



JUNE 2026 - N. 20

BULLE IN

PONTIFICIUM OPUS A SANCTA INFANTIA
SECRETARIATUS INTERNATIONALIS



THE VOICE OF THE CHILDREN

NATIONAL OFFICES

MALI

ECUADOR

CZECH REPUBLIC

DIOCESES

NIGERIA - NSUKKA

NORTHERN ARABIA - MISSIO AVONA

MAURITANIA - NOUAKCHOTT

THAILAND - CHIANG RAI

RWANDA - BUTARE

VIỆT-NAM - LONG XUYỀN

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA - BOSTON

BANGLADESH - MYMENSINGH

UKRAINE - IVANO-FRANKISK

SURINAME - PARAMARIBO

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO - KANANGA

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SANCTA INFANTIA
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MISSIONARY NEWSLETTER
N.20 - JUNE 2026

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DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO -
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Children's rights are close to my heart!

"The presence of children, wherever they may be, should urge us to change our perspective and invest all our resources in them, rolling up our sleeves to build a better future together."

Dear children, adolescents and readers,

Warm greetings to you from the International Secretariat of the Pontifical Society of the Holy Childhood.

When I think of you, I think of hope.

I think of your smiles, your dreams, and your wonderful ability to look at the world with clear eyes and with a heart that is still capable of trusting, loving, and hoping. It is precisely your presence, wherever you are, that invites us to change the way we see things.

Too often, we adults build a world driven by the pursuit of success, power, and self-interest.

But a world that does not put children at the centre is a world that risks losing its soul. For this reason, I feel a great responsibility in my heart: to remind myself first of all, and then everyone else, that investing in children means investing in the future of humanity.

You are not just the tomorrow: you are the present.

You have the right to grow up in peace, to receive love, education, listening, and dignity.

You have the right to live without fear, without violence, and without loneliness. We adults cannot remain indifferent to the wounds that so many children around the world continue to carry in their hearts and in their lives.

I would like to tell each of you never to stop believing in goodness. Even when the world seems difficult, even when you feel small or fragile, remember that every act of love possesses an immense strength.

A smile, an outstretched hand, a kind word

can change a day and, sometimes, even a life.

I also want to give you children a special mission: teach us to be more human.

Teach us simplicity, the joy of little things, the capacity to forgive, and to live together without building walls.

The world needs your pure gaze to find its way back to fraternity and peace.

I wish to thank all the adults who work with dedication to protect the life and dignity of children. I assure them of my esteem and my prayers.

But I also wish to make a strong appeal to those who still do not do enough: let us roll up our sleeves.

It is not enough to talk about children, we must make concrete choices to protect them, listen to them, accompany them, and offer them real opportunities for growth and for the future.

Every forgotten child is a wound for all of humanity. Every child welcomed, loved, and protected is a light lit in the world.

Dear children, never lose hope. You are a precious gift to the Church, to society, and to the entire world. Keep dreaming, loving, and believing that a more beautiful future is possible.

Together we can build it.



SR. INÊS PAULO ALBINO, ASC

*Secretary General
Pontifical Society Holy Childhood*

MALI

NATIONAL OFFICE



Despite the difficult socio-political and security situation, the National Office of the Pontifical Mission Societies in Mali, under the responsibility of the Episcopal Conference of Mali, continues its mission of proclaiming the Gospel on Malian soil. It does so by animating Christian communities in the spirit of support, commitment, and the self-reliance of the Church.

This year, the theme guiding the missionary activities of the Holy Childhood was inspired by the message of the late Holy Father Francis for World Mission Day 2025: “Missionaries of Hope for the Peoples”, reformulated for children as: “Children, be pilgrims of hope”.



CURRENT SITUATION OF THE HOLY CHILDHOOD ASSOCIATION IN MALI

In Mali, the Holy Childhood Association brings together children aged 7 to 14. The majority of them belong to the Catholic Action movement called “**FRIENDS OF KIZITO**,” which serves as the core of missionary animation in the country. The movement is present in every diocese, parish, and Small Christian Community. Their slogan is “**Hand in hand for a more beautiful**

world.” It is a Catholic movement open to all children, regardless of ethnicity or religion. Driven by a missionary spirit, Christian children walk alongside Muslim and Protestant children to learn Christian virtues and human values, thus building a more beautiful world of solidarity, justice, and peace.

However, it must be acknowledged that insecurity and the worsening socio-political situation in the country are increasingly



affecting the lives and growth of children. Many can no longer attend school or the weekly meetings of the “Friends of Kizito.”

Despite these challenges, thanks to the ordinary and extraordinary subsidies from the Holy Childhood, each diocese organizes various activities for children: biblical formation and catechism classes, recreational activities, games, visits to the elderly, and moments of prayer.

For several years, we have established a joint action between this National Office and the national leader of the “Friends of Kizito” to facilitate and coordinate the support of all children, thanks to the invaluable help of the animators.

CELEBRATION OF HOLY CHILDHOOD DAY (EPIPHANY SUNDAY)

Known as “**CHILDREN’S CHRISTMAS**,” this year too, Holy Childhood Day was celebrated in all dioceses of Mali on the day of the Epiphany. Preparations included the creation of short animation videos by the children, which were shared on social media to inform and sensitize the faithful about the work of the Holy Childhood. Additionally, the Rosary was recited with the Friends of Kizito and their animators throughout the week. In most parishes, the Friends of Kizito led the celebrations through songs, readings, and prayers. During the Masses, offerings were collected to support the Church’s mission for the youngest. In some parishes, children stayed after Mass to spend the day together in creative and educational activities (sketches, concerts, choreography, conferences).

In most parishes across the six dioceses of



Friends of Kizito Christmas Special at Sacred Heart Parish, Bamako - aunt Thérèse telling stories to the children

Mali, the children imitated the Three Wise Men: Melchior, Caspar, and Balthazar. In the parish of the Holy Martyrs of Uganda in Djélibougou, after the solemn Epiphany Mass, they visited local families to bring the peace of Christmas, inviting family members to offer gifts to the Child of Bethlehem, for whom they serve as messengers.

TRADITIONAL AFRICAN TALES AND GOSPEL VALUES

On December 26, 2026, the Friends of Kizito from Sacred Heart Parish in Bamako organized a "Christmas Special" in the parish sector of Lafiabougou. The event brought together more than 800 children.

The goal was to draw inspiration from traditional African stories to teach children Gospel values such as love, truth, hope, kindness, and generosity. Two elders (a man and a woman), deep connoisseurs of both ancestral culture and the Gospel, were involved to guide the children.

We collected the testimonies of three children who participated in this special Christmas event.



I am Etienne Traoré, I am in the 5th grade and I am 12 years old. I really enjoyed this year's Christmas special because of the stories about loving one's neighbour that Aunt Thérèse told us. In the fable of the hare and the hyena, I understood that we must always share with others. The hyena always thought only of herself: everything she found, she ate alone without thinking of anyone else. Unlike the hyena, the hare was very charitable; he shared with his family, his friends, and his neighbours. When the famine came, the others helped him, while the hyena remained alone and regretted her behaviour. This is exactly the teaching Christ gives us in the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 7, verse 12: "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets".

I thank Aunt Thérèse for her stories and Father Jacques for the commentary on the Gospel.

Etienne Traoré

Friend of Kizito from Ouizindougou

THE **HYENA** ALWAYS THOUGHT ONLY OF
HERSELF: EVERYTHING SHE FOUND, SHE ATE
ALONE WITHOUT THINKING OF ANYONE ELSE.
UNLIKE THE HYENA, THE **HARE** WAS VERY
CHARITABLE; HE SHARED WITH HIS FAMILY, HIS
FRIENDS, AND HIS NEIGHBOURS



I am Rachelle Dakouo, I am 14 years old and I am in the 8th grade.

What struck me during this year's great meeting of the Friends of Kizito at Sacred Heart Parish was Uncle Zacharie's beautiful story. He told us the story of the little seed of hope.

Once upon a time, in an African village, there was a little seed named Akila. Akila lived in dry, barren soil, without water or sun. She felt sad and hopeless. One day, a wise old man told her: "Akila, you have the power within you to grow and become a beautiful tree! You just have to hope and wait for the right time". Akila believed those words and began to hope. She waited patiently, even when the sun was scorching and the wind was dry. One day, the rain arrived! Akila drank the water and began to grow, developing strong roots and green leaves. She became a beautiful tree that bore delicious fruit.

From this story, I understood that hope is believing that something beautiful will happen, even when things seem difficult. Like

Akila, we can hope and wait for the right time to grow and succeed. The Apostle John tells us something similar in his Gospel: "Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds" (John 12:24). When culture meets the Gospel, the heart is filled with joy.

Rachelle Dakouo
Friend of Kizito from Sébénikoro



HOPE IS BELIEVING THAT SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL WILL HAPPEN, EVEN WHEN THINGS SEEM DIFFICULT

I am Virginie Camara, from the Christian community of Our Lady of Peace in Lafiabougou. I liked the story of David and Goliath that Father Jacques told us.

Once upon a time, in Israel, there was a young shepherd named David. The Philistines, enemies of Israel, had a giant named Goliath who challenged the Israeli army. Goliath was huge and terrifying! David, who had come to bring food to his brothers who were soldiers, heard Goliath's challenge. He said to King Saul: "I will go and fight Goliath, because God is with me!" With a simple sling and a stone, David defeated Goliath. The Philistines fled and Israel was saved!

Moral: With God, we can be brave and overcome our fears and challenges. Like David, we are stronger through faith.

I want to thank the National Office of the PMS of Mali for organizing such an activity for us children. Thank you to all our benefactors, thank you to our fathers and mothers. Above all, a big thank you to Aunt Thérèse, Uncle Zacharie, and Father Jacques for the cultural and Gospel teachings.

Virginie Camara
Friend of Kizito from Lafiabougou
from the report of the National Director



ECUADOR

NATIONAL OFFICE



In Ecuador, the Missionary Childhood and Adolescence Association (Infancia y Adolescencia Misionera - IAM) groups are active in many communities and are promoted through various activities at the diocesan, archdiocesan, and vicariate levels. Children participate with joy and commit themselves to being evangelizers within their communities. The constant and significant presence of the National Director at various meetings across different jurisdictions has contributed to animating and strengthening the commitment to the Church's mission.

Animators are also encouraged to take on the leadership of the Society in their communities with responsibility and commitment. Their growth is supported through national and provincial training workshops, as well as both virtual and in-person formation meetings. Through these initiatives, the National Office seeks to revitalize the missionary spirit and reaffirm a permanent commitment to the task of evangelization, thanks also to the active participation of laity, priests, seminarians, and consecrated persons. These spaces for formation, dialogue, and strengthening missionary commitment are not only moments of accompaniment for animators but also opportunities for active participation for children and adolescents.

Members of the IAM have shown remarkable interest and enthusiasm in persevering in this task of evangelization.

Furthermore, animators and their respective IAM groups participate in World Mission Sunday (DOMUND) and the Day of Native Vocations in mission lands, the Day of the Ecuadorian Missionary ad gentes, as well as the feast of St. Francis Xavier, patron of the missions, on December 3rd. They also celebrate the Day of the IAM, which in 2025 was held under the motto: "Missionaries of hope and solidarity, pilgrims in the world".

*from the 2025 report
of the National Director*



My name is Winter Elian Briones Zambrano, I am 12 years old and I belong to the IAM of La Paz Manta Parish, in the Archdiocese of Portoviejo.

I first learned about the IAM because I go to Mass every Sunday in my community, Mary Help of Christians. In church, I always saw children and older kids wearing a special t-shirt, like a uniform, and it caught my attention.

How did I join the Society? It happened like this: I told my mom I wanted to be there. About two months before my First Communion, I went to Mass with her, and that day it was the IAM's turn to animate the liturgy. If I remember correctly, halfway through the Mass, three girls entered dancing. One was slightly ahead and two were on the sides, dressed in clothes from the time of Jesus. Behind them came five boys, each carrying a different coloured flag (blue, white, red, yellow, and green), and they lined up in front of the altar. The priest stood before them, called the others, and made the sign of the cross over them.

I whispered in my mom's ear: "Mom, I want to be there too; I want to be part of them." My mom, who always supports me in everything, said: "First, make your First Communion, and

then, if you're still motivated, we'll ask what needs to be done to join the Holy Childhood."

That's how I joined, and now I am one of them.

At my first meeting, I thought about all the new things I would learn; I was very curious to know what they did. It was so much fun! I remember coming home and telling my mom that joining the IAM was the best decision I had ever made.

Before joining, I went to Mass every Sunday and to catechism on Saturdays; my mom had always talked to me about God and the Virgin Mary and I already knew all the prayers and some Bible stories she told me. I really like the group games because they are fun; I laugh a lot and we have great times with friends, which makes me forget all the stress from school.

In the IAM, I have learned that God is always with us, that we can find Him by helping those most in need, and that He takes care of us even when we do not behave well. When we help other children, I feel good and very lucky because I tell them about God, something many of them do not know. I feel lucky because I had someone to teach me these things, while others have not had the same chance. In the group, I get along very well with Thiago, and my favourite thing is talking about "life things."

One of the stories that strikes me the most is the story of Moses. God speaks to him and, even though Moses was very afraid because he did not feel capable of doing something so big, he eventually accepted the mission. I think you need to be very brave and have a lot of faith for that. Out of the IAM Decalogue, my favourite is: A missionary child always gives thanks to God.

Since joining the group, I feel I have changed for the better. I am very shy and reserved, and I find it hard to make friends; now I feel a little bit more open—just a little bit.

My mom says:

"As a mother, I see the change in the fact that he joined the choir; I never imagined he would want to sing. One Sunday he came back from the IAM and told me: 'Mom, I joined the choir and I have to go to rehearsals on Fridays.' I just said 'Okay, if you like it, do it.' I always try to encourage him; now he participates in Mass and is more confident. These are small changes that make a difference."

As members of the IAM, we do novenas in people's homes, and I really liked that. You always learn something and there is always something to share, learn, or eat. When I went to the Cottolengo (hospice/care home), I felt happy to help and share with the people living there; they are lonely and sick elderly people, many of whom have no one to visit them. It makes me very sad to think they are alone. I have my grandparents and it would hurt me to see them like that, so I thank God for my grandparents who have a family to take care of them.

I do not know yet what I will be when I grow up. I have thought about being "my own boss," but I do not know—I think I will figure it out over time. My mom always tells me that when I am grown up and working, I should create a "chain of favours": I help someone, and that person does not pay me back but helps someone else, and so on. I am sure I will do it: I believe the chain of favours is like doing a mission. God will guide me.

If a child were unsure about joining the Holy Childhood, I would tell them not to be afraid: it is a beautiful thing where you learn a lot about Jesus and Mary, you have fun, and you make new friends.

I would tell them not to be afraid to tell their parents they want to be part of it. I hope all children have good parents who support them like mine do. I think it is important for Holy Childhood to spread all over the world so that children will know God.

It is a united group where they teach you values and motivate you to be a better child.

CZECH REPUBLIC

NATIONAL OFFICE



The Pontifical Society of the Holy Childhood in the Czech Republic is a very active and vibrant reality. Czech children are engaged in missionary activities during the whole year in order to help their less fortunate peers in the world and to grow in their faith and solidarity. The National Office has regular activities that are carried out during the year and special initiatives for special occasions.

THE "MISSION CLUBS"

Missionary formation activities for children in the Czech Republic have been taking place for more than 20 years through groups called **LITTLE MISSION CLUBS**. Through these Clubs, children support missions in a very creative way under adults' leadership. The National Office prepares member cards for Club members and posters for mission boards, formation and animation materials for missionary work. A practical Guide is also available.



It comprises all necessary steps for leading a mission group, and it offers a lot of practical tips including information about the admission ceremony into the PMS of Holy Childhood and the anthem – "Send me, I will go".

DAY OF HOLY CHILDHOOD

The World Mission Day for Children is celebrated in the Czech Republic on the 1st of June, while in most countries it is celebrated at the beginning



of the year. The reason why is that when this tradition started, Czechoslovakia was under a communist dictatorship that severely restricted and suppressed all Church activities. It was only after the Velvet Revolution in 1989 and the restoration of the full activities of the Church, including the Holy Childhood, that this feast began to be celebrated in the country and it was set for June 1, which is also World Children's Day. However, most missionary activities take place around Mission Sunday, Advent and Easter.

MY HOLIDAYS AT THE CHURCH

The National Office prepares summer mission material to make it more enjoyable for the younger children to visit the church during trips and holidays. This material, in form of a pdf file, can be downloaded, printed out and folded into a square format, creating a card that can be carried in the backpack. Thus, the children can carry it around during the summer and write down each Sunday where they have been to Mass and colour a picture from the Gospel of the day.

CARTOON CALENDARS

Cartoon calendars for children for liturgical feasts (Easter, Mission Sunday and Christmas) are also published. Children have a prepared task for every day and they can colour the calendar. The tasks lead them to experience a deeper period and reminds them to think about others.

MISSION BRIDGE FOR CHILDREN

In the context of Mission Sunday, this is a time for children to speak about the continents, each of which has its particular colour on the mission rosary (red, blue, green, yellow and white). The children add symbols to the continents, pray, sing and light candles and pray The Lord's Prayer, Hail Mary and Glory to the Father.



MISSIONARY ACTIVITIES ASSOCIATED WITH THE JUBILEE YEAR

The Jubilee year 2025 represented a worldwide time of hope, renewal, and encouragement in an era full of uncertainties, and the Pontifical Mission Societies in the Czech Republic joined the message of the “Pilgrim of Hope” already in the spring through their Lenten activity for children and adults titled *“The Pilgrim of Hope Ascends the Sacred Mountain of Easter.”* The symbolic “ascent” — from oneself, through one’s neighbour, and ultimately toward God — unfolded progressively from Ash Wednesday to the Solemnity of the Resurrection of the Lord through fasting, acts of mercy, and prayer, with the aim of experiencing Lent as an authentic pilgrimage of hope and transformation. In September, this initiative was followed by a 13-month catechetical program for children titled *“Missionary Pilgrim of Hope.”*



MISSIONARY PILGRIM OF HOPE

The year-long catechetical program for children “Missionary Pilgrim of Hope” started in September 2025 until October 2026 and serves as a bridge between the Jubilee Year and the 100th Mission Sunday. The program consists of thirteen monthly themes and includes both informative content and activities, creative tasks, quizzes, and sometimes worksheets. The children are accompanied throughout the year by the mascot of the Jubilee Year, Lucy, and together with her they journey through the entire program, meeting not only other pilgrims but also inspiring saints. Led by St. Thérèse of Lisieux, St. Francis Xavier, and the founder of the Pontifical Society for the Propagation of the Faith, Blessed Pauline Jaricot, they will ultimately arrive at the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the World Mission Day — Mission Sunday. It will be celebrated in all parishes on 18th October 2026. More than 1,500 children enrolled in the program in 2025.



MISSIONARY ROSARY FOR ALL THE CHILDREN OF THE WORLD 2025

The missionary material was part of a May missionary prayer initiative called *“The Children’s Prayer in the Jubilee Year 2025”*. The initiative consisted of regularly praying The Children’s Prayer in the Jubilee Year 2025 along with

one decade of the rosary. Children could also pray the entire missionary rosary and gradually remember children from all corners of the world. The material was available both in printed and electronic form.

On the separate prayer card, featuring The Children’s Prayer in the Jubilee Year 2025, the pilgrim Lucia was also introduced. Her attributes are inspired by the official mascot of the Jubilee Year 2025.



from the report
of the National Director



NIGERIA

DIOCESE OF NSUKKA



TESTIMONIES



The Catholic Diocese of Nsukka was formally established on November 19, 1990, by Pope John Paul II. It was carved out of the Enugu Diocese and is part of the Ecclesiastical Province of Onitsha. It covers an area of 3.792 km² and has a population of approximately 1.593.655 people, with about 69% Catholics.

Nsukka Diocese is a semi-urban Diocese. Most part of the Diocese is rural with poor and indigent families with many children. Most parents are peasant farmers and petty traders and the greater percentage of families of the Diocese live below poverty line. Because of this poverty, children lack most basic needs like food, potable water, health care, recreational facilities, educational materials etc. Some children live in the rural areas and they have to walk a long way to attend school. Thus, there are many out-of-school-children and the government cares little about their welfare.

SCHOLARSHIPS

The only veritable hope for the poor is the local Church. Thus, many of the periodic activities of the Diocese are designed for children. Because of the collapse of the government educational system, parishes are encouraged to establish nursery and primary schools where the children are taught with every dedication. Every year the Diocese gives scholarships to some indigent but gifted children in the mission schools, some of whom are

chosen based on their exceptional performance as members of the Holy Childhood Association (HCA). This special one-year program grants scholarships to 50 very active indigent HCA children, at least 3 from each of the 13 deaneries. These children usually do not come from the same place or the same school.

HOLY CHILDHOOD GROUPS

Many parishes have very active Holy Childhood groups, which learn about God and help evangelizing their peers. They have regular meetings in the Diocesan centre and a yearly meeting with the Bishop. During their weekly prayer they pray for children all over the world. They also visit orphanages and bring little gifts when they visit hospitals. Children also do "out-reach", which means that they move from one family to another to invite their members to join in the mission solidarity. They also invite other children to church.

*from the report of
The Most Rev. Godfrey Igwebuike Onah
Bishop of Nsukka*

NIGERIA

MISSIO AVONA

APOSTOLIC VICARIATE OF NORTHERN ARABIA



The Apostolic Vicariate of Northern Arabia (formerly the Apostolic Vicariate of Kuwait) was established on May 31, 2011, following a decree from the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. The new Vicariate encompasses the northern territories of Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia and serves as a spiritual refuge for an estimated 2.2 million Catholics, the vast majority of whom are migrant workers from around the world. Each member of this diverse community carries a personal story of faith, migration, and hope. Thus, AVONA is home to an extraordinary blend of cultures, rites, and traditions.

While canonically organized as a Latin-rite jurisdiction, the Vicariate embraces the significant presence of the Eastern Catholic Churches, each contributing its own liturgical heritage and spiritual depth. The faithful gather in churches and chapels to celebrate Mass in the Latin, Syro-Malabar, Syro-Malankara, Maronite, Melkite, Chaldean, Coptic Catholic and Armenian Catholic traditions, among others. The ancient chants and prayers of the Eastern rites echo alongside Latin hymns, creating a unique symphony of faith that reflects the universality of the Church.

A cornerstone of AVONA's mission is its commitment to peaceful coexistence with Islam and other religions. In a region where diverse faiths have long intersected, the Apostolic Vicariate actively engages in interfaith dialogue and community outreach. This mutual respect and collaboration not only enrich the spiritual life of the Catholic community but also contribute to social harmony across the Arabian Peninsula. By fostering understanding and shared values, AVONA helps build bridges among communities, demonstrating that faith can unite rather than divide.

from the website www.avona.org



FUNDATION OF THE HOLY CHILDHOOD

Bishop Aldo Berardi, the Apostolic Vicar of Northern Arabia, welcomed the first 46 child volunteers of the Holy Childhood Society, on March 28, 2025 in the cathedral of Our Lady of Arabia in Awali, inaugurating thus the Holy Childhood Society in Bahrain. During the Mass, 46 children pledged to be child missionaries, to become friends of Jesus, and to serve other children.

SOME INITIATIVES

from the article of Rev. Fr. Marcus Fernandes – Sower magazine n°5/2006



ST. NICHOLAS DAY

On December 5, 2025, for the first time, ST. NICHOLAS DAY was celebrated to honour the children and to foster a deeper understanding of the saint. Saint Nicholas was an example of someone who followed Jesus Christ faithfully and expressed his love for Jesus by serving the poor, especially

children. We held a drawing and essay-writing competition for the children based on the life of Saint Nicholas. Many children participated. After the Holy Eucharist, candies were distributed to the children. Children surrounded our Bishop, receiving his love, blessings, and candies, creating an atmosphere of joy.

SERENADE - LET'S SPREAD THE CHRISTMAS JOY

This singing competition was conducted through submission of a recorded video. Altogether, we had 9 groups from the four countries: Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar. Most of them are posted on YouTube. It was a beautiful and community-oriented competition.

After the event, we were told that it helped form unity among children, parents, and the community. The winners were announced and awarded on 4th January 2026 on the Holy Childhood day, during the Mass. We have

conducted this event for the first time in the vast Northern Vicariate through the medium of social media. It has created excitement among the parishioners, and they are already expecting to have this again next year.

Last year, under Missio-Avona, we had conducted essay writing for the children based on the theme: "Children are the missionaries of Hope" (based on three mottos: pray, help, and share). By introducing Pontifical Mission Societies in AVONA, we have created awareness about the four societies, and gradually, people are aware of each Society's role.

In less than a year and a half, Missio-Avona has made significant awareness and progress.

Glory to God on high and Peace to the people of Good will.

MISSIO-AVONA ORGANIZES

MISSIO-AVONA

SERENADE
Let's spread the Christmas Joy

Missio-Avona invites All Children or the children choirs. To sing like the Angels!

Theme: Serenade
Language: One carol in English and a song with Christmas wishes could be sung in any Language.
Time: Duration 4 minutes.
Presentation and costumes recommended.

REGISTRATION COMPULSORY
Last date for registration is 8th December 2025

REGISTRATION DETAILS
Parish Name and country (in Arabic), Phone number.

SUBMISSION DATE
Carol submission by 17th December 2025

Scan To Register

Share your Video recorded carol song on cur.missionavona.org

Participant: The competition for the Avona's children (17 years below) at the Parish Level. Organized by Missio-Avona. (Group of minimum 10-15 children)

The best three winners will be declared by three judges. (Parish Priest Please encourage your parish children)

Apostolic Vicariate of Northern Arabia (AVONA)
P.O.Box 25362, Villa 137, Rd 4603, Awali, Kingdom of Bahrain
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CELEBRIAMO - THE HOLY CHILDHOOD DAY

The Holy Childhood Day in the Vicariate was celebrated from the 2nd to the 4th of January 2026, for the first time on a grand scale at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Arabia, Awali, Kingdom of Bahrain. It was announced under the title **CELEBRIAMO: THE HOLY CHILDHOOD DAY 2026**, and the theme was “*Children, come around Jesus*”.

On January 2nd, after the Eucharist, children were invited to be the stars inviting others to Jesus, like the star of Bethlehem that led the three Magi. Then, Sr. Roselyn, Carmelitan Nun, and the Headmistress of the Sacred Heart School of Bahrain, gave a talk on the importance of Holy Childhood. Many activities were organized, like, drawing and painting based on the theme, action songs, live dancing... On the 4th of January, H.E. Bishop Aldo Berardi celebrated the mass of the Epiphany, reminding children about their missions and the three mottos of prayer, help and sharing the gospel. He



appreciated the children’s prayer and support to the Church in Gaza by their little monetary collections and their handmade cards with messages of hope. Holy Childhood day celebration – celebriamo – from 2nd to 4th of January 2026 created a huge awareness of the Holy Childhood Society under Missio Avona and now many children have joined it. There was big enthusiasm - “*Missio-Avona*” is bringing life to the Vicariate!”

The Holy Childhood Day 2026, organised by Missio Avona, brought children,

volunteers, and parish members together for a joyful day of faith, fellowship and fun, filled with prayer, creativity, music, and smiles. A truly memorable celebration of childhood and mission.

It was a great desire of our Apostolic Vicar, H.E. Bishop Aldo Berardi to promote the Pontifical Mission Societies in the Apostolic Vicariate of Northern Arabia.

HOLY CHILDHOOD SOCIETY: ADVENT SECRET FRIEND ACTIVITY

To begin the Advent season a meaningful activity was organized: each child selected a secret friend—a peer they would pray for throughout this special time of preparation.

To guide them in this activity, every child received an Advent card. They were encouraged to write a short message or prayer on it for their secret friend. On Christmas Day, the children added a handmade greeting card and presented it together with the Advent card.

The theme of this Advent activity encouraged children to:

- *Pray daily for their secret friend*
- *Write a thoughtful message or prayer on the Advent card*
- *Learn more about their friend’s family and keep the entire family in prayer.*



This simple yet heartfelt tradition nurtures compassion, strengthens friendships, and deepens the children’s understanding of prayer and community.

Olga Fernandes

Awali Holy Childhood coordinator - from Sower Magazine n°4/2026



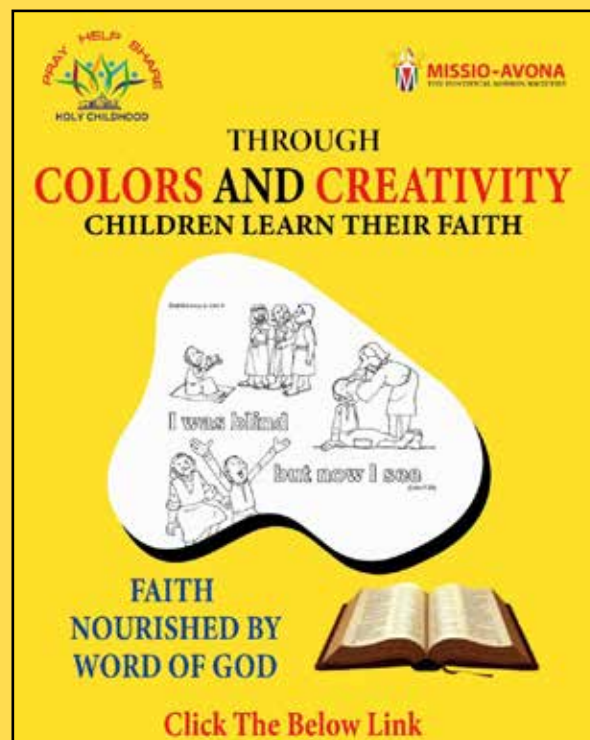
IN TIMES OF WAR - A NEW PROJECT FOR CHILDREN DURING THE CONFLICT IN THE MIDDLE EAST

P. Marcus Fernandes – delegate of Missio-Avona

The outbreak of war in the Middle East led initially to a slowdown in many areas, with people staying indoors and distant classroom activities. Church and government always motivated people to stay calm and be prayerful. Then, the war started to spread out and every incoming missile or drone attacks pressed the button of sirens, creating unconsciously not good feelings. Thus, His Excellency the Bishop gladly approved the project of activity for the children called “*Faith nourished by Word of God*” presented to him by the Missio-Avona Office.

THE PROJECT

“FAITH NOURISHED BY WORD OF GOD” is an activity for children based on the Sunday Gospel. It is an educational project, which includes the Gospel explanation, a video link related to the Gospel, colouring pages, quizzes, word puzzles and a crossword, among other activities. This project’s aim is to help children understand the Word of God, but it also prepares parents and children for the Sunday Eucharist celebration, fostering faith and enrichment. The issues are posted each week on the AVONA website, or shared through WhatsApp social posts. Two priests, a Catechist and the Holy Childhood coordinators are involved in arranging the contents and preparing the lessons.



The project was very well received by parishioners.

Further, Holy Childhood children are also requested to pray a “Hail Mary” for peace. From their homes, they pray for peace in the Middle East.

I really felt that this is such a meaningful and child-friendly way to help children grow closer to Jesus and remember the Word of God. The worksheets and puzzles make the experience more fun, keeping children engaged and focused. It does not feel like a lesson, but rather something, children can genuinely enjoy. It certainly creates a wonderful opportunity for parents, too, to get involved, making it a meaningful activity for families to bond and interact together.

Avona Parishoner – Qatar



MAURITANIA

DIOCESE OF NOUAKCHOTT



The Diocese of Nouakchott is the sole jurisdiction of the Catholic Church in Mauritania. It covers the entire national territory, approximately 1,030,700 km². The diocese was established on December 18, 1965, by Pope Paul VI. Being in an Islamic Republic, Catholics represent 0.1% (about 4,000 – 4,500 people)

of the total population. Since proselytism is prohibited, the Church focuses on social and humanitarian action (health, education, aid to migrants), interreligious dialogue, and the promotion of fraternity.

The Catholic Christians (approximately 4,000) living in the Diocese are of foreign origin and, for the most part, are gathered in Nouakchott, the capital. There is also a significant number forming the Catholic community of Nouadhibou, commonly known as the country's economic capital.

The diocese carries out pastoral and educational actions for two categories of children: on one hand, the children of the faithful within the Catholic community, composed exclusively of foreigners (expatriates, international officials, diplomats, migrants in transit, refugees, or established families without citizenship). Most of these children come from sub-Saharan Africa.

On the other hand, the Church develops activities with children who attend the diocese's social structures, such as kindergartens and nurseries, the CRENAS (Nutritional Recovery Centres for Severe Acute Malnutrition), and centres for children with disabilities. Most children in this second group come from Mauritanian families and are therefore Muslim. Catechesis is provided primarily in the three parishes that offer this possibility.

Every year, no fewer than 700 Catholic children benefit from structured accompaniment within the parishes through: catechism classes, youth movements (Scouts, Guides, CV/AV, children's choir, altar servers), school monitoring services (nurseries, academic support), and child care and promotion centres (CRENAS and centres for the disabled). With the goal of helping these adolescents shape their character and build their personality, these movements are based on practical activities organized into camps, day events, or sessions.

The Catholic Church in Mauritania is composed of approximately 40 nationalities. Despite the effects of migration policies, which have led to the departure or deportation of some families, our community remains very cosmopolitan. One of the main challenges is diocesan communion and the fundamental bond with the Universal Church. Consequently, one of our pastoral guidelines is to encourage all structures where pastoral agents work—particularly those of the Holy Childhood—to be platforms where children from different backgrounds learn to interact, listen to, love, help,



endure, and forgive one another. This is a challenge that the priests, religious, and laity of the Diocese of Nouakchott strive to overcome every year. The children are organized into movements and associations and welcomed into the aforementioned structures where, with the help of adult animators, they learn to participate in the Church's mission according to their age, by living and walking together. The parishes with a presence of Catholic children are, in descending order of importance: Nouakchott, Nouadhibou, and Rosso. Here, movements, associations, and catechism are present, as well as the children's choir in Nouakchott. The children come from Christian families with varying degrees of religious practice. Among Europeans, Americans, and Lebanese, it is generally the children who encourage their parents to attend Mass and certain functions, especially when they have an active role during celebrations. In this way, children contribute to revitalizing religious practice in these parishes.

The Diocese has kindergartens and nurseries that welcome both Christian and non-Christian children. Here, young Mauritians mix with children from Europe, America, Korea, Nigeria, Mali, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, etc.

Thus, children of all origins and social categories learn to live together and respect each other—something very important in a country strongly marked by ethnic divisions. Equally important are the meetings between students' parents, who learn to discover and esteem one another in this context.

NUTRITIONAL RECOVERY AND EDUCATION CENTRES (CREN)

In Mauritania, especially in shantytowns and rural areas, young children are often undernourished and/or suffer from severe malnutrition. This compromises their subsequent physical, psychological, and intellectual development. Many infectious diseases, particularly tuberculosis, are also linked to this malnutrition. The purpose of the

Recovery and Education Centres (CREN) is to eradicate malnutrition, an endemic scourge in this desert country.

In Nouakchott, there are two CRENs run by religious sisters, although they belong to the Ministry of Health. They function as day hospitals where children between 4 months and 5 years are cared for (maximum 25-30 per centre) and receive systematic medical treatments and supplements when necessary, while mothers are trained in nutrition, hygiene, preventive health, etc.

CENTRES FOR THE DISABLED

The Centres for the Disabled (one in Nouakchott and the other in Atar run by the Daughters of Charity) welcome school-aged children with physical, motor, or mental disabilities that prevent them from accessing educational institutions. The lack of adequate facilities forces these centres to admit children of all categories: intellectual disabilities, deaf-mutes, Down syndrome, and behavioural disorders. In a population that lives essentially on "oasis" agriculture (few vegetables and date palms) and is therefore very poor, a disabled child is marginalized by society, and families are unable to care for them.

SCHOOLING AND ACADEMIC SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN

The Mauritanian educational system is not very suitable for foreign children in general due to the complete Arabization of public institutions. Bilingual private schools are the only ones where foreign children can progress, but tuition fees are very expensive. There is a growing number of destitute parents asking the diocese for help with their children's education and schooling.

*from the report of
The Most Rev. Victor Ndione
Bishop of Nouakchott*

The NURSERY SCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN OF THE CATHOLIC MISSION OF NOUADHIBOU, a mining and fishing port with a parish of about 500 Christians, are run by the Community of the Sisters of Bethany. In addition to the kindergarten and nursery, the sisters also run a women's promotion centre and a library.

There are three sisters, called to live in community, who carry out activities for Catholic children within the Catholic Mission of Nouadhibou. Besides caring for sick and malnourished children, the sisters hold catechism classes for children and lead the CV and AV groups. Alongside pastoral work, they carry out educational activities (traditional integration days, parent awareness, visiting the sick...) and health activities (primary healthcare, distribution of medicines and food products...)

THAILAND

DIOCESE OF CHIANG RAI

The Chiang Rai Diocese was split from the Chiang Mai Diocese in 2018 and is the 11th Diocese in Thailand.

It consists of the 4 northernmost provinces of Chiang Rai, Phayao, Nan and Phrae plus the Ngao district, in the Lampang province. It covers an area of about 37.839 square km and its total population is estimated at more than 2,7 million people, out of which about 25.000 are baptized.

It is one of Thailand's poorest Dioceses, being mainly mountainous and populated by a large proportion of ethnic hill tribe people, many of whom are stateless having moved from poorer bordering countries of Laos and Myanmar.

The majority of Catholics in Chiang Rai Diocese are made of an ethnic minority of hill tribe people such as Akha, Lahu, Tai Yai or Shan people, Paga-Gayor (or Karen), Northeastern Thais.

The Diocese counts 17 Youth and children learning centres, 4 schools under its direct supervision and 3 under the catholic priests or nuns affiliated schools.

A large portion of Catholic ethnic minorities in Chiang Rai are Akha and Lahu. These are people from southern China who migrated to the mountainous areas in Chiang Rai in past generations and many of them still retain their traditional beliefs and practices alongside Catholicism.

Most of these hill tribes people are poor and practice subsistence farming or grow low value-added cash crops on the poor soil of the mountainsides, or are seasonal or casual labourers with no fixed regular income. As a result, they often cannot afford to send their children to school, especially for post-primary education, which is generally far from their villages.



Many families do not have Thai identification cards, because they or their parents failed to register their child's birth properly with Thai Government offices, making them stateless and ineligible for many state

benefits. Stateless families may lack the opportunity to enrol their children in schools or access state resources such as free healthcare, or other benefits. If they travel outside their area of residence, they may be subject to arrest as illegal immigrants.

As a result, the Church supports these children's education or establishes centres of dormitories for them to live closer to public schools (albeit removed from

their parents) where they can also receive adequate food, shelter and access to health services and spiritual comfort.

There are a total of 17 Catholic centres enabling better lives of 978 children. Priests and sisters also extend their monitoring and services to those children in the hill tribe area who still live with their families.

*from the report of
The Most Rev. Joseph Vuthilert Haelom
Bishop of Chiang Rai*



HOME OF CHARITY

CAMILLIAN SOCIAL CENTER OF CHIANG RAI

The Home of Charity, situated in the Muang district of Chang Rai province, aims to provide essential care, rehabilitation, and education for disabled children, primarily from poor, rural areas lacking access to healthcare and education.

The healthcare of the children is personalized and includes physical and aquatic therapy that improves their mobility and general health. Educational support includes Thai, English, mathematics and life skills, ensuring quality education for children with various learning and intellectual needs. The Centre's program integrates pastoral and missionary formation through daily sessions on Christian values, teaching compassion, empathy and spirit of service. These teaching help foster a strong sense of community and personal responsibility. Children are taught to make small sacrifices, offer

prayers for children worldwide, and practice kindness in their community life.

Our children engage also in community service and missionary activities. This gives them the opportunity to practice what they learn and to bring them joy and fulfilment through helping others, deepening their connection to Christian teachings. Despite their disabilities, they actively help one another – pushing wheelchairs, sharing materials, and supporting classmates during activities. Through companionship and service they show Christian love in tangible ways.

When visitors come to the centre, the children welcome them joyfully, sing songs, offer simple gifts, and express gratitude. These interactions become moments of missionary outreach—children sharing God's love with others.

MINT

MINT arrived at the Home in 2016 unable to stand or walk due to severe physical weakness and lack of early care. With love, consistent therapy, and adapted education, she worked hard every day to strengthen her body and build confidence. Today, Mint can walk with support, participate actively in school, and is preparing to continue her studies at Sri Sangwan School in Chiang Mai. Her journey reflects a true missionary spirit—showing how perseverance, faith, and the care made possible by generous benefactors can transform a child's life and inspire others with hope.



ACHAI

The Little Artist Who Inspires Us All

When ACHAI first arrived at the Home of Charity, his severe physical disability made even simple tasks difficult. Yet he carried an extraordinary joy that never left him. With the support of the Pontifical Mission Societies and our dedicated staff, Achai has grown through daily therapy, adapted learning, and one-on-one support. His greatest breakthrough came through art therapy—using clay to express himself creatively despite limitations in his hands. Today, he is known as “the artist of the Home of Charity,” proudly sharing his colourful creations that strengthen both his skills and his confidence. Achai's bright smile and determined spirit remind us that hope, dignity, and beauty can flourish even in hardship, and that with love and support, every child can grow into the person God intends them to be.



RWANDA

DIOCESE OF BUTARE



The Diocese of Butare, located in the southern part of Rwanda, covers an area of 1,958 km². Established on September 11, 1961, as the Diocese of Astrida by Pope John XXIII, it was subsequently renamed the Diocese of Butare on November 12, 1963, by Pope Paul VI. The Diocese counts approximately 700,000 Catholics (54.5% of the total population).

In our Diocese, children make up 65% of the population and actively participate in Church life through children's choirs, serving at Mass, pilgrimages, meetings within Small Christian Communities, and youth centers during the holidays.

However, many children come from poor families who often lack the basic daily necessities; they struggle to study and sometimes drop out of school to live on the streets. Some are orphans or

have been abandoned by their parents, raised with great difficulty by their grandparents, if they were fortunate enough to have them. Due to poverty, they are also targets of violence and are lured by sects.

For these reasons, the Diocese gives high priority to animation and outreach work.

*from the report of
The Most Rev. Jean Bosco Ntagungira
Bishop of Butare*



THE “SAINT ANTOINE” CENTER OF NYANZA

THE CENTER

The Saint Antoine Center is a socio-educational and charitable work run since 1988 by the Congregation of the Rogationist Fathers. Since its founding, in addition to various apostolic activities, the Center has always served as a foster home for orphaned children and young people between the ages of 4 and 20. The primary goal is to provide minors without parents or family support with an integral human and Christian education. Since January 2023, the Center has also welcomed a small group of children suffering from spina bifida and hydrocephalus.

STREET CHILDREN

In recent decades, the phenomenon of ‘street children’ has spread throughout Rwanda, especially in urban areas. These are minors between the ages of 6 and 16 who leave their families to ‘seek a life’ in the cities. In most cases, the causes of this phenomenon lie in material poverty and family conflicts. Often, these children find no food at home and, in order to survive, they move to urban centres, particularly around market areas or stations. Life on the streets exposes minors to numerous dangers, leaving them without an education and far from a spiritual and faith-based dimension.

THE PROJECT OF THE CENTER

The Saint Antoine Center project aims to help street children to:

- live a life like their peers, ensuring them food, housing,



medical assistance, and education, as well as a spiritual journey;

- reintegrate into society, learning to respect rights and duties through educational guidance that leads them to abandon the bad habits acquired on the streets and to be responsible. In this socialization process, they are helped to rediscover their faith and to become witnesses and announcers of the Gospel according to their personal vocation;

- return to their families, where possible. The ultimate goal of the project is family reunification. From the moment they enter the Center, a collaboration with their families of origin is launched to jointly address the causes that led to the separation. If returning to the original family is not possible, a new foster family is sought to welcome them.

All the boys and girls welcomed at the Center are also nourished by the Word of God. Some are baptized, others have received Holy Communion, and still others are preparing to receive Baptism.

Fr. Vlastimil Chovanec, rcj

TWELVE YEARS LATER, STILL A STUDENT

Father Vlastimil Chovanec, rcj

20/03/2014 – 20/03/2026

A few weeks after my arrival on mission in Rwanda, twelve years ago, a European missionary not far from Nyanza, was celebrating fifty years of service in this country. I was not present at the celebration, but his words reached me nonetheless, and they have often returned to my mind ever since.

In his speech, that missionary said, more or less, that after three years he had the impression that he knew the country and its people by then. After seven years, he was convinced he knew them very well. And today, after fifty years, he realized instead that he barely knew them at all.

When I first heard those words, I had only been here a short time. Everything seemed new to me: the language I was trying to grasp, the culture full of subtle nuances that you don't learn in books, the pace of life that is not marked by the clock, but by relationships. I was full of enthusiasm, energy, and ideas about the mission. You arrive with the desire to help, to offer solutions, to be useful. You think that with effort and goodwill, you will gradually manage to understand things. I knew I had not come to do something instead of someone, but together with someone: not to build buildings, but to contribute to the formation of personality and character.

Since then, I have been working at the Saint Antoine Center in Nyanza, where for ten years I have lived and worked with street children.

Each of them carries a unique story.

The boys often hide their wounds behind defiant attitudes; the girls learn to keep their pain deep inside. The street has left its mark on all of them. Wounds can be healed, but the scars remain.

At the beginning, I thought I knew what they needed: security, an orderly life, school, clear rules, encouragement. Even now, I must say that all of this is indeed important.

Over time, however, I have understood that behind every behaviour lies a deeper story. Behind anger, fear is often hidden. Behind lies, the attempt to defend oneself. Behind running away, the desire for a life without limits, and behind apparent indifference, there can be the experience of a betrayed trust.

My experience is made of light and shadows. There are moments of great joy: when a child comes back from school with a good result, when they manage to recognize a mistake and ask for forgiveness, when they learn to take responsibility for their choices. It is also a source of joy to see

genuine friendships blossom among the children, no longer dictated by fear or the need to survive, but by trust and mutual support.

However, there are also days of helplessness, when I witness the return to old habits, failures, escapes, deceptions, and disappointments. Sometimes it seems like everything is moving forward; other times it feels like we are standing

still, or even going backwards.

Little by little, I am learning that change cannot be imposed. We can create a space, offer help, stay close, but the decision must mature within the person. Freedom cannot be bypassed, neither through education nor with the best of intentions.

This mission is teaching me patience. It teaches me that relationships matter more than results, that answers do not always come right away. That silence is not emptiness, but space.

Gradually, I have learned that it is not enough to understand words: you must learn to read between the lines, to catch small gestures, to respect the sensitivity of the other.

The longer I live here, the more I realize that neither a country nor a person can be known to the core. Rwanda is not just history and





numbers. It is a memory that lives in families. It is the ability to smile even after painful experiences. It is a strong sense of belonging: here, no one lives only for himself or herself. The life of the individual is naturally intertwined with that of the community, and everyone carries their share of responsibility toward others. The children we live with are not a project, nor a statistic. They are concrete names and faces, real stories that grow and mature at their own pace.

After twelve years, I do not think I know enough. Rather, I am beginning to sense how many things remain hidden. These lines are not meant to be a celebration of the years gone by, nor a balance sheet of successes and failures.

They are rather a pause along the journey, a review of the path travelled, an attempt to bear witness. This experience, in fact, teaches me humility: before the country, the people, and even myself.

I am beginning to understand today through my own experience, the words of that missionary, after his fifty years of service.

Perhaps the most authentic sign of maturity is not certainty, but the awareness of one's own limits. The willingness to recognize that one is still a student: a student of this country, of these people, of the children, and of daily situations that teach more than any manual.

Over these years, I have realized that knowledge is born slowly, in the shared life of every day. The longer you stay, the more you realize how little you know. And yet, you also discover that, while



not having answers for everything, you can stay close, accompany with patience, and not give up. It is precisely in this tension between not knowing and faithfulness that I find the meaning of my mission and of walking humbly with my God (cf. Micah 6:8).

VIỆT-NAM

DIOCESE OF LONG XUYỀN

The Diocese of Long Xuyên is located in the southwest of Vietnam within the Mekong Delta region. It covers the provinces of An Giang and Kiên Giang, along with parts of the Cần Thơ city districts. It is known for its multi-ethnic and multi-religious character, home to Cham, Chinese, and Khmer communities. It was created in 1960 and covers an area of 10.243 km². About 5,3% of the population is Catholic.



THE CHILDREN OF MINH HÒA

MINH HÒA COMMUNITY

Minh Hòa Ward is situated in Châu Thành District, Kiên Giang province. Kiên Giang province has a population of approximately 1.72 to 1.75 million people and falls under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Diocese of Long Xuyên.

The community of Minh Hòa Ward counts approximately 19,000 residents and is predominantly composed of two ethnic groups: the Kinh and the Khmer. For the Khmer people in Minh Hòa, rice cultivation serves as a primary source of income. However, half of them face difficulties due to lack of land ownership. Those with land engage in rice farming, a livelihood highly dependent on environmental factors and hindered by low agricultural technology.

Unfortunately, children from Khmer ethnic backgrounds rarely get the chance to attend school. This is attributed to a long-standing belief among parents that education does not significantly contribute to their child's future, and that children should prioritize supporting their families financially. In the past years, many children had to discontinue their education due to their parents' inability to afford school fees.

CHILDREN'S SPIRITUAL LIFE IN THE PARISH AND SPECIAL OCCASIONS

The children come together every Sunday, attend the Mass and have catechism classes. The Parish organizes picnics two times during the year and gatherings for some special occasions, like the Mid-autumn festival for kids. During the summer, special courses are organized at the church such as read and write Vietnamese, music, English, while at the end of summer, the children participate in a three-day camp to learn how to cooperate with others in a team.



SUMMER CLASSES

Last year the program was carried out with the collaboration of 60 university students from various universities in Saigon who volunteered during the summer to help with teaching. Throughout the past summer, the program left many touching impressions on both parents and children. Many parents came in person to thank the teachers because, after attending the classes, their children had become more well-behaved,

learned to greet politely, and were more obedient to their parents. At some villages, the joy was even greater, as many children who previously could not



read or write were able to do so after the summer classes. Although the parents were poor, they still wished to express their gratitude with small gifts, vegetables or papayas, from their home gardens.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR POOR CHILDREN

In this context, the objective of the project run by Minh Hòa Parish is to offer educational opportunities to children from impoverished families, especially those from Khmer households, in the village. Through scholarships, these children can access quality education, paving the way for a brighter future. Attending school and learning to read and write, represents the dream of these children and is also a fundamental right of childhood.

Some families are hesitant to send their children to school because they do not see the importance of study. Thus, those in charge of Minh Hòa Parish approach them, listen to their concerns, and then share with them the essential aspects of education. Gradually, they begin to trust them and agree to send their children to school with the assistance of the scholarships.

At the beginning of the school year, Minh Hòa Parish pays tuition fees, health insurance, and other necessary expenses (such as bicycle for commuting to school, school uniforms, books, etc.). During the school year, we collaborate with the parents and regularly visit the children to understand their actual situation and to encourage and support them to continue making efforts in their studies.

To use the scholarship fund more effectively, this year Minh Hòa Parish collaborated directly with 12 schools in impoverished areas. Through this partnership, we were able to identify students most at risk of leaving school because their families could not cover even minimal school expenses.

However, the number of needy students far exceeded their capacity, so each class was able to select only one student to receive a scholarship.

*Rev. Fr. Joseph Nguyen Tuan Phuc, SJ
responsible of the project
“Scholarship for kids from impoverished families
in Minh Hòa ward “*



A STORY THAT DEEPLY TOUCHED EVERYONE

In the village, there was a mother with two young children. Her husband had gone out to sea to fish and had not been heard from since, with no indication when he might return. Her older daughter, a 6th grader, had been forced to leave school to help care for her new-born sibling. When they were informed that the Church could provide a scholarship and that she could return to school, the mother and the daughter embraced and wept tears of joy and relief. Thanks to this support, the girl is now able to attend school alongside children her own age.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

ARCHDIOCESE OF BOSTON



Thanks to French missionaries, the Catholic faith in Boston was established in 1803. Two hundred twenty-three years later, students in Boston's Catholic schools and faith formation programs follow the faith-filled example of another Frenchman, Bishop Charles Forbin de Janson, by tirelessly upholding the Missionary Childhood Association's (MCA) charism of prayer and sacrifice, so that all children embrace Christ's saving Passion and love.

MONTHLY MISSION MATERIALS

To foster a missionary spirit of prayer and sacrifice in our students, the MCA office in Boston channels its resources towards education and animation. The office proudly piloted a set of monthly mission materials that creatively weaves the missions into the fast-paced school and parish curricula. Included is a "TEACHER'S TOOLBOX" calendar that inspires daily mission-mindedness; a Prayer Service tied to virtues or liturgical seasons; a COUNTRY OF THE MONTH to witness specific MCA projects at work; and a SAINT OF THE MONTH, which

focuses on the missionary traits of beloved "HEAVEN'S HEROES." These materials are shared across many U.S. and international diocesan mission offices.

THE MISSION MODERATOR

To ease the added responsibility that the MCA program brings to school and parish leaders, we encourage them to nominate a "MISSION MODERATOR." Similar to the role of the catechist in the

missions, the mission moderator becomes the linchpin of the program. They distribute the monthly materials, coordinate sacrificial periods, and continue students' missionary formation, keeping the mission connection strong throughout the school year.

EAST BOSTON CENTRAL CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Students at East Boston Central Catholic School (EBCCS), an inner-city school, exemplify the fruits of the MCA program in the Archdiocese of Boston. For over 30 years, mission has become a way of life for students, both globally and locally. Today, former teacher and mission moderator, Miss Kathie Hughes, brings students to Boston's annual Mission Education Day- a retreat day for students and their Moderators - and satisfies the young voices that ask, "*When are we going to get our Mite Boxes [mission banks]?*" The students, in the spirit of the Widow's Mite, give up their own funds, filling their banks by selling friendship bracelets and doing extra chores.



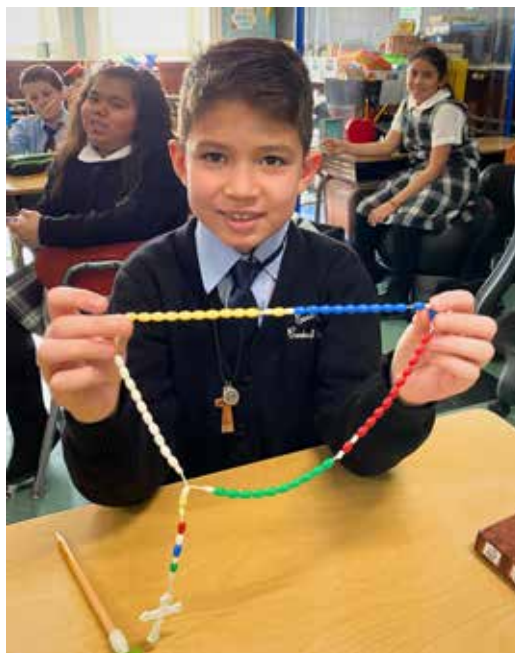
Mr. Robert Casaletto, the principal at EBCCS, shares that it is *“beautiful to see low-income students earn ten cents for their Mite Box. It’s not a lot, but they give something, and that’s what matters.”*

The World Mission Ribbon Project

In October of 2025, when handed the “THE WORLD MISSION RIBBON PROJECT” from the monthly materials, the third-grade class led the whole school in prayer for the missions. They set up a display outside their classroom with ribbons in the colors of the World Mission Rosary. For each prayer offered, the students took a colored ribbon and tied it to one main string to symbolize their conversations with Christ. Mr. Casaletto recalls the excitement of watching the project grow. As more ribbons were tied, more children in the missions were uplifted in prayer.

A mission moment

Finally, students at EBCCS feel the fire of the missionary spirit by serving the hungry at a local soup kitchen. On the way back to school from serving their neighbors one day, Mr. Casaletto and the group stopped to pick up boxes of donated school supplies. Rather than retrieving his car to drive everything a mile back to the school, the principal used it as a mission moment and asked each student to carry a box. Some grumbled about how much easier it would be had the boxes been shipped.



Upon returning to the school, Mr. Casaletto paused the students, asking them to recall those in the missions who must travel long distances. *“You carried tape dispensers. Some people walk way more than a mile every day to carry food and water in order to live,”* he explained.

Months later, one eighth-grade girl wrote to Mr. Casaletto, *“Thank you for making me carry that box... Now I understand how important my time was in the soup kitchen and filling my Mite Box.”* Having grown in faith that day and during her time as an MCA member at EBCCS, only God knows what this girl and her peers will accomplish as adults in the Church to grow the Body of Christ.

*Daria Braithwaite
Mission Education
Coordinator
Pontifical Mission
Societies in the
Archdiocese of Boston*

BANGLADESH

DIOCESE OF MYMENSINGH



Bangladesh is presently enduring a serious political crisis and continues to struggle with widespread poverty and economic hardship. These challenges are compounded by recurring natural disasters such as floods and the indirect effects of regional conflicts and wars. In addition, our communities—especially the poor and vulnerable—suffer from unexpected threats such as attacks by wild elephant herds crossing the border from India, which destroy crops, homes, and livelihoods.

The Diocese of Mymensingh was established in 1987 and, as of December 2025, the Catholic population numbers approximately 89,050 faithful, the vast majority (98%) belonging to the indigenous Mandi-Garo community. Alongside them, there are about 30,200 other Christians (Baptists, members of the Church of Bangladesh, etc.) living within a total population of 497,562, composed of roughly 95% Muslims and 4.5% Hindus. The Diocese covers a vast area, with many communities scattered across remote and challenging regions.

THE SCHOOLS

Within our Diocese, we operate Catholic Primary Schools, five Middle Schools, and ten High Schools. More than 15,000 children under the age of 14 are enrolled in these institutions. While most primary students are Catholic or Christian, a significant number of Muslim and Hindu boys and girls also attend our schools, reflecting the inclusive mission of the Church.

MANDI-GARO CHILDREN

Most of these children come from very poor families, particularly among the Mandi-Garo people who live in remote border and hilly areas. These regions remain underdeveloped, neglected and deprived of modern facilities. Poverty is compounded by limited income opportunities, political instability, corruption,

religious fundamentalism, and the challenges of being a minority community. As Christians, they face socio-cultural and economic pressures from the mainstream population, leaving them socially, economically, and psychologically vulnerable. Many villages are isolated and surrounded by communities of other faiths, especially Muslims, and the people struggle daily to preserve their culture, faith, and very existence alongside their fight against poverty.

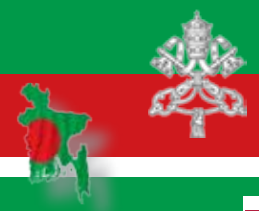
Daily labourers do not earn enough to support a family or provide education for children.

THE CHURCH, A BEACON OF HOPE

In this situation, the Church stands as a beacon of hope, striving to support the poor and underprivileged. Our Boys' and Girl's Hostels, catechism programs, and other parish-based services would be severely handicapped without external assistance.

The Bishop, the Parish Priests of the different Parishes and the Community Members of Religious Women are responsible for an ongoing program for the food and nutrition needs of 60 indigenous children.

*from the report of
The Most Rev. Ponen Paul Kubi CSC
Bishop of Mymensingh*



HOLY NAME OF JESUS PARISH, BALUCHORA

This parish, with more than 4,000 Catholics, is located at the border between India and Bangladesh.

These Mandi-Garo villages are in remote areas and far away from the city and are deprived of urban facilities. The roads are muddy, broken and communications are very difficult. These social and environmental conditions present significant challenges for children. The future of many young people remains uncertain due to poverty, limited access to education, and rising exposure to illegal activities. One of the major issues facing the community is the increase of child labour. A growing number of children are lured into smuggling as a way to earn money, putting their safety and development at risk.

In response, the parish has taken proactive steps to support vulnerable children. Through the establishment and maintenance of hostels, we provide a safe environment, basic facilities, and educational support. This intervention allows children to continue their studies and receive proper guidance and formation.

At the heart of our parish lies an open door – one that especially welcomes children with warmth and joy. These young souls are not merely attendees; they are vibrant participants in the spiritual and communal life that flourishes within these walls. Children actively join parish programs and liturgical celebrations, where they learn the meaning of faith through lived experience. Whether it is assisting at

Mass, singing hymns, or participating in seasonal activities, their presence brings life and energy to our worship. Our teachings go beyond religious

education. Children are lovingly guided to: respect and care for the elderly, maintain cleanliness and care for the environment, embrace catechism and moral values in their daily lives.

These lessons are woven into every gathering, creating a culture of kindness and purpose.

For those staying in hostels, life is shaped by discipline, routine, and a spirit of community. Children follow thoughtful rules that instil responsibility and consideration for others. It is a nurturing space where friendships bloom and character is built. Their journey is more than a list of activities – it is a profound experience of growing in love, compassion, and faith.

These missionary moments become

seeds of virtue that, with time, blossom into lifelong values.



Father Plinson Dominic Mankhin
Parish Priest

UKRAINE

ARCHEPARCHY OF IVANO-FRANKISK



BLESSED TARSIKIA MATSKIV COMMUNITY FOR GIRLS

THE DONATION

The Blessed Tarsikia Matskiv Educational Home for adolescent girls is located in Bratkiivtsi, Ivano-Frankivsk, and is led by Mother Maria Iednosti.

The mission began three years ago when a woman from the village, as an act of mercy, donated this house to the Congregation, which then began caring for teenage girls from large and impoverished families. The sisters care for these girls who live with them, while also welcoming other local girls who frequently visit to play, eat, and pray.

The Sisters' primary goal is to help these girls acquire Christian and human virtues, so that they may become faithful Christians and conscious,

responsible citizens. For this reason, they provide catechesis and education using books and school supplies, while also teaching manual crafts and organizing small cultural trips and pilgrimages to Marian Shrines to pray for peace and for the Church.

PRAYERS FOR THE MISSIONARIES

Meetings with missionaries from various countries are also organized, and the girls are always very happy to meet those they pray for. Indeed, the Home fosters a love for the Church and for missionary work, that spreads the Catholic faith. They pray for missionaries and for non-believers, offering small daily sacrifices for them.



CATECHESIS GROUPS

The Sisters, together with the girls, organize activities within various catechesis groups for children, where they talk about the work of missionaries and the need for support from parish faithful. Each week, the children's groups are given a task to complete, which is then offered for peace in Ukraine, for missionaries, and for those who do not yet know Christ.

TIME OF WAR

During this time of war, the Sisters strive to make the girls' lives as normal and fulfilling as possible, teaching them everything necessary for the future through study, household chores, and cooking shifts. Various cultural activities are also offered, including music, art, and language studies. Every day they participate in Holy Mass and are encouraged to receive the Sacraments, weekly penance, and daily communion to find the necessary strength to be good Christians.

Since the beginning of the war, the girls of the Blessed Tarsikia Matskiv Home and the children in the catechesis groups have been praying and offering their studies and work for a just peace in Ukraine and throughout the world.

THE WEEKEND

The weekend is a special time for the girls of the Home. On Saturdays, together with the Sisters, they can engage in activities they enjoy most: painting, singing, cooking, playing musical instruments, playing games, or simply spending time together. On these days, various pilgrimages and cultural trips are also organized.

Sunday, instead, is the day for catechism. Everyone goes to the parish, where there are several Holy Childhood groups divided by age, as well as a group for adolescents. There, they play, receive catechesis, and learn how to participate fully in the Holy Mass. The girls from the Blessed Tarsikia Matskiv Home assist with games, singing, and crafts. After this apostolate, the Sisters welcome children living nearby and, through play, speak to them about Jesus and the Gospel to bring them closer to God.

*Mother Maria Iednosti
Local Superior*

Servants of the Lord and the Virgin of Matará



TESTIMONY

My name is NASTYA. Every Sunday, with great joy, I attend the Missionary Childhood meetings. This is a very special time for me because here I have found new friends, happiness, and God Himself. These catechesis meetings are led by the sisters. They always teach us to do well and to love God and our neighbour. I have learned many new things here because every week we have different themes, games, and even the prayer of the Rosary. This prayer has become very dear to me. Now I have also learned to pray for my family. For this reason, every day we pray together for peace in Ukraine and for all our soldiers, so that God may protect them and give them strength. In these meetings, I have also come to know missionaries who are in different parts of the world. They help people to know Christ and bring hope and love. I realized that, even though I am a child, I can pray and do good to others. Moreover, through small daily sacrifices, I can make Jesus joyful by offering everything for those who do not yet know Him.

SURINAME

DIOCESE OF PARAMARIBO



The Catholic Diocese of Paramaribo encompasses the entire territory of the Republic of Suriname. It is a suffragan diocese of the Archdiocese of Port of Spain (Trinidad and Tobago) and a member of the Antilles Episcopal Conference. Originally established as a Prefecture Apostolic in 1817, it was elevated to a Diocese on May 7, 1958. It counts about 30 parishes, many of which are located in remote areas accessible only by river. It covers an area of 163.265 km² and the Catholic population is approximately 22-25% of the national population. It is a unique mission territory characterized by a highly multicultural and multi-religious society. The Cathedral Basilica of Saint Peter and Paul in Paramaribo is its most iconic symbol. Built entirely of cedar wood in 1885, it is one of the largest wooden structures in the Western Hemisphere and a UNESCO World Heritage site.

SUMMER CAMPS CAN CHANGE LIVES

In recent years, the sisters Servants of the Lord and the Virgin of Matará (the “Blue Sisters”) established a community in Paramaribo. In the summer of 2011 they started two separated vacation camps, one for boys and one for girls. Since then, children from all over the Diocese participate each year in these camps, where they get to learn about the faith and the moral teachings of the Church in a healthy environment.

The children who participate in these camps mainly come from poor social economic backgrounds and do not have the means to enjoy the vacation time. It is namely at this time of the year that the children are left without supervision and end up in bad situations.

Many children and youth in Suriname live in broken families in which the father or mother is absent and in many cases even both. The children live in

situations exposed to violence and immorality. In times of vacation, this even becomes a greater danger for them, as they do not even spend part of the day in school.

Thus, some years ago, the Bishop suggested that the sisters would mainly engage themselves with the formation of the children and youth. With love and enthusiasm, the sisters complied with this special request and since then they have been active in various





apostolates with youth and children.

This project of the summer camp involves also a whole team of volunteers that assist the sisters during the camp: a group of adults and a group of young people, the latter being in part the first ones to participate in the camps when they were younger. With this strategy, the sisters continue to build up, so that the same children will be able to teach others and help bring a change in the lives of so many strayed from the truth. Many activities for the formation of the volunteers are organized throughout the year and the same volunteers help in other apostolates that the Sisters have during the school year.

During the camps, the children receive teachings about the Catholic faith and morals. The aspect of mission is always stressed and the children are made aware of their special role in communicating the Gospel to their peers at school and in their neighbourhood. They are encouraged to become “ambassadors of Jesus” and to keep praying.

They also have the opportunity to learn different crafts, and also to live special moments that help them to discover their talents. They really enjoy the time of games and sports during the camps, all within an atmosphere of festive joy. For the majority of these children it is only during camps that they receive preparation and are able to make their confession. The presence of a priest at camp is very edifying for them, since the majority do not get to know the priest from their parish as close. During these camps the Sisters also receive children from non-Catholic families and backgrounds of whom several have been baptized into the Catholic faith in the course of the years. The groups of children that participate in these camps each year is increasing and they come mostly from the outskirts.

As a result, the children improve their knowledge of Catholic teachings and learn practical ways to implement them in their lives.

The campus focuses also on the growth of these children in their spiritual and moral life, so that they are able to defend themselves against the realities they have to live in.

Thus, many of them have been able to change and become a source of help in their families.

*Sr. Maria Mma fu Marwina
SSVM*



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

ARCHDIOCESE OF KANANGA



The Archdiocese of Kananga is one of the primary metropolitan sees in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, located in the province of Kasai-Central. With a population of approximately 4,532,000 inhabitants, of whom nearly 60% are Catholic, the Archdiocese covers a territory of about 33,000 km².

THE EFFECTS OF THE WAR

The province experienced the Kamuina Nsapu war, during which many children lost their parents. Some were forcibly recruited into militias, while others remained traumatized by the effects of the conflict. Within the militias, some succumbed to alcoholism, smoking, and drug use under the pressure of their leaders to perform certain acts, leading to phenomena of delinquency and barbaric deeds. Most of these children, now orphans, find themselves on the streets or are cared for by the Church and by people of goodwill. The local Church takes this regional specificity into account and cares for all of them.

THE WORK OF THE CHURCH

The Archdiocese has a coordination cell in charge of overall pastoral care, and each deanery has its own committee that plans activities. Furthermore, each parish has a children's council, which meets regularly to address

issues concerning childhood, their organization, common activities, and acts of charity towards vulnerable and elderly people.

THE INITIATIVES

In addition to celebrating Holy Childhood Day, the Archdiocese organizes a pilgrimage for children to the Sanctuary of Our Lady and Don Bosco Tshibashi, the African Child's Day, summer camps, and visits to the sacred sites of the Archdiocese. Children are involved in various movements, including the Kizito and Anuarite, the Eucharistic Crusade, altar servers, scouts, etc., and participate in catechesis, Sunday Mass, meetings, and various activities.



*from the report of
The Most Rev.
Félicien Ntambue
Kasenbe
Archbishop of Kananga*



DESKS FOR OUR SCHOOL!

The story

TANTAMANA is a primary school in the parish of St. Therese of Nganza, located in the most populous area of the Archdiocese. It offers education from kindergarten to the end of primary school and has 1,049 children.

The school was founded by the Sisters of Charity of Heule to bring the educational institution closer to the population, ensuring the children's education and preventing them from having to travel long distances to attend school.

However, the school, with its three buildings, has been heavily affected by the passage of time. The classrooms are no longer equipped with desks, and the children suffer greatly as a result.

Some bring a chair or a stool from home to be able to study in acceptable conditions and avoid sitting on the floor.



After the support from the Holy Childhood

Dear benefactors,

we have received the subsidy you granted to our school.

We sincerely thank you. Thanks to this funding, we have purchased 90 desks to allow the children to study in acceptable conditions.

The desks have been delivered to the school and arranged in the classrooms.

The children are very happy with this gift and, through us, express all their gratitude to you.

Knowing that these desks come from the generosity of other children, they have understood how important it is to contribute in turn to alleviate the suffering of other little ones in the world through the Holy Childhood.

*Maurice Kabasele Madila
Principal of Tantamana Primary School
under the supervision of the Parish of Sainte Thérèse de Nganza*



PONTIFICIUM OPUS A SANCTA INFANTIA
SECRETARIATUS INTERNATIONALIS