always dependent. In truth, Jesus is the eternal Child-Son of God. He can remain tied to his Father, forever dependent on His divine providence: He survives by*



receiving everything from Him (see Matthew 11.27) and carrying out His will (see John 4.34); and it is from such dependence that He saves man. Here Jesus's identification among children becomes clear, He and He who sent Him, and His imperative character towards his disciples: welcoming a child - in His name - means welcoming the Child-Son of God, and welcoming him where He dwells, in truth, means welcoming His providential Father, with whom He is one in love (see John 10.30, 14.9). In fact, by welcoming children in their weakness, protecting them from threats and promoting their overall development, we are welcoming and rescuing the Son of God Himself, who kept his glory hidden and presented as defenseless and in need of man's care.

In welcoming Jesus's weakness represented in children, we are welcoming the salvation that God the Father freely offers and grants to those - with merciful and generous hearts like His - take in and look after His youngest children.

### **In the logic of the Church**

In one of his homilies on the book of Exodus, Origen reads the relevant passage (Exodus 2:1-10), which can reveal another important clue in terms of the Society of the Holy Childhood:

*I think in the Pharaoh's daughter we can*

*glimpse the Church gathered among the people and she, albeit having an ungodly, wicked father, hears the Prophet tell her: "Listen, daughter, and pay careful attention:*

*Forget your people and your father's house. Let the king be enthralled by your beauty" [Psalm 45 (44) 11-12]. This is the woman who leaves her father's house and approaches the waters to be purified of the sins she had committed in her father's house.*

*Then, forthwith, she receives bowels of mercy [see Colossians 3:12 (Luke 1:78)] and takes pity on the child.*

*This Church of nations finds that Moses was lying among the reeds abandoned by his people and exposed; she feeds him, nourishes him among her own and that's where he spends his childhood. But when he grew up, she took him with her and adopted him as her son.*

It would perhaps not be unreasonable to develop the inspiration Origen states at the beginning of this text to attempt to comprehend why the passage in Exodus 2:9 is so evocative in expressing the Holy Childhood's intentions as to become an emblematic phrase in registration memos. In this way, in the Pharaoh's daughter (the Church "gathered by people" and "of nations"), we can better discern the local Church in its formation, stemming from the missionary announcement: and in Moses's mother, the new Israel, the universal Church and, above all local, already established Churches.

The Society founded by Msgr. Forbin-Janson would thus appear to be the "mother" Church which, surprisingly through its children (a role which, in the biblical passage, is carried out by Moses's vigilant sister, Maria), comes to the aid of that "adoptive" mother, still unable to take care of her offspring. Moses, the story's central figure (still not the great agent he'll become, but as a patient subject), has all the power to evoke - as an exposed child - those other abandoned children that contemporary





missionaries would find and save.

Therefore, what is being suggested is that the endangered child (initially located in China) is saved and by and through the “water”, that of the *baptism*; he is *rescued* by his mother, the Church, who rears him until she can return him to that young Church prefigured in the Pharaoh’s daughter; he is also *educated*, by the former and then the latter (the three elements constituting the Society’s purpose according to its 1872 “Policy”). This process culminates when the “Pharaoh’s daughter” Church can “repay” the

“mother” Church for the favor received, enriching it with its contribution of communion and mission. Besides the greater or lesser success of the concrete application we are proposing it seems evident that, in seeing children assisted by the Holy Childhood as “new Moseses”, Msgr. de Forbin-Janson presents them as rescued and, simultaneously, as

saviors for their people; that is as “*redeemed and redeemers*”, as “*baptized and sent*”, as “*disciples and missionaries*”. Rescued by and through baptismal waters (like Moses in the Nile) they are sent to save others by offering them the same liberating waters (like Moses to his people in crossing the Red Sea). One could say, all things considered, that in his simple allusion to Moses, the French bishop implicitly delivers the ecclesial, and therefore vocational, baptismal and missionary meaning of the Society he founded.

### ***Missionary purpose of the Society***

To better analyze this essential missionary sense of the Holy Childhood’s charisma, let us start with its particular way of perceiving and acting, as described in the paragraph above.

Juan Carlos Carvajal sums it up as follows:

*This Society was ideated by Msgr. de Forbin-Janson] with an integral nature; not only did it seek to save the children of infidel parents from death and offer them acceptable living conditions, it also sought to educate them humanly and Christianly in a series of centers, so that they may become those new Moseses who - now liberated by the waters - would be the liberators and evangelizers of their peoples.*



*In this perspective it is important to stress that the contribution of childhood to the ecclesial mission is not only in the Society’s origins: it is also in the goal. Initially, affected children are rescued, baptized and educated in faith by way of donations and their Christian brothers’ prayers; but, in time, they also become subjects of the mission*

*to their peoples, and encourage the life of faith of their brothers in Churches with long-standing Christian traditions.*

Through a complementary approach, Joseph Ballong-Wen-Newuda notes how the three-pronged object of the Holy Childhood mentioned in its “Policies” is unified in a single mission; This is in accordance, moreover, with that “integral nature” Carvajal stressed:

*Each of these three goals, in fact, was none other than a way to reach one single goal: saving children; rescue, baptism and education comprised the three axes of the Society’s mission: children were rescued from death to be born again out of water and out of the Holy Spirit; with the grace of baptism; on top of that, though, they had*



*to be raised to know God and love Him in a spirit of apostolic commitment, of Christian charity and brotherly solidarity. It thus was, since its creation, a specifically missionary association.*

This missionary sense provided by the Holy Childhood ultimately presumes something unusual: the “audacity” of interpreting the missionary mandate as also directed at children in the measure in which, being baptized, they cannot stop being - in their own way and to their own degree - its recipients. The Society in fact adopts - as two of the three components of its goal - *baptism* and *education*, which we expressly find in the articulation of Matthew’s command: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20).

The third component, *redemption*, appears in the root of Luke’s missionary mandate: “He told them, “This is what is written: *The Messiah will suffer* and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things” (Luke 24: 46-48). And the mission of the Church, driven by the Holy Spirit, consists in extending its humanity to all and, therefore, “to all the creation” (Mark 16:15, see Romans 8:19-22, see *infra*) the benefits of the price paid by Christ to the Father by his

passion and death on the cross. The disciples have to offer everyone the chance to access that Redemption through baptism (commanded in Mark 16:16) and reconciliation (commanded

in John 20:23). And it is good that within the Holy Childhood most of all the innocent, children, take on the missionary task of propagating baptism, a sacrament which restores innocence (see CCE 1263).

At this point, we could see in the mission a redemption or “price of love” - if we may use the

term - which the Church “continues to pay” for the salvation of souls, in addition to the price the Lord paid in his sacrifice at Easter. If “the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew

20:28), it follows that those who espouse Him - “missionary disciples” and missionaries in the specific sense - prolong His mission, prolonging also the offer of His ransom, because “the mission of the disciples is collaboration with that of Christ”: “The envoy in fact enters the life and mission of he who *made himself*

*nothing by taking the very nature of a servant* (Philippians 2:7); he who, in fact, “who gave himself as a ransom for all” (1 Timothy 2:6).

What is unprecedented, we will reiterate, in the inspiration received by Msgr. de Forbin-Janson is the claim that children are included in this salvific ransom, partaking in it through their union with Child Jesus, achieved through baptism. In truth, the contrast between the scarcity of their resources, their “small size” in evangelical terms





and the results of the evangelization and human promotion deriving from the Society's activities serve to show "the presence and power of the Spirit and Jesus's assistance", providing loud and clear testimony that the mission "does not rest on human abilities, but on the strength of the Resurrected".

To take better stock of the lofty background of the missionary perspective offered by the Holy Childhood, let us now outline a clue that appears significant among the other- undoubtedly possible- ones.

### ***The Redeemed with the Redeemer***

Even if our objective was not to dwell on redemption as a biblical or theological concept, the search for support for our study led us to the following text by Albert Gelin, p.s.s. Taking inspiration in some way from the quote in Exodus 2:9 contained in Saint Teresa's registration, it seemed appropriate to take into consideration his words in his explanation of salvation-redemption as one of the main expressions relating to messianic assets in the Old Testament:

*To describe salvation as the work of God, the Bible simply uses two terms with a long history: God redeems (padah) and God liberates (ga'al). The former means "paying a*



*ransom"; But when it comes to God, no party is able to receive His ransom. Essential inadequacy of the human language! The "ransom" (or Redemption) had happened in the past for the people of Israel, when it overcame slavery in Egypt [...]. When the time of salvation comes, and when God thinks it appropriate to work through His grace (héséd), there will be another Redemption [...] [The time will come] when God's true Israel will be established<sup>2</sup>.*

To save man and free him from death, it is God who takes on the payment of the unattainable ransom. Psalm 48 recites as follows: "No one can redeem the

life of another / or give to God a ransom" (v. 8); "Ransom for a life is costly, / no payment is ever enough / so that they should live on forever and not see decay" (v. 9-10); "But God will redeem me from the realm of the dead" (v. 16). This ransom, Gelin explains, is in turn, only received by God Himself. Furthermore, to be worthy of the payer and the payee, such ransom must also be God Himself, the incarnate Son. Our salvation, delivered by Jesus Christ, consists in this "absurdity" of inconceivable love.

What we wish to underline by this is, in effect, that by presenting itself as the Society of Redemption, the Holy Childhood converts its charitable activity as a sign of the Redemption delivered by Our Lord in favor of all humanity; redemption from death to life which He has conquered for all, and each "accepts for themselves", receiving baptismal waters, since "baptism means communion with the death of Christ" (CCE 1220). Through their participation in the Society, Christian children extend to others, who still are not, the chance to benefit from - in virtue of said sacrament - the fact of having been ransomed by the Redeemer.

<sup>2</sup> GELIN, A., Las ideas fundamentales del Antiguo Testamento (Desclee de Brouwer, Pamplona 31965) 59-60

The connection to the Holy Childhood of Jesus thus is fundamental for the experience of faith and charity offered to children, and to the understanding of their activity in favor of their brothers most in need. Through this Society, little ones learn - not in theory but through experience - that He, Jesus Christ, is the Redeemer and the Ransom, but also the Redeemed in those children in need of the Society.

Missionaries with the original Missionary, redeemers with the Redeemer, “new Moseses” with Jesus “the New Moses”, the youngsters of the Holy Childhood thus “practice” effectively as a Church, that is in “missionary communion”, while the pedagogical and educational efforts help them to live coherently “as Christians” and to progress on their chosen path.

### **Baptism and redemption of the body**

Following this trail, we present the following excerpt from the letter to the Romans (8: 19-23):

*For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.*

*We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.*

The last expression is sometimes translated

as “ransom of our bodies”, and this manifests the “eschatological nuance” that “adoption to sonship” could hold in verse 23. The nuance would bring light to - while also culminating - the transcendence of “the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” (Romans 8:15); and through baptism we are joined to the Son so as to be able to pray “Christ’s same prayer in Gethsemane” (note to this verse in the Jerusalem Bible; see CCE 1243).

By the same translation, *ransom*, Manuel Iglesias, SJ, opts for the tail end of the quoted extract: “[...] we also wail on the inside, desiring adoption to sonship, the *ransom* of our bodies”. And in a note on verse 23, he recalls the “perfect *adoption to sonship* includes the glorious

resurrection of the flesh. Even saints in Heaven, according to St. Thomas Aquinas, beg for the only thing they’re missing to be fully blissful, the glorification of their bodies”.

In short, without wanting to expand further, the key that this excerpt of the Letter to the Romans offers to understand the magnitude of the Holy Childhood is powerful, as it clearly connects adoption and the redemption of the

body. It is uncanny to think that this Society, sometimes erroneously reduced to an array of “innocent” activities could have, with its emphasis on redemption and baptism, such an eschatological projection - aiming at the resurrection of the flesh and which engages - again, not theoretically but through experience - children.

Without explicitly speaking of baptism, the cited Pauline text thus refers to our condition as children of God thanks to the Spirit, realized by virtue of that sacrament. And, concurrently, it radically manifests the value and dignity of the body, the body Christ took on in His incarnation







(see Hebrews 10:5); of the body of “these least brothers of mine” (Matthew 25:40) in which He continues to dwell; of all bodies that, *ransomed* “at a price” “are temples of the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 6:19) because on it falls the baptismal water; of that body that will one day resurrect, associated with the resurrection of He who spilled His blood for the salvation of the world.

Thus, when missionaries - like those on St. Teresa’s registration in her early childhood, or those we have today - endeavor to provide health, homes, protection, food ... to the neediest children in the world, they offer signs of the redemption of the body initiated by baptism and showcase their enormous dignity as people. It is not just about facilitating a purely human “good life”, but about following Jesus’s path, He who “has come to bring integral salvation, who hugs all of man and all men, opening up admirable horizons of divine sonship”.

This global vision of the mission is what Pope Francis justifies and exemplified with the following words:

*Everything in the horizon of the blessed and of works of charity is in accordance with the mission, it has been announced, it has been made a mission. The Church is not an NGO, the Church is something else. But the Church is also a field hospital, where everyone is taken in as they are, the wounds of each are healed. And this is part of its mission. It all depends on the love driving the hearts of those who do things. If a missionary helps to dig a well*

*in Mozambique because he’s understood it’s necessary to those he baptizes and to whom he preaches the Gospel, how could he consider that endeavor as separate from announcement? You can also go on a mission in accordance with Christ by building football fields for the children of suburban Buenos Aires. A Sister who works in hospital, perhaps among non-Christians, announces the Gospel by way of the charitableness with which she heals the sick, and thus manifests her love for Jesus, and Jesus’s love for the sick<sup>3</sup>.*



### **CONCLUSION: PEDAGOGY OF THE MISSIONARY CHILDHOOD**

After having completed this itinerary, we will retrace the aspects that most highlight the Holy Childhood as the “Society of Redemption”. These aspects are, we could

say, the focus of interest to which the initiative founded by Msgr. de Forbin-Janson wants to draw the attention (not in an intellectual, but rather, affectionate sense) of children. But these focuses are of such importance that this Society can serve us adults perfectly in recalling or revitalizing fundamental aspects of our Christian, and therefore missionary, lives.

The first of these is the centrality of baptism. The Holy Childhood highlights “spontaneously” the ordinary need for this sacrament for salvation, where *need* is the noun and *ordinary* the adjective (see CCE 1257-1261). Even knowing that God “is not subject to His sacraments” (CCE 1257), even considering that his mercy leaves open the possibility for other “extraordinary” paths to salvation, what this Society comes to

<sup>3</sup> FRANCISCO, Sin Jesús no podemos hacer nada. Ser misioneros en el mundo de hoy (Libreria Editrice Vaticana-Romana, Madrid 2021) 51-52.

announce, with enthusiasm and simplicity, is that baptism “has all the meaning in the world”: “For this reason the appeal of the Church not to prevent children from coming to Christ through the gift of Baptism becomes more urgent still” (CCE 1261); “The pure gratuity of the grace of salvation manifests particularly in the baptism of children” (CCE 1250)

The second aspect is the need of the mission, which the Society intends as connected to baptism “on the fly”. Whoever receives “the sacrament of faith” (CCE 1253) hears the missionary mandate from God, which urges the dissemination of the gift of that faith through the offering of baptism and subsequent education and catechesis. The Holy Childhood points out that baptism “implies” the mission (see CCE 1270) and that the mission “implies” baptism. In this context one can fully grasp the characteristic missionary dynamism of reciprocity, of “giving and receiving”, which the Society expresses in its general motto: “Children help children”. As mentioned, we are all in Church, even children and in their own right, the “baptized and sent”, the “redeemed and redeemers”.

The third aspect is the integral vision of the person, avoiding dichotomous or Manichean conceptions that seek to juxtapose- even within the mission- care of the body and care of the soul. The surprising thing is that it is the very

“ransom”, something apparently so “earthly” like paying a price, that allows the Society to elevate itself from peremptory material needs, to nothing short of resurrecting bodies. And this ransom in the field of tutelage and promotion

of the human being becomes a sign of the ransom delivered by baptism and, in turn, a sign of the eschatological ransom.

The doors to that final ransom are thus opened by baptism (first aspect). Joined to Christ by this sacrament - to His Holy Childhood - children can open those same doors to other children through the mission (second aspect). The “bodily” ransom of the neediest, most suffering children - a ransom brought forward by the missionaries, supported by the Society’s “little missionaries” - is a manifestation of the dignity of every human being and of all the

children in the world, according to an integral vision of the person and the mission (third aspect) stemming from the “integrity” of the salvation offered by the pure grace of Jesus Christ.

In short, the Holy Childhood shows that baptism *redeems* us for the mission, and that the mission *redeems* our brothers for baptism and that Christ saves us all for integral salvation. At the same time, this Society offers children a profound, authentic experience that we are “baptized in Church”; that is to say that baptism, mission and salvation are realities that







take shape in an “ecclesial” way. This implies, in a sense of continuity and communion, that everyone must partake in it “personally” and, at the same time, as mentioned, “in reciprocity”.

In simple terms: I cannot baptize, send or save myself, but I can be an instrument to- through the Church- baptize, send or save another. So are we all, and Christian children too, “instruments of salvation” for one another, according to the expression Msgr. de Forbin-Janson used twice in his “Notice...”. This proves the Society founded by him with his enormous appreciation for the “sacrament of regeneration” (CCE 1213). In such a way the Missionary Childhood, Society of the Holy Childhood and redemption, is today *redeeming* baptism as well, evidently not because it may be itself in danger, but our perception of it could be, of its meaning, of the ordinary need for it and of its missionary significance.

We do not wish to conclude without underlining that the founding Bishop was not able to carry forward the theological development of what this charismatic initiative held. On the other hand, what

this Society wants is not to offer children a repertoire of theoretical arguments, but rather a pedagogy that will lead to an experience and become testimony. This is achieved through a simply unity of action that allows access to a profound reality: originally, the two-pronged gesture of the coin and the Hail Mary proposed to the children by Msgr. de Forbin-Janson.

In fact, “children *save* children”, which they themselves experiment when, driven by the love of Christ (see 2 Corinthians 5:14), they offer up their coin, placing it together with those of other children of the world in the Holy Childhood’s Universal Solidarity Fund, to help the neediest children. Msgr. de Forbin-Janson was inspired to promote and channel this, undoubtedly modest, *ransom* so that it may bear overabundant fruit, depositing it in God’s hands through prayer.

It is, undoubtedly, an application of the missionary charity-prayer binomial to children, accepted as the original charisma of the Pontifical Mission Societies by Blessed Pauline Jaricot, founder of the Pontifical Society for the Propagation of the Faith. However, based on the very lowliness and innocence of children, this application stresses- as a teaching to adults- that we are all “baptized and sent”, and that it is God’s providence, with which we “connect” through faith and prayer, that keeps the mission going in all its beauty and fecundity, under the protection of the Queen of Missions, “to the very end of the age”

(Matthew 28:20).





# XAVERIAN MISSIONARIES OF MARY

## XAVERIAN MISSIONARY CONGREGATION

The Xaverian Missionaries of Mary are the female branch of the Xaverian Missionary Congregation. The holy bishop Guido Maria Conforti, who had founded the Xaverians in 1895, had, at his request, obtained encouragement from Rome to found the female branch, but death overtook him in 1931. His project was carried out by one of his sons, Fr Giacomo Spagnolo, who obtained the collaboration of Celestina Bottego for this purpose. In 1944, after some time to reconsider her initial refusal, Celestina said yes and made her person, her house and all her possessions available to the nascent missionary family.

The purpose of the Congregation is exclusively missionary and is inspired, like that of the Xaverians, by the missionary ardour of Bishop Conforti expressed by Fr James and Mother Celestina.

The Xaverian missionaries have remained a small reality of about two hundred people, scattered in various countries: Brazil, Mexico, United States, Cameroon, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Japan and Thailand. They are now a multicultural family, made up of sisters from all the countries where they are present. Their motto: 'All means and all forces for the mission'.

### **THE GOSPEL BELONGS TO THE LITTLE ONES**

"Let the children come to me," said Jesus, "do not prevent them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these" (Mk 10:14). Jesus loved and welcomed children as they were, not as future adults. On the contrary, he pointed them out as a model for becoming disciples: "unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 18:3).

The history of children is marked by love but also abandonment, respect but also exploitation, transmission of values but also ignorance of their value.

In the 19th century, the brilliant intuition of the bishop of Nancy, Charles de Forbin-Janson, appeared in the Church. Unable to help the children of China who lacked missionaries, enlightened by the advice of Pauline Jaricot who had founded the Society of the Propagation of the Faith years earlier, the idea that 'children help children' sparked in the French bishop. He launched an awareness among French children for 'a Hail Mary a day and a penny a month' for Chinese children. It was 1843, the "Society of the Holy Childhood" was born, which eighty years later Pius XI recognized as 'Pontifical'. Today, the Pontifical Society of Missionary Childhood, as it is now called, is one of the four Pontifical Mission Societies entrusted to the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.

Developed in more than 130 countries, it bears witness to the entire Christian community that it is indeed true that the Kingdom belongs to the Little Ones. We give here some testimonies of this Missionary Childhood Society (IM) in the places where our Sisters work.





## BRAZIL

### SOUTH



In our **parish in Londrina**, in Paraná, I have been accompanying the IM group of children for two years. It has as its objective: children who evangelize other children. The group was born about ten years ago, thanks to some animators, including our sister Carmen Cruz. Weakened then by the pandemic and the lack of animators, the group is now numerous and is led by a couple: the lady takes care of the children and her husband takes care of teenagers, which was born recently.

It is nice to see the enthusiasm with which the children- between five and twelve years of age - listen to talk about Jesus and communicate Him. It is a way for them to begin to fit into the life of the Church. We adults simply accompany them.

The children meet in the early afternoon of every Saturday. When they arrive, they prepare the room with symbols of the world. Some of them animate the meeting. As they are small, they are accompanied by a parent or both: they stay at the edge of the room, following the meeting that takes place in the centre.

On Sundays, at the 11 a.m. Mass, with their headscarves around their necks, children and teenagers welcome those who come, and follow the moment of offering. Every month, they put the offering of their sacrifice of the week for the missionary goal indicated to the diocese into the common piggy bank.

The adults who accompany them explain the world situations to them. This year the help will be sent to children in Africa. In addition to that, every Saturday they make a commitment for the week, - for example: to help their mother- and on the following Saturday they give an account of it. Parents often express their happiness and gratitude for the progress they see in their children.

It is important to help these little ones to get to know Jesus and to know the reality of other children who are in more difficulty than they are, and also for this reason to learn to take care of things, not to waste food, not to demand the superfluous; to educate them to think of others, having the Lord Jesus as their model.

These children also participate in ordinary catechesis and perform various services, such as that of an altar boy. Their patrons are St Therese of Lisieux and St Francis Xavier. It is nice to see their enthusiasm.

Last year the Christmas novena, passing from family to family, was animated by them, and with what care! During Easter week, after listening to the story of Jesus washing the disciples' feet, they did the washing of the feet among themselves. Some refused at first; then seeing the others willingly do it to imitate Jesus, they took courage and did it.

*Maria de Jésus da Silva dos Santos*

## BRAZIL

### NORTH

In the **diocese of Abaetetuba**, in Pará, Missionary Childhood and Adolescence (IAM) is very developed. Weakened somewhat during the pandemic, it is now starting up again. There are currently twenty-one IAM groups in the diocese, corresponding to the number of parishes. The IAM also animates schools and is also starting in the islands along the river. Children are impressed by the announcement made by another child and some ask to join the group.

The IAM is increasingly taking on the face of an outgoing church. Children and adolescents become protagonists of the mission, to the point that it is they who organize the meetings.

The diocese organizes training sessions for new coordinators aged 16 and over, who support the commitment of the 9-10 year olds who animate the meetings and who also receive training. In this way, from an early age, the children, prepared and motivated, mature in their commitment to be heralds of the message of Jesus. The fruits can be seen in abundance.

Also this year, for the sixth time, children and adolescents are preparing to experience the 'mission'. Every morning we go out with them to visit families in a suburban area of the parish. The children prepare first with a retreat and training on how to approach and speak to the families about Jesus. And that is what they do with all their heart: they share the word of God, conveying such a deep joy that it also attracts the attention of adults.

During and after lunch, dynamic games are planned. In the afternoon we meet to share the experience and it is wonderful to hear their stories.

I am now in a parish in the state of Maranhão, always with the desire to revitalize this society. Currently there is only one group at the centre: our wish is that it can also be established in the different communities in the villages that make up the parish.



IAM is a reality that gives me great joy. I have always believed in the potential of children to be protagonists of the proclamation: children evangelizes children, adolescent evangelizes the adolescent. It is up to us to sow the Word in their hearts and give them confidence, without tiring. Even as adults, it is they who will express the face of the outgoing church, because they have learnt to live the missionary dimension since childhood.

I would like to invite pastoral animators to promote IAM where they are, despite the difficulties, such as the reticence of some priests. Let us continue to sow 'burning hearts and walking feet', as the Pope said last year for World Mission Day.



*Marta Cardoso*





## MEXICO

I carry out my apostolate in the municipality of **Zapopan** on the outskirts of Guadalajara. The houses are scattered among hills and small valleys; some are made of resistant material, others are made of wood or simpler material, with plastic roofs, held up by poles. The families who live there are poor. Sometimes people, in order to get to work on time, leave their homes at 4 or 5 in the morning, with risk, being a suburb where drugs and all vices circulate.



I am happy to accompany the children to the Sacraments and also meet their parents to meditate on the word of God. It is my desire to promote IAM here too. In my experience in this Society, I have discovered that children and adolescents can learn to be protagonists in the Church and grow in the love of God and towards their brothers and sisters through small services and gestures of solidarity. Even in the family they become more helpful and creative, and often, little by little, they also involve their family members in the activities. This path will help them discover the vocation to which the Lord is calling them.

IAM is aimed at boys and girls from 4 to 15 years of age. Each group has its own formation book through which, in the light of the Gospel, the children get to know Jesus and his mission. The training includes manual activities and workshops through which the children become aware that Jesus is also calling them to be missionaries. They visit families, inviting other children and adolescents to participate; when they meet a family in difficulty, the children organize themselves to bring help. Every two years a National Congress of IAM is held in Mexico, preceded, in each diocese, by a pre-congress in which all the parishes participate with their IAM groups and catechists. In the parishes, the IAM groups mobilize to prepare for World Missionary Day in October. They walk the streets of the neighborhoods praying the Rosary for the entire world, singing, dancing, carrying the globe. The families in turn prepare a "missionary altar", with the colors of the continents.



Thanks to them, we join the mission of the Church in the entire world. In our time, carrying out this pastoral activity is a challenge, but it is worth it because it nourishes in children and adolescents the desire to know Jesus in order to follow him, love him and serve him in their brothers and sisters.

*Carmen Carrillo*

## CAMERUN



**Irène Galtoua**, who has been in **Garoua** in northern Cameroon for several months, says: "In February 2024, a few days after my first arrival in Garoua, in northern Cameroon, I accompanied our sister Doriane to the Cop'monde children's groups that she accompanied. That is how I got to know this movement. Cop'monde is the abbreviation of "Copains du monde", companions of the world. Its fundamental values are: trust in the child's ability to express himself, to be, to act; the joy of living and sharing; the courage to be bold; the will to commit oneself together with others for a better world. A Cop'monde child is always happy and smiling, spreads joy; he is a friend to everyone, he has a good heart; he works with his group; he is brave; he tells the truth; he is pure, polite and respectful; he obeys his laws.

On Sunday afternoons we participate in the group meeting, to animate with songs, dances and some teaching starting from the word of God of the day. During Lent we organized a pilgrimage on the theme "How to build the house of God like Cop'monde". The aim was to express the invitation to walk with Christ, to participate in his suffering and to prepare for the Easter celebration; also to help them to detach themselves, as they were asked to bring some money to share. Since the church is under construction, we gave the sum collected for a window, also considering the theme of the day. We must love the church, care for it as a building and as our family.

We went to a sector of the parish, where we were welcomed. We walked around praying and singing and stopped to give teachings. In June, we celebrated the Day of the African Child for three days: on the first day, we walked, sang peace, danced; on another day, we stayed to listen to the teachings.

In their movement, children are an active part: they are invited to build their lives with joy, to engage with others for a more just, supportive, sustainable and nature-friendly world. This movement helps them to grow by learning to know Jesus, to love him, to serve him.

The Cop'monde movement is an expression of Catholic Action for Children (ACE), which is aimed at girls and boys, aged 6 to 15, regardless of nationality, religion, social status and cultural background. ACE offers an integral education based on play, creativity, planning, revision and spiritual openness. ACE Cop'monde responds to Christ's invitation: 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations' (Mt 28:19). They receive from the Church the call to live as disciples of Christ and to the heart of presence of God the Father.

With these children I learn many things such as patience, a bit of rigour to correct them...



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children I learn many things such as patience, a bit of rigour to correct them...



It is beautiful!”

From Berèm in Chad, **Judith Rosales** recalls the origins of the IM in the south of Cameroon, in **Douala**: “In Douala, the Missionary Societies had been working for years on the animation of children, but the missionary children’s movement as such did not exist in the diocese. This gave rise to the idea of gradually forming a small pilot group. We visited the children in their families and began to organize the very first meetings in their homes, in turn. The children showed interest and enthusiasm and thus the first group was born.

The objective was: ‘Children help children’. IM promotes a missionary spirituality in the children, open to all, in prayer and love for the Lord Jesus, the Father’s first missionary. So the children form, celebrate, solidarize, announce. The activities take place in an atmosphere of joy, freedom and curiosity typical of children: weekly formation meetings, daily prayer especially for poor children and in war situations, active participation in Eucharistic celebrations, visits to the elderly and the sick, praying the Rosary in families, visits and activities in orphanages, meeting and sharing with the most disadvantaged children during the Christmas and Easter holidays. Prayer every day. On the occasion of the diocesan Missionary Childhood Day, the group went to the parishes for missionary animation. Today, several young people, who were once IM children, have joined the ‘Missio’ youth group animated by Xaverian missionaries”.

ACE COP MONDE expresses the IM in the context of the diocese of Douala. From Douala, Tudu Nshombo recounts: “It is a Catholic action movement that brings together children from 6 to 12 years old, where children help children: they are the actors in their development, through the teachings they receive. Its objective is to make them know Jesus, to teach them to be joyful, to be friends with everyone, to have a good heart, to love work, to be polite, respectful and obedient towards their parents and elders, in short, to cultivate human, moral and Christian values.



Through the teachings received, the child is able to perform good deeds in his or her living environment: at home, in the neighborhood, at church, at school. He also learns to pray, i.e. to enter into a relationship with God and discover his talents, to be responsible in his studies. Finally, Cop Monde encourages children to open their minds and hearts, so that they feel part of the Church: missionary boys and girls, who by their actions evangelize those around them. They meet every Sunday after Mass. Helped by their animators, they share a theme, foreseen in the book that the Diocese publishes each year. It is what we call the ‘Campaign of the Year’. The formation is well structured, with themes, Advent and Lent retreats, charitable actions such as visiting the sick, helping the poor, visiting children in orphanages by playing with them and giving a little joy.

Cop monde gives importance to play: through education based on play, the child learns to be creative, to develop his imagination, to relate to others, to express himself and to live fraternity and solidarity towards others”,



## CHAD

And in Pala, Chad? Judith Rosales recounts: "In the diocese, the Missionary Societies are active in the implementation of various development projects, also in favor of children. The spirituality of the IM is nurtured especially on World IM Day, with solidarity collections: the protagonists are the children who are trained in the Kemkogi movement. This year, the Diocesan Missionary Societies are working with renewed commitment so that every Christian, including children, can experience a deeper missionary spirituality."



## DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

### I LENT HIM MY PEN...

Bukavu, Saturday afternoon. While waiting for the IM meeting to start, I ask the children: "Do you like Missionary Childhood?" "Yes, we are happy to be part of it. We pray for children all over the world," says Chanceline. Shukuru confirms and adds: "It's nice: we learn how to make rosaries." "We pray for unknown children, because we love them: we ask to be freed from war, from disease. We are all sons and daughters of God, brothers and sisters among us. In heaven, we will all be together," Claude says. "I like this group because they teach children how to live love," Sifa adds. What do you actually do to live love? "For example," explains Jean, "during the exams, I helped my neighbor by lending him my pen. And what if one day the Lord calls you to announce it in other countries...? "We will go," they answer in several voices.





In our **parish of St Peter Claver**, in **Bukavu**, Siud-Kivu, the meeting of Missionary Childhood and Adolescence - boys and girls aged two to fifteen- takes place every Saturday. As an animation team, we meet every Wednesday to prepare for it. At first, the parishes and the diocese hesitated to accept this work, not understanding its specificity; now they join in with conviction. Our sister Marie Chantal, on her return from Brazil, shared her experience in this regard.

The IM wants to promote the good of every child in the world, teaching them not to close in on themselves or their environment but to turn their eyes everywhere, especially to other children who are suffering to help them with prayer and concrete solidarity. It helps children to become dynamic in their Christian life, cooperating in the coming of the kingdom of God and the mission of the church, which is to help, to save the world.



Co-operation begins with information: the child is informed of world situations and feels committed to pray for all the suffering in the world, to ask for peace. Every day he prays a decade of the Rosary. Added to this is the offering: the child offers his life as a gift and shares the little he finds, because he cannot be happy alone.

In the IAM we try to pass on to children and young people values such as love, sharing and prayer especially towards all children who are in need, perhaps of things they themselves have. And also the importance of listening to the word of God: at each meeting, we read and meditate on a passage from the Gospel. Seeing how these children live in the neighborhood, some parents ask us to also welcome their child into the group.

Every last Thursday we pray the missionary rosary in the parish, uniting ourselves with the children from all over the world. With candles we draw the rosary on the floor, asking for light for ourselves, our families and the whole world through Mary's intercession. The children really like this initiative and new ones come each time.

*Marthe Aziza*



The IAM is a grace for our diocese of Bukavu. It helps us to form the children from an early age, teaching them missionary spirit, prayer, giving of themselves for others, with an openness to the world. We are fortunate to have a Bishop who understands the importance of the IAM and encourages us.

Thanks to the Xaverian Missionaries, the IAM is beginning to take shape in the diocese: the IAM is now in all the twenty-one parishes and in all the Catholic primary schools up to the second year of secondary school (3-17 years old): in this way, even those who do not attend catechesis learn to pray with the sick, the elderly, especially those who suffer in the

world, in their hearts; they go together to visit sick children or elderly people in their homes and bring joy, song, cheerfulness.

Every first Thursday of the month, the IAM children and youth pray the Rosary for children in war-torn countries around the world. They send their concrete help to the war displaced people crowded into camps in neighboring North-Kivu. They share the Holy Father's messages every month.

We are planning a training meeting for all animators at diocesan level, which will bring together more than 600 animators for three days, and we are looking for means. We already have the model of the IAM flag and scarf, but again, it is a question of means...

The IM also helps us to make an educational offer to the children during the holidays, helping them not only on the spiritual side but also on the human side, as is the case in the 'holiday camps'. Group life can then help the various vocations in the Church flourish. The Diocesan Service for Missionary Animation (SDAM) is active.

The IAM can help in the conflict situation in the Great Lakes Region, because we teach children and young people to love everyone, avoiding stigmatizing people. We ourselves went to Burundi to see how the IAM is organized there. We are thinking about a meeting next year between the children and young people of the IAM of Bukavu and those of the neighboring diocese of Cyangugu, in Rwanda, to help break down barriers between people.

Growing in the conviction that we are all created in the image and likeness of God, there will be no more discrimination or unnecessary wars.

*Abbé Jean-Claude Ciza, direttore del Centro diocesano di pastorale e delle POM a Bukavu*



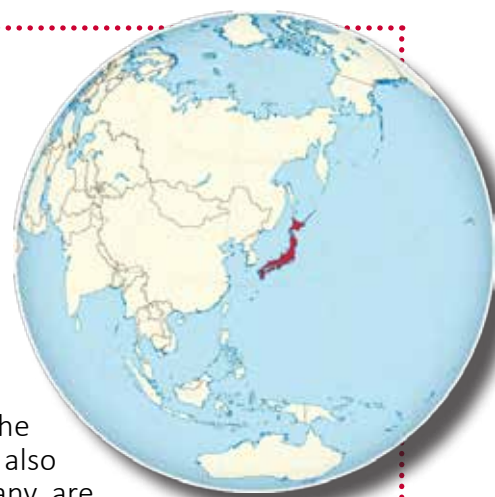
In our **parish of Mulongwe**, in **Uvira**, Missionary Childhood is the common formation we give to different groups of boys and girls up to 15 years of age. Each week the groups meet according to their schedule; at the end of the month they all meet together for a retreat, a common gesture of solidarity and other activities. With us, the Missionary Childhood includes all children, to teach them to collaborate by helping those in need. Thus, they experience that one cannot work and be happy alone, but with others.

*Rosine Françoise Wakilongo*





## JAPAN



Siamo un piccolo gruppo dell'Infanzia missionaria nel sud del We are a small missionary childhood group in southern Japan, in **Miyazaki**. Last year we celebrated ten years of this adventure and at meetings we showed photos of the journey we made together. Animators who left the group because they moved elsewhere also wrote letters. It was a looking back and recognizing how great God's mercy is.

Since the beginning of the group, we wanted to extend the invitation not only to the children, Christian or Buddhist, but also to their families. Living in a country with few Christians, many are religiously mixed couples and sometimes like to attend the celebrations as a family. In addition, the children are busy with school and extracurricular activities, attend sports or art groups and have few opportunities to interact with their parents, so it seemed good to offer parents this opportunity.

Our meetings are held once every two months and begin with Sunday mass. Since children from different churches attend the meetings, we take turns meeting in one of them, so



we can also participate in the Eucharist with different believers and in different places. After mass, we have a small snack. To introduce ourselves to the theme chosen for the year, we watch a short video. Then we divide into groups according to age and explore the theme. We get together to share what we have learnt and the commitment we have made. A very important aspect is the game, planned according to the theme of the day. Finally, we all have lunch together.



The animating group, from the beginning, is made up of Xaverian sisters, a diocesan priest, and the Salesians and a group of catechists who are passionate about this project, working together. Even with the challenge to continue during Covid, we have seen how the hand of God has guided us. Looking to the future, I am full of hope for the children, now teenagers, who have grown up participating in the meetings: they will be the animators of the future and in their hearts they will carry the missionary seed that will grow to give greater glory to God.

*Enriqueta Ayala Gonzalez*

## THAILAND

I have been in Thailand for fifteen years, and for the past twelve I have had the joy of working directly with the IM, first at parish level, then as diocesan leader in the diocese of **Chiang Rai**, in the north of the country.

The reality is very simple, small and fragile, even if, among the four Pontifical Mission Societies, Missionary Childhood is still the most visible. It has existed in Thailand for some twenty years and operates mainly in Catholic schools and in some Catholic centres, attended mostly by Buddhist children.

This year, to celebrate IM's one hundred and eighty years, the first national gathering was held in Bangkok: a beautiful event, full of life, with children representing the country's eleven dioceses. The expression they used in Thai to translate 'Missionary Childhood' is beautiful, made up of three terms: one meaning children, adolescents and young people, another meaning good religious teaching to be lived, and the last meaning ambassador, representative: children, adolescents, young people ambassadors of good teaching to be lived and transmitted.

This is generally speaking... And in my personal experience of direct contact with children with

specific names and faces, what are the IM children like? It was a completely new experience for me, because Thailand is a Buddhist country: in our diocese, Christians do not make up 2% of the population. In the villages, out of ten children who participate in this activity, nine are Buddhists. While respecting the religious vision of their families, we have therefore adapted the language and content, maintaining the same method that IM uses in Christian countries.

We educate the children in worldliness, solidarity, fraternity and knowledge of Jesus. These are very important aspects to work on, taking into account the social reality. In fact, the population is made up of people from very different ethnic groups, languages and traditions, and there is a great risk of restricting our gaze and help to those who belong to their own ethnic group and village. This narrow view is not due to ill will towards other ethnic groups, but to a form of traditional education.

One day a Christian mother, whose







children participate in IM activities, said: "I have never heard what you say. When I was a child, no one ever taught me the importance of visiting a sick person, of not wasting food and other goods in solidarity with children who have nothing to eat. Even some school teachers told me: "The children who attend your meetings are different, they participate more actively than others."

These adults helped me to see that something really happens in children through this activity. Getting to know the reality of children in other parts of the world, visiting a sick person, preparing to lead an activity... these may seem like things that are taken for granted in other contexts, but for these children they are all new: they rejoice in participating and do so with responsibility. It is difficult to explain the reality here, I feel like saying, like Jesus: 'Come and see!'. What is my goal? I do not expect these children to be baptized one day... but I would like them to be able to know God's love for them and pass it on to others. For now, what we do is to sow abundantly on all opportune and untimely occasions, confident that this seed will take root and grow. This is God's work: I cannot give faith to anyone, but God's love can. And, as the Pope says, missionary work will never be complete if God's favorites, that is, children, are missing.

*Elizabete Ferreira De Souza*





# ANGOLA

## DIOCESE OF CABINDA



The idea of creating IAM in the diocese of Cabinda was born in the oratory that the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians were running in the parish of St Joseph.

The appeal was launched to a group of catechism children and many joined in. The Bishop of Cabinda, Msgr. Belmiro Cuica Chissenguete, recognized the initiative and gave his approval in 2019, encouraging the team to expand the Society to all parishes.

In the same year, many children made their first

commitments in St Joseph Parish.

The team formed by Sister Sirlei Oliveira, Gerson Púcuta and Roque dos Santos took on the task, moving from parish to parish, of inviting children and adolescents to join the Society. Guided by counsellors and animators, they fulfil the command of Jesus: 'Go into the whole world and proclaim the Good News to all nations' (Mt 28:18-20), becoming missionaries from an early age; with zeal and dedication, they continue to



ignite the flame of God's love; they awaken the missionary spirit and solidarity among other children and adolescents.

It is truly a Society that has transformed the lives of children and adolescents, as recounted in the testimonies of some of them.

*IAM is an important group for me because it teaches me to love children, to pray to our Heavenly Father for my family, for people who suffer and for the whole world. Here I learnt to pray the rosary, to sing and to show solidarity. It gave me the opportunity to visit the sick in hospitals and the children in the orphanage. IAM has made me an obedient and respectful girl.*

**ANA BAZOLA LUTETE**  
(13 years old)

*IAM is a school and has made me dedicate my life to Christ; it makes me help others. Since I joined IAM my life has changed a lot. It has taught me to behave well, both at home and at school. I am grateful to the group for all it has done for me and for others. May God bless all the members of IAM.*

**CATARINA FILIPE**  
(15 years old)



*In these five years of IAM, I have experienced and learnt many good things: to be disciplined, humble, joyful, to love Jesus, to speak in public and not to be discouraged when faced with difficulties. What impressed me most were the visits to the children in the paediatric ward and to the orphanage in Bethany, where we served at the soup kitchen. Through parish and diocesan activities, I made many friends. On the fifth anniversary, I received a certificate of merit for my participation in the group's activities. This makes me very happy.*

**MARIA MARLENE CONDE**  
(14 years old)





# GUINEA BISSAU

## DIOCESE OF BISSAU



*The apostolic prefecture of Guinea Bissau was elevated to Diocese in 1977. Currently, it extends over a territory of 11,495 km<sup>2</sup>, and is subdivided into 23 parishes. In 2020 the baptized accounted for roughly 15.7%.*

### **THE SISTER'S SERVICE**

The Benedictine Sisters in PONTA PENIZ offer an educational/academic service for children aged 3 to 10. Today our school counts roughly 200 pupils. These children, besides the educational service aimed at the integral formation of the individual, are offered a meal a day by the School, for many of them the only meal of the day. This is to prevent or treat malnutrition and all the other diseases that derive from it. Child mortality is still very high here, but since the Sisters have been operating in this village, small results of their

educational and preventative work are already noticeable.

### **THE SCHOOL - BROTHERHOOD, SOLIDARITY AND AWARENESS**

The school is attended by non-Christian children too, but everyone receives the Christian message of solidarity, brotherhood, of the respect of differences with particular regard for the last and neediest. The children's talents are also enhanced by rewarding the most deserving; we generally do so by providing school materials (books,





notebooks, pencils, erasers) and scholarships: that is partly why we ask the Holy Childhood for support.

In Guinea school starts in the month of September and ends in June, Monday to Friday, that is why our request is to support the food project expenses throughout this period. However, 150 children attend the mission on Saturdays and Sundays too for recreational or catechism activities. They too receive a hearty snack.

Furthermore, by the school is an area that works much like a small infirmary: mothers take their feverish or wounded kids here and the sisters administer first aid (medication, disinfectants or hygiene products) and even take the direst cases to hospital.

However in our school and pastoral activities with children we always try to sensitize them to their more disadvantaged or struggling mates; even during lessons attention is placed on the "last", and we make it so children acquire this mentality of sympathetic support.

Thanks to this subsidy the sisters who work on the premises have been able to continue their academic activity integrating it with the cafeteria, and providing the opportunity to some children whose families cannot afford the fees to attend the school.

The contribution we received allowed us to purchase four months' worth of food and we know how important that is: for most of these children what they eat at school is their only meal of the day, and has thus been a fundamental support. The Congregation has provided for the purchase of the food for the rest of the year and covered the scholarships by seeking other

benefactors.

The children who attend our school, though of different religions, besides getting an academic education as close as possible to the academic programs for their age, always receive an education in accordance with the Christian values of respect, tolerance, peace, friendship, helping those most in need, sharing and in accordance with the guidelines of the country's Episcopal Conference.



The teachers attend refresher courses offered by the school to improve their professional competencies and to offer teaching that is in line with our education principles. As Benedictine Sisters of Divine Providence we ask them to be thoughtful and respectful towards the weakest and those who need more attention to complement the academic pace.

The school also promotes initiatives aimed at the responsabilization of children towards those who have less than them; gratitude and the awareness that there is always

Someone higher than us guiding our steps are dispositions we try to transfer through the art of teaching.

*Sr. Lina Maria Girotto  
Superior General  
Bissalanca, August 2023*

# INDIA

## DIOCESE OF BELTHANGADI



The Diocese of Belthangady is a young mission Diocese in South India. Most of the Parishes are in the remote villages. The people are financially poor. Most of the children are unable to do their studies and get quality education. In order to solve this problem we have started schools in various villages. This project aims at providing financial assistance to poor children of 5 schools.

With this subsidy we helped the children between the age of 6-16 studying in 3 Primary Schools and 3 High Schools. We helped 86 Primary School children and 82 High School children. In total we helped 168.

These are pupils from financially very poor families. They find it very difficult to continue their study. Hence the help that we gave enable them to buy books, uniform dress and pay tuition fees. The children are very happy.

The children become aware of the love of Jesus. They are active in the Holy Childhood and Cherupushpa Mission League (an Association for the children). They are very proud of being a Catholic and sharing the love of Jesus through charitable activities for others.

Msgr. Lawrence Mukkushy  
Bishop of Belthangadi

### SOME LETTERS FROM THE CHILDREN

Dear Sir,

I am writing to thank you for your generous sponsorship of my presidential scholarship. I was very happy and appreciative to learn that I was selected as the recipient of the Pontifical Society for Holy Childhood. I am Ashwin Joseph of class 9th, throughout my studies I have maintained A grade in all the subjects. I promise to do my best in my final exam. Thank you so much for choosing me one of your sponsored children. Please, do remember me in your prayers. Merry Christmas and may this New Year bring you joy and laughter. Thank you once again.

Sincerely,



Ashwin Joseph, 20/12/2023



Dear Sirs,

I wanted to take a moment to express my heartfelt gratitude for your generous support. Your contribution to me has made a significant impact on my life and educational journey. Thank you so much for selecting me as the recipient of the Pontifical Society of Holy Childhood.

I am Anusha, a 10th grade student. Throughout my studies, I have maintained an "A" grade in all the subjects. I have been able to attend all the programs conducted by the school. This opportunity has not only enhanced my knowledge and skills but also boosted my confidence and motivation. Your investment in my education and personal growth means the world to me.

Once again thank you so much. May this Christmas bring joy and prosperity to you and your family. Please keep me in your valuable prayers, and know that you will always be in mine.

Yours sincerely,

Anusha, 20/12/2023

Respected Sister,

I am Anjali Sebastian from St. Mary's Church, Mudun, Karnataka, India. Dear Sister I am very grateful to the Pontifical Society for Holy Childhood, for helping me in my faith formation and education through your prayers and financial support. I am proud of being a member of Holy Childhood.

This year in the month of October, during the Dasara Holidays we had special programmes and retreat for all the members of HCS. in our Parish. HCS members are doing charitable works in our schools such as helping poor students to buy books, umbrella, uniform and other study materials.

Dear Sister I express my sincere gratitude for your generous financial support. Your kindness and generosity have made a significant difference in my life. Your contribution has given me hope, confidence, motivation.

We are praying for you every day.

Thank you again for your generosity.

Sincerely,

Anjali Sebastian (10/05/2024)

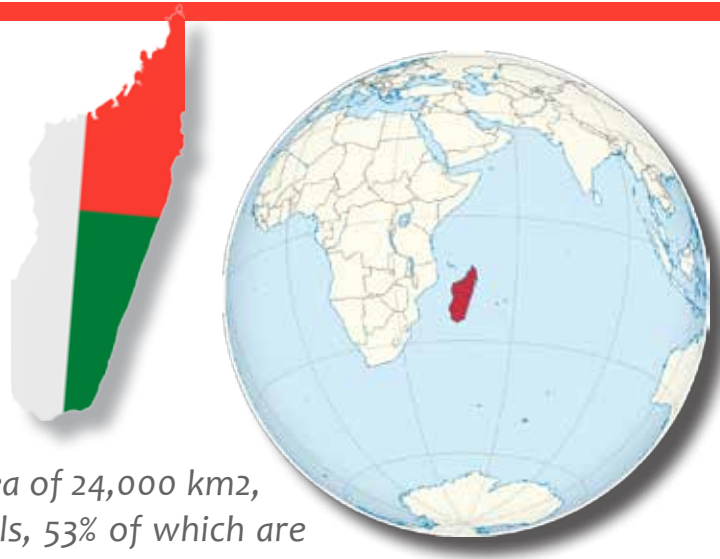




# MADAGASCAR

## DIOCESE OF AMBOSITRA

*The Diocese of Ambositra was established on June 3 1999 by detachment from the Archdiocese of Fianarantsoa. The Diocese covers an area of 24,000 km<sup>2</sup>, with a population of 963,000 individuals, 53% of which are baptized.*



As in the rest of the country, children are the largest part of the population and their situation exposes them to many dangers on account of the country's growing poverty. Their education is the aspect most affected by said poverty. A few years ago, a priest was appointed at the head of the Missionary Childhood, and, along with priests from missionary districts, friars and sisters, organizes Missionary Childhood days. Most of the children are illiterate as their parents do not have the means to pay school fees and, moreover, many of them have dropped out of school to help their parents earn money. The Diocese has tried its best to deal with this problem, building catholic schools throughout the territory.

Msgr. Fidelis Rakotonarivo  
Bishop of Ambositra

### **COLLÈGE ST. JOSEPH – AMBOHIMANAiky**

Collège St. Joseph- Ambohimanaiky, dedicated to the education and teaching of children in need is the only catholic school in our rural district of Mahazoarivo. Being a private institute, our school has no other financial resources besides school fees and the school social. This project is located in the region of Fandriana, in the province of Fianarantsoa. The population is by and large sedentary and the main activities are in the informal sector, that is agriculture, traditional animal rearing, food crops. The population mostly earns seasonal wages (0.50 euros a day). Many of the parents live in extreme poverty as they have no other financial resources and, because the harvests are not sufficient to satisfy the family's food needs, they struggle to ensure their children's education.

Our children mostly come from the countryside,

they rent a home by the school and on weekends they return to their parents to fetch food. We assume responsibility for our pupils' education by training our teachers. Every year the school takes part in the World Day of the Holy Childhood, by way of a whip-round deposited with the Diocese, class prayers and different activities to help poor children in the neighborhood. The academic results are satisfactory, with good percentages, notwithstanding the national and international health crises. The school also strives to provide quality catholic education through catechism lessons, a deeper understanding of the faith, sharing the Word of God to experience the Gospel in everyday life and introspection in liturgical seasons.

Considering their parents' destitution, the school takes care of approximately 60 poor children,



including orphans and social cases. They are provided with a meal per day in the cafeteria, as they often arrive at school with no food, especially during lean season. This year, parents made a huge effort to contribute 15 kg of rice each, to ensure the cafeteria keeps running until the end of the school year. The children carry out practical jobs by planting products they can use to cut cafeteria costs. Each class takes care of an allotment of land on the field to plant vegetables for the lunch broth.

Each year our college organizes activities for education and sensibilization, aimed at progressively creating new behaviors:

- Experiencing the Gospel in an atmosphere of trust and respect for others and oneself.
- Promoting solidarity, mutual assistance and sharing, to support the most disadvantaged children: contributions for the purchase of school materials.
- Enhancing the human qualities of these children, whatever they may be, through tutoring and assisted learning.
- Providing solid human and spiritual training: preparation to Baptism, Confirmation, engagement in Church movements.
- Providing festive and celebratory moments for reflection and introspection: Christmas, Lent, Easter, liturgical seasons.
- Developing the acquisition of knowledge,

learning to live in harmony with others, opening up to the world of the Church (the life of dioceses), of sport and culture.

- Celebrating three days to achieve PEACE in the world, at school and in families, Faith Day and Mission Day.
- Participating in donating for the propagation of the faith, praying for the local Church, for the Pope's intentions, for evangelization in mission countries, etc.
- Experiencing the ten commandments of missionary children to be apostles among their peers: brotherly union and communion.
- Experiencing the spirit of sharing with children around them through the sacrifice of Lent and the liturgical seasons of the Church.
- Learning to live gratuitously and in solidarity with the district's other catholic schools and the "Sagesse" schools in Madagascar.

*Sr. Marie Rose Rasoavololona*  
Project manager  
*Sr. Lalao Olga Easoamanolo*  
Cafeteria manager

CLARETTE, 7th grade. I'm a studious girl, but I live a little far from our school. I'd like to study in a catholic school, but my parents can't afford to pay the school fees or buy the school materials I need.

The sisters have taken in me on a sponsorship and since then we've been eating in the cafeteria during the school week, and I no longer have problems pursuing my studies thanks to your help and food assistance. We pray for you every day!



JEAN PIERRE 4th grade: I am my parents' oldest child, they are farmers and live on a small area on a rice field that is insufficient to ensure food for all my family throughout the year, we live in want...

Often the food from the cafeteria is my only meal of the day. I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart for your kind care for us through your donation. Many thanks from all the students in school!



# PERÚ

## APOSTOLIC VICARIATE OF SAN RAMÓN



A large part of our Vicariate is inhabited by native communities, mostly children. Care for children is a priority, due to the poverty in which they live and the insufficient education they receive in these very remote sites in the Amazon jungle. For this reason, the Vicariate directly administers five primary and secondary schools, and another 15 schools are administered by the Religious Congregations present in the Vicariate. These schools are of 'joint action' between the State and the Church and, in this way, are free of charge. School subjects are taught in each one and they work with groups from the Missionary Childhood. The dangers the children face are family instability, the dangers of the street, gangs, drugs, abuse inside and outside the family, among others. We try to respond to these challenges as best we can.

Msgr. Gerardo Antón Zerdin OFM  
Bishop of San Ramón

### **THE SHELTER FOR NATIVE ASHENINKA CHILDREN IN OVENTENI**

The Gran Pajonal is a historical territory, bordered by the Pichís and Pachitea rivers to the north, Tambo and Perene to the south and Ucayali to the east, and the Andes mountain range to the west, where Ashéninkas communities have lived for thousands of years. It is located in the central jungle of Peru, most of which belongs to the province of Atalaya and two other parts to the provinces of Satípo and Oxapampa.

It currently consists of 48 Ashéninkas communities in sometimes extreme poverty. Oventeni is the capital town of this area. The city is located in the high jungle zone, with an area of about 3600 km<sup>2</sup> and relief between 1000 and 2000 metres, and communications are very complicated, due to the lack of paved roads, and many communities can only be reached on foot.

Oventeni belongs to the Raymondi district, Atalaya province and Ucayali department.

Access from Atalaya, the provincial capital, to Oventeni is 127 km of very rough and uneven unpaved road.

Throughout this area of the Gran Pajonal, there are 38 primary schools in the indigenous Ashéninka communities. After primary school, the students do not have the opportunity to continue their secondary education because of the distance, between 4 and 10 hours of walking on trails and paths. For this reason, and at the request of the parents, this bilingual secondary school was created, where their cultural identity can be appreciated and experienced, reinforcing their mother tongue and ancestral customs.

Another reason why the parents requested the establishment of this residential school is the guarantee that the Church offers them in the care of their sons and daughters, who reside there from Monday to Friday.

This vast area of Gran Pajonal has been abandoned for many years, has suffered the consequences of terrorism and today most of its inhabitants have vague beliefs, without much conviction; some come from other churches.





Access to these communities for evangelism is very limited and they show little interest. However, in the hostel we are able to evangelize little by little and make the person of Jesus Christ known with the necessary calm and depth. As always, from the children we turn to their parents, generating in them an openness to the Church and the Gospel.

Last year we had 21 baptisms of students who asked for it and prepared themselves.

*Luis Alfonso Tapia Ibáñez  
Parish priest and Coordinator of the Keshiki  
Student Residence  
Parish "San Pascual Bailón"  
Oventeni - Atalaya*

## Dear Friends of Missionary Childhood

we are two brothers, Walter and Reinaldo Coronado Ampicha, and we belong to the Ashéninka people in the central jungle of Peru. Our community is called 'Mañarini'. I am Walter, the eldest, I am 16 years old and I am in the fifth grade of secondary school. Reinaldo, my younger brother, is 13 and in the second grade of secondary school. In our community we have a kindergarten and a nice primary school, but that is all we have. To go to secondary school, we have to walk 2 hours there and 2 hours back to the village of Oventeni, in sun or rain, dust or mud; also, in the village school they make fun of us because we are indigenous and because sometimes we do not understand Spanish well.

We thank the parish of Oventeni that created this school with a residence where we go on Sunday afternoon and stay until Friday afternoon. Here we sleep and eat, we study and do sports, we learn to work in the garden, to cook, to wash dishes and pots and pans- they teach us so many things. They also tell us about God and we listen to his word, whoever wants to is baptized and some have also received communion. For now we are only baptized. We both live with my mother, because our father was killed three years ago. To this day we have not been able to forget him, nor to forgive.

In my house we had almost nothing, here we have a room, a bed, sheets and towels, food and studies; we are very happy, even though sometimes it is difficult for us not to be able to go out and walk for a while. In addition, they take care of us here, assist us when we get sick, help us with our homework and teach us many nice things.

They told us that they are helping us from Rome for the new children's wing, because every year more and more children arrive and there is very little space; we also lack classrooms, because there are two first and two second classes. Tell Pope Francis that we thank him very much for his help, that we pray for him every day at Mass and that the priest also tells us to pray for all the people who help us from afar. Thank you all from the bottom of our hearts and we look forward to seeing you in Keshiki whenever you want to come.



*Walter and Reinaldo*

# CAMEROON

## DIOCESE OF MAMFE



*The Diocese of Mamfe, erected in 1999, is a Roman Catholic Diocese in the South West Region of Cameroon. It covers an area of 10.500 km<sup>2</sup> and today it is home of 82.000 Catholics and counts 29 Catholic Schools.*

In 2016 the English speaking regions of the country suffered a socio-political crisis that affected the socio-economic life of the people. A lot of violence has been seen in the regions, resulting in the loss of human lives and destruction of material resources. Thus, the children grow in a hostile and frightful environment, some have been displaced and have lost their parents, others have lost opportunities of going to school due to the shutdown of school facilities in the communities or their inability to get their fees paid. The Church in the Diocese is trying to alleviate their sufferings and provide them with opportunities to live and grow in a dignifying environment.

Annually, especially through the Diocesan Youth Chaplaincy, through schools and Parochial Youth Offices, the Diocese of Mamfe runs activities for children at different parishes. These children get Christian and human formation, pray and get the opportunity to participate in the missionary life of the Church.

Msgr. Aloysius Abangalo Fondong  
Bishop of Mamfe

### **"KIDS HOUR" ON RADIO EVANGELIUM**

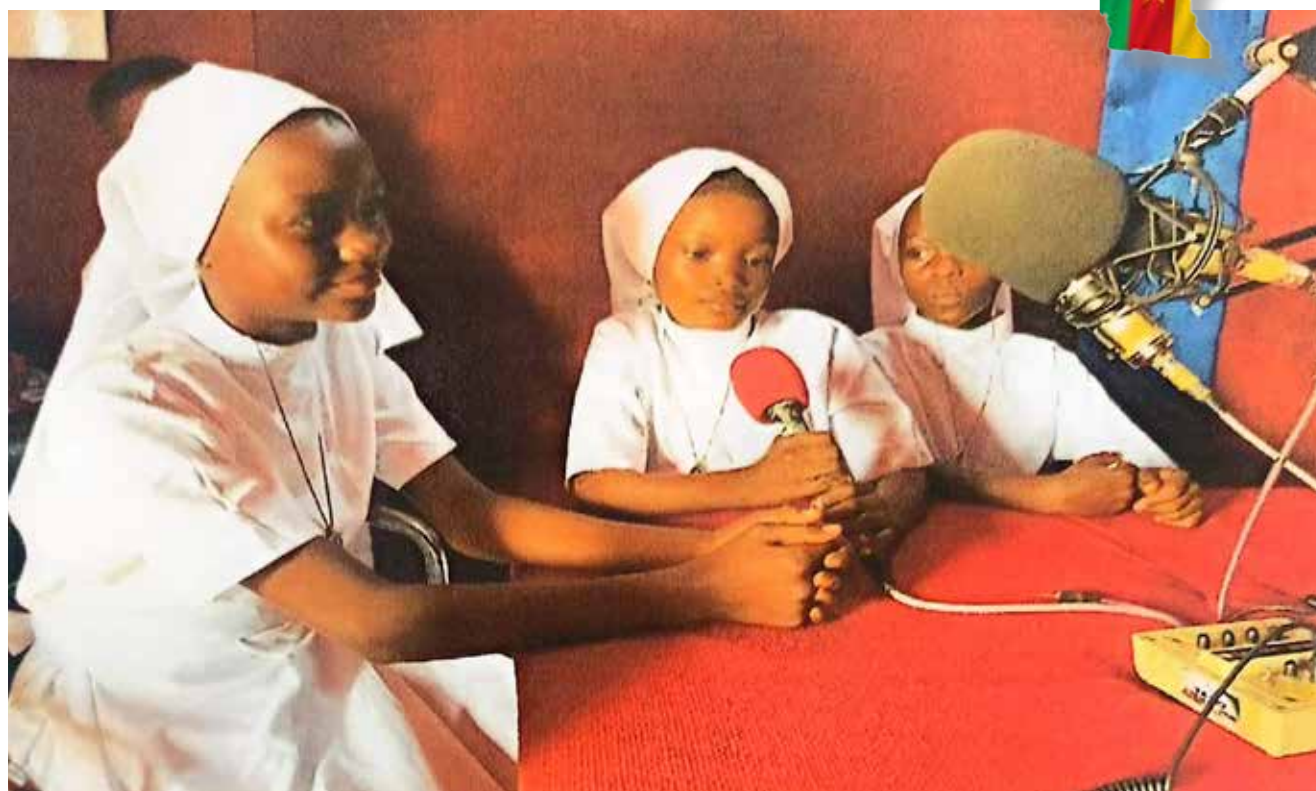
Radio Evangelium, in collaboration with the Diocesan Youth Office has presented a project to give kids between the ages of 4 - 10 the opportunity to share their faith and evangelize their peers through the airways of Radio Evangelium Mamfe. Under the guidance of the Manager of Radio Evangelium, and supported by the team



of the Youth Apostolate and the Diocesan Pastoral Formation Team, the children received formation in Catechesis, Prayer and Communication. The kids also had manuals and other resource materials issued to assist them carry out this activity.

On weekly basis kids from different parts of the diocese had the opportunity through





## TESTIMONIES

live and recorded programs to talk about the Catholic Faith, discuss issues that touch the lives of children and also pray with the listeners of Radio Evangelium. They also participated in the celebration of Holy Masses via the airwaves of Radio Evangelium, animated by children.

The kids had opportunities to ask questions, express their worries and learn from the resource persons put at their disposal, either on live programs or formation sessions on the Radio.

This project has contributed greatly in laying the foundation for the formation of future evangelizers, missionaries, Priests, and Religious of the Diocese of Mamfe. It is a strong statement to ensure the future of the local church and an effective continuation of her mission of evangelization. Not only have kids shared their faith and bore testimony to the faith, but they have equally

inspired their peers and challenged their parents and other adults on the need to live the faith fully and participate in the Church's mission of evangelization. In the children themselves has been spurred the missionary zeal and belief that everyone, no matter their age, and according to their capacity, can participate in the life and mission of the Church.



The faithful of the diocese, the listeners and participants of Radio Evangelium have been truly impressed and challenged by the kids and their activities over the radio this past year.

We are grateful to POSI and their benefactors for their support to this project!

*Rev. Fr. Christopher Eboka  
Manager of Radio Evangelium*



# RWANDA

## DIOCESE OF GIKONGORO



*The Catholic Diocese of Gikongoro is located in the province of Kigali and was established in 1992 by the Diocese of Butare. It spans over an area of 2,057 km<sup>2</sup> and it has a population that is 42.6% Catholic.*

Up until October 31 2023, our Gikongoro Diocese has had to manage 104 primary schools- of the 188 throughout the Diocese- that is 55.3%, for a total of 71,634 pupils and 2,637 teachers. Many of these children come from, as usual, poor families in the countryside who live in hardship on account of the lack of food; some have no school materials or uniforms, others are orphans, others still are suffering from HIV/AIDS1 etc.

Moreover, like elsewhere, our Diocese is dealing with the problem of the proliferation of the anti-Catholic religious cults and movements, which are gradually developing in the territory, especially after the 1994 genocide. These religious cults

and movements often tend to use all possible means to draw children away from our schools which have a series of socio-economic problems to contend with. For this reason, we consider the evangelization of the youth a priority, insisting on the need for a religious studies course, good catechesis in our schools and Christian morals to instill in children who are approaching sacraments of Christian initiation from a very early age. For this reason we have continued to buy new books on religion and distribute them in schools.

Throughout the school year, the Gikongoro Diocesan School Service implemented a series of activities and, for instance - with the aim of

providing students, teachers and headteachers in primary and secondary schools with better support - carried out visits in schools. In the Diocese's schools Mass was celebrated and the Basic Ecclesial Communities (CEB) and the Catholic Action Movement (MAC) were strengthened and enlivened. Moreover, the creation of Caritas committees in some schools was of help to a number of destitute children.

In collaboration with a number of churches, the Diocesan School Service was able to organize training courses for Religion teachers, with the aim of encouraging them to work together to promote faith in children. In the Diocese's various churches the celebrations for Children's Christmas were also organized, along with training courses for children's friends (adults to look after children in catechism and moral activities). These meetings for children take place mostly on weekends in basic ecclesial communities, hence the name: "Utugoroba tw'abana".

Catholic Education Week: in the year 2023, the celebration of Catholic Education Week had the aim of awakening the conscience of every educated person and every educator or person involved in education, for better performance, vital to the progress of the country and its



reconstitution. It is a very likely week in schools, it invites all those who work in education to partake more in the smooth operation of our schools. This week took place from the 7th to the 11th of June 2023 in all the schools and churches in the Diocese of Gikongoro, except for the church in Kibeho, where it is celebrated nationally. The Diocesan School Service has contributed to gathering all those who hold a position in our schools, for exchanges and commitment in the preparation of said event. To this end, in every school different activities were set up, including prayer, conferences, competitions in teaching subjects, singing and dancing, stories and skits. Prizes were assigned to the best students and to teachers who most distinguished themselves in their work as educators. The general theme underlying it all was: "An able and disciplined child".

*Fr. François Xavier Kabayiza  
Diocesan Representative  
to Catholic Schools in Gikongoro*



# ITALY

## FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF THE GOSPEL

### MISSION ...CONTAGION OF HEARTS!



Time is a precious gift from God and it is therefore not given to us so we may squander it but treasure it... and it is indeed a big treasure that we want to hand over to all by sharing the experience of an announcement of joy; the joy of believing in the “Wonderful or Good News” and continue its dissemination; the joy of knowing God as a Father who loves us to the point of giving us His Son... It is such explosive news that we cannot keep it in the coffers of our hearts... it’s impossible to contain!!!! Believing that God loves me produces infectious joy... That’s why we cannot hold silent but with courage, fearlessly and guided by the Spirit we rush to announce, infected by the enthusiasm of the little ones, to you as well a God who passes, who lets Himself be found, who comes to meet us, who embraces us. A God who does not sleep, who never turns away, even if we turn away from Him, does not get tired of us and calls at all hours. On the first World Children’s Day, like in Papua New Guinea, in speaking to the children Pope Francis recalled that “each one of us has a role and a mission that no one else can do and that this, though it involves some struggles, also bestows a sea of bliss, in a different way upon each person. [...] we all have limits, things we can do well, and others with which we grapple or that we can never do, but this is not what determines our happiness: it is rather the **love** we put into everything we do, give or receive. It is therefore **Love that drives us to be brave witnesses for the Gospel by sharing with others what we hold most precious: faith!** In the context of gifts it is significant to speak of the mission... and today, in particular, of **Mission Youth**.

#### WHAT IS MISSION YOUTH?

When we think of a mission our minds envision going to faraway lands, to people who do not

know the Gospel. Today we want to share an experience that makes missionaries of many of us who, without travelling to Africa or Asia or any other country, choose to stay in our land, in our country, a place which in 2024 is here- more than ever- to commit to be a witness through life and the word, that living water capable of quenching the thirst of so many brothers.

It’s true, we must admit this with honesty and courage, we have dropped off a little, sometimes we lose the pleasure of meeting up, the joy of praying together, the simplicity of singing the praises of the Lord. We rush about, caught in a thousand engagements for work, study, for our families, caught in our worries.

Mission Youth is a real opportunity to stop and meet, once again, **the mysterious stranger from Jerusalem who opens the eyes and incenses the hearts of those who can re-know him in a different way**

Mission Youth is a very significant missionary experience welcomed as a proposal by congregations that wish to focus on the family ministry.

It was created in 1998, and in subsequent years it engaged different realities present throughout Italy, both in the north and south, helping youths to become missionaries, to be not just the recipients but true protagonists in the announcement of the Gospel. With them and through them families are reached with the proposal of two evenings for discussion starting with the reason for their presence and their children’s experience in the mission, drawing inspiration from their reports to underline the importance of listening within a family as to day-to-day-life, and the importance of the relationship between parents and children, helping and encouraging the transmission of faith





to new generations.

The young missionary's day requires sacrifice. They start early with a powerful experience that has them waking up earlier than usual to start the day with their friends and with the Friend par excellence: Jesus. After the Greeting to Jesus which lasts about 15 minutes and breakfast...off to school; ready to walk the streets with their mates and some of the parents... that bliss that increases throughout the morning when the Sisters meet the children at school. And it all starts again... hymns, announcements, testimony...

An important moment of the day is the afternoon, when young missionaries with a knapsack over their shoulder, a cap, a bandana or some other identifying sign- received at the initial celebration of the missionary mandate - are protagonists in their being witnesses for Jesus. They roam the streets knocking on doors and recounting their missionary experience starting with the Gospel passage chosen as the icon of the Mission, and on which they will reflect together over the course of those days. Many people, often the elderly and the sick, look very much forward to the visits of these youths who, besides their enthusiasm, leave behind a gift or a sign that was specially conceived and prepared. Occasionally, they are rejected.

Mission Youth moves hearts and creates a climate of enthusiasm all over the territory and it is often contagious for adults as well... it is impossible to resist the explosion of exultation of so many youths around town announcing the joy of having found Jesus.

On top of that, they are protagonists in outside demonstrations like the missionary march on the streets, missionary treasure hunt, itinerant prayers, routes, releasing balloons with missionary messages, recitals or "exemplary Sundays" with their families, parties for their grandparents organized by them... as well as moments of prayer, liturgies (such as entrustment to Mary....)

An intense experience lasting 4-5 days which engages children and kids from preschool to middle school and their parents, and which can help the three realities surrounding the child's life to engage: family, school, Congregation (educational solidarity), thus allowing them to work as a network.

Mission Youth must be prepared to help gain awareness that by virtue of baptism each one of us is a missionary and, at the same time, helps communities and congregations with education in missionary spirituality. That is why the choice of

the evagelic icon, slogan, logo, anthem and mission prayer is made together

### **WHY HAVE A MISSION YOUTH?**

Because Mission Youth has an ambitious goal: that of reaching and giving awareness to children and youngsters in the community that within them is a heart capable of responding- today, just like 2,000 years ago- to Lord Jesus's call, and of being children of a good Father. It will be them, with their offhand, easy-going enthusiasm, to help everyone to overcome certain closed situations in which it is easy to withdraw so as not to make room for a simpler and more overwhelming faith.

Mission Youth and not A Mission for the Youth, an experience that needs to support and encourage everyone's efforts to retrieve what orients our lives towards God and towards man.

Days when all of us will be called to build a missionary church, a congregation with the status of a mission ready to launch, with and towards the most "little" to announce that Jesus died, but most of all He Resurrected, and this is the reason for such great hope among so many daily struggles.

During the days of Mission Youth we will therefore be enveloped by the Love of the Lord which is marvelous, and with the joy of Jesus in our hearts, and on our lips will live moments of announcement, of prayer, of brotherhood.

*Sorella Noemi*

### **THE MISSION IS... AN EVENT OF SALVATION!**

**Jesus is knocking at your door:  
ANSWER IT!**

**Jesus is coming into your family:  
WELCOME HIM!**

**Jesus is speaking to your heart:  
LISTEN TO HIM!**

**It is Jesus who is seeking you, and  
wants to meet you!  
GOD NEEDS YOU...  
DON'T MISS OUT!**

# CHILE

## NATIONAL OFFICE

### MISSIONARY CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE NATIONAL DAY



**T**he IAM Communities of Chile celebrate their National Day (JN IAM), throughout the month of June, a moment of animation of the collection in favour of the most vulnerable children and adolescents, celebrating another year of life of the Society and sharing its purpose: to know Jesus and make friends in His name and those who are His friends join Him in 'help and prayer'.



The motto we use this year is that of Mission Month: 'Go and invite everyone to the banquet', cf. Mt 22:9, which allows us to have a common missionary outlook as a country throughout the year, emphasizing going out and being outreaching to others.

The Day invites children to be the protagonists of this feast of solidarity, so that they may become aware of the needs that exist in the different parts of the world, and learn how the Pontifical Society of Missionary Childhood and

Adolescence, has the same attitude wherever it is, how it tries to contribute even in a small way or even in poverty to help those who have greater needs in health, education, housing, or all those who suffer from wars, migration or displacement from their homes and countries due to various circumstances.

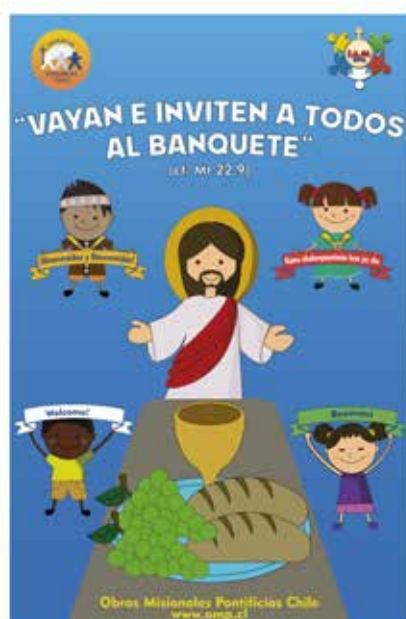
Giving from the heart!

The organization of the Day is entrusted to the different dioceses, where the diocesan directors of the PMS together with the diocesan



secretaries of the IAM organize a day in which the invitation is to celebrate another year of life of the Society, highlighting the financial contribution with a collection, gathering in front of the Eucharistic table. It is a day of mobilization, starting with the different communities in their respective parishes or schools, depending on their geographical reality, since June is winter and it is quite cold here.

The material we prepare annually are posters, stickers and piggy banks that everyone paints and assembles; then they take them home or prepare them for the



community.

The weekly meetings are deepened through the monthly cards in which we experience the School with Jesus, which invite us to get to know the different realities, to promote and encourage in the parish and/or at school about children and adolescents of the world, and to be able to make a second collection on the Sunday Mass of the Day or on another special day.

*Herminia Morales Rucal*

## IAM PATROCINIO SAN JOSÉ



*A Salesian school community belonging to the Archdiocese of Santiago, shared with us their weekly meeting where they received and recounted this year's contributions and the testimonies of two children*

**Why  
do you collect money  
(in the collection) as IAM  
children?**

**Santiago:** I collected money so that countries at war no longer fight each other, so that they can live together.

**Alejandro:** I collected money for children who have no money and no home, so that they do not freeze to death when they sleep and also have food

**Both:** to help all the children in the world.

*Second grade children from  
IAM Patrocinio San José  
Salesianos Providencia*





Hello, my name is Lindzay, I am from the Missionary Childhood 'Amigos sin Fronteras de San José Obrero Los Bosques Peñaflor'. I have been asked why we build piggy banks, why we put money in them and why we help. Because there are children who suffer, some of them have no parents and are abandoned. This year on the piggy bank it said welcome in different languages and I liked the fact that no matter what language we speak, the important thing is that all the

children can have a home and food, nice clothes and I would like to tell those children who are suffering that Jesus loves us all and loves them even more. Because he has us all in his heart. I would like the children to be able to play without being robbed or beaten. That all children can laugh and play. That is why we must help everyone. Let us be friends of the Lord Jesus and pray for the children of the world... from January to December... Missionaries always...

*Lindzay Gálvez*

*8 years old*

*IAM Amigos sin Fronteras El Prado - Peñaflor*

## **SOME COMMUNITIES GO OUT INTO THE STREETS TO SHARE AND GIVE TESTIMONY OF SERVICE AND MISSION WITH SONGS, DYNAMICS AND ACTIVITIES IN THE MIDST OF THEIR SECTORS**



IAM from the Archdiocese of Santiago, where more than 200 people from the different communities participated (around 20)

IAM Diocese of Punta Arenas, which spent a day of formation and recognizing its animators together with the celebration of its communities (around 8) with the presence of around 60 people, accompanied by their Bishop





IAM Diocese of Iquique, with a day of missionary celebration highlighting its Patrons and Societies, was attended by over 100 people representing its communities (around 6)

IAM Carlo Acutis, a new community that celebrated National IAM Day for the first time, belongs to the Archdiocese of Concepción



IAM Amigos Sin Fronteras EL Prado-Peñaflor, shared with us their meeting for the creation of piggy banks, their delivery and the celebration where they received missionary signs and one of their girls shared her testimony



The IAM Liceo Verbo Divino of the Los Angeles Diocese shared with us its activity of sharing with the families of the sector, with the motto of the year, the poster and the piggy banks



The IAM Los Vilos shared with us the photo of the delivery of the insignia on the occasion of the national holiday



The IAM of the Valparaíso diocese, on two occasions, brought together some 300 people in the Eucharist and missionary animation activities



# CAMBODIA

## NATIONAL OFFICE



The Holy Spirit is working on our children and our team leader. He inspires us by the Pontifical Mission Society for the Holy Childhood to push our heart in the country of young church in Cambodia. We have Catholic around 25,000 among the population 16 millions. Our Catholic children is very small number in the new evangelization area however we have the right when St. Joseph parish had collected Catholic Children by this spirituality.

### **HOLY CHILDHOOD IN ST. JOSEPH PARISH, PHNOM PENH**

Fr. Paul Chatsirey, PMS national director of Laos & Cambodia responds this mission from the Holy Spirit and start the plan to establish the

Missionary Children In his parish, St. Joseph, in the capital city of Phnom Penh, Cambodia. He starts from zero about this idea in Cambodia.

By the Holy Spirit, he starts with the leader team with Sister Benedicta, SHB, and select some of catechists who responsible the catechism class of teenagers. The handbook of "Missionary Children" which is supported by PMS Siri Lanka, the meeting, action plan was prepared by Fr. Paul. He has meeting for formation to team leaders.

### **THE GROUP OF YOUNG LEADERS AND THE LOGO**

This year, we start to create the group of young leaders from the teenager catechumens,





especially who already have the sacrament of Confirmation. The activity of Holy Childhood is presented to them and some of them volunteer to participate this. We have many times to give the formation about the spirit and purpose of this activities.

Sr. Benedicta, prepare the acting song which support from PMS Thailand, the youth leader learns to open themselves to this mission of Christ before sharing to their children. We create the logo of our group. During this 2 moths, August and September. We are preparing the open the Missionary Children group to the parish in the month of missionary, October 2024.

### A SMALL STEP FOR A YOUNG CHURCH

This is the small step in the young church country. But we hope that the light of Holy Spirit will lead us from group this group model and will spread through the vicariate and all over the country.

Sr. Benedicta gives us the witness about this movement that

*The missionary children in Cambodia is very challenge. It makes me walk out from "Comfort Zone" which I familiar and walk out to share and help others. It is not easy for this mission. After Fr. Paul Chatsirey asks me to start this initiative activity, I am very keen and decide to participate this project by hope that our Khmer catholic children will live deeply in their faith and by this faith will encourage them to walk out and share their life to others, especially, in their church, school, village and community. Now, we are on the process to form the leader group for next term.*

Fr. Paul Chatsirey Roeung





*I'm Pisey, catechist, I realize that Children missionary spirit help me to form them to know how to share, union and help one another. This spirit is transferred to children out from themselves and see the love of God by all activities and by the strength of Holy Spirit. He encourage us: 1. Proclaim the mercy of God, 2. Evangelization, 3. Making us to be good Christian in society.*

PISEY

*My name is Sok Lynda, as the team leader, I learn that the spirit of missionary is not only know but we must practice. I learn how to be leader, that is learning how to be close to Christ. I would like to help our Christian children to live close to God. Children missionary is a good practice way for me because I realize that I have the gift from Holy Spirit and it is enough to share to our community.*

SOK LYND

*I am Sok Lean: 1. I learn that the movement of Children missionary push me out to think about the people around me. I learn how to saving money for helping the other poor people. 2. I feel that the Holy Spirit teach me how to pray and think about other who need the prayers. He teach me how to save by seeing the lacking people around me.*

SOK LEAN



These are some witness who touch the spirit of Children missionary spirit. Thank you to the Holy Childhood, POSI who inspires us to know the mission of Christ to our Catholic children. We hope that they will be the good Catholic and will shine the love of God in everywhere that they live and share the good news by their faith living.





Find the words listed. Words may appear forward, backward, up, down or diagonal. Words may overlap and cross each other. When you have found a word, be sure to circle it and cross it off the list.



## BIBLE Word Search



ADAM	K	T	G	M	K	G	H	C	V	N	J	K	N	M	V	C	N	C	T	B
ANGEL	R	G	T	M	O	L	F	N	F	L	O	Y	Q	W	P	Z	O	V	K	B
ARK	V	J	Y	D	H	Z	T	T	L	M	R	I	Z	X	J	J	A	D	X	G
BETHLEHEM	L	M	I	R	A	C	L	E	S	A	N	D	X	L	S	X	H	K	L	A
BIBLE	Z	N	G	N	M	B	J	D	M	X	M	R	P	I	R	U	N	P	C	R
CREATION	L	T	D	N	O	Z	E	G	N	J	R	A	V	V	F	O	S	J	Q	D
CROSS	N	E	I	C	T	I	T	T	T	A	R	G	L	B	I	I	C	E	S	E
CRUCIFIXION	X	N	V	Q	M	N	T	L	H	A	L	E	M	T	Q	R	C	E	J	N
DAVID	M	C	A	M	A	R	V	A	B	L	G	D	C	F	E	P	L	U	F	Q
DISCIPLES	V	O	D	B	D	V	S	L	V	N	E	E	E	A	G	P	R	L	R	G
EXODUS	V	M	S	C	A	Q	E	H	A	L	R	H	T	S	I	B	X	W	K	C
FAITH	S	M	L	E	B	S	M	P	E	R	A	I	E	C	I	W	A	R	K	V
GARDEN	T	A	Q	R	S	G	N	E	U	P	O	S	S	M	Z	M	W	T	Z	H
GOD	E	N	S	S	O	R	C	S	L	N	H	I	N	V	F	R	O	X	N	Z
GRACE	H	D	P	H	N	H	E	O	L	R	D	E	R	G	F	M	B	R	Z	H
JESUS	P	M	N	L	B	R	N	J	Z	Y	W	F	R	P	D	J	M	J	P	M
JOSEPH	O	E	N	B	I	J	S	E	R	M	O	N	A	D	N	R	M	C	R	L
MARY	R	N	B	M	B	T	G	L	Y	R	X	K	F	I	G	E	C	A	R	G
MIRACLES	P	T	N	M	L	V	E	X	O	D	U	S	X	T	T	M	F	D	C	M
MOSES	K	S	P	L	E	M	L	J	R	E	Y	A	R	P	C	H	Z	G	N	Y
NOAH																				
PARABLES																				



PRAYER  
PROMISED LAND  
PROPHETS

SALVATION  
SERMON  
SHEPHERD



RESURRECTION TEN COMMANDMENTS







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