

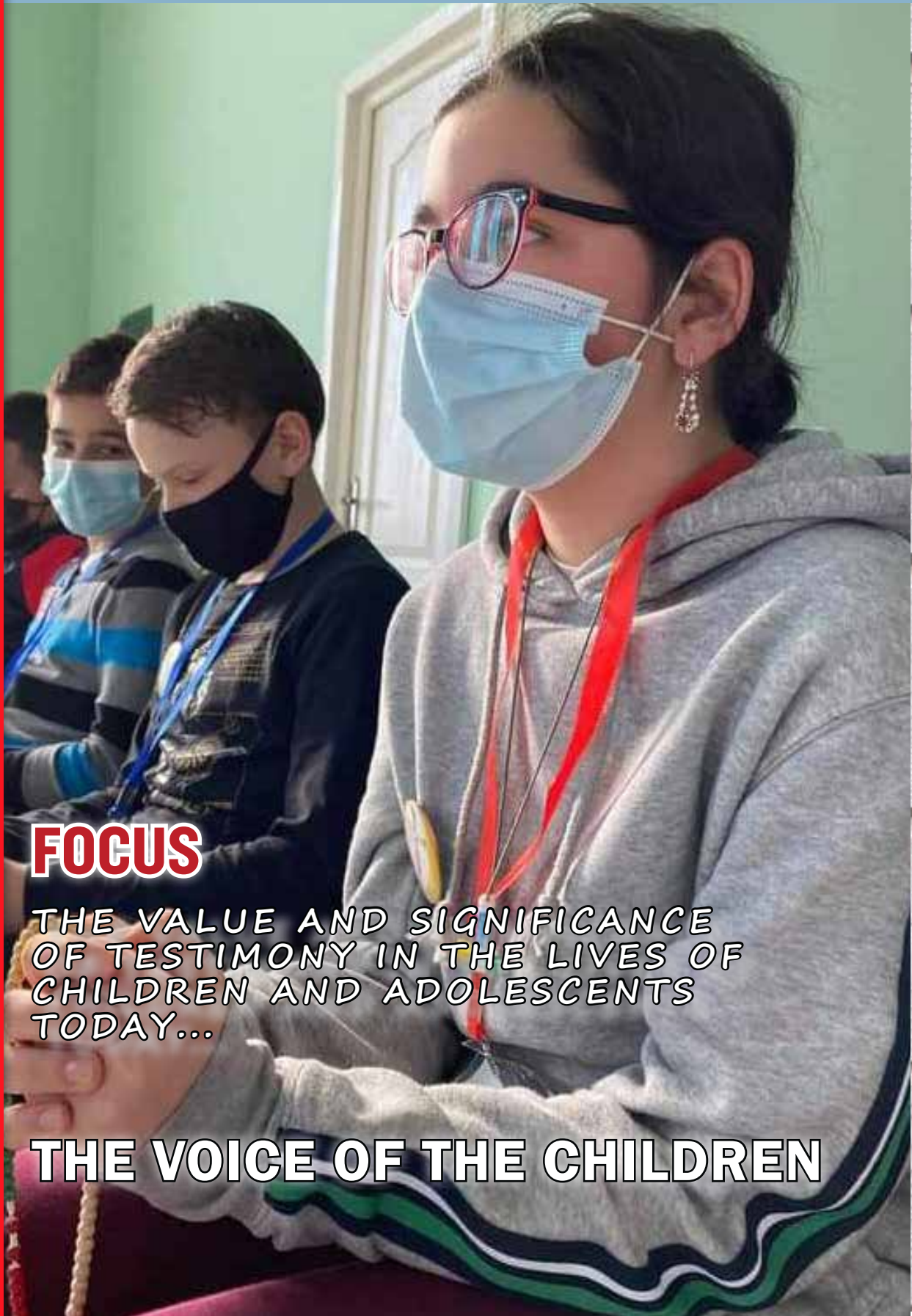


MAY 2021 - N. 8

BULLETIN



**PONTIFICIUM OPUS A SANCTA INFANTIA
SECRETARIATUS INTERNATIONALIS**



FOCUS

**THE VALUE AND SIGNIFICANCE
OF TESTIMONY IN THE LIVES OF
CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS
TODAY...**

THE VOICE OF THE CHILDREN





**MISSIONARY NEWSLETTER
N.8 - MAY 2021**

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What witnesses does Jesus have today?

We did not see Him in His lifetime; we did not see Him after the resurrection, and yet we have encountered Him! We receive Him in the Eucharist, we can listen to Him in His Word, and we have the opportunity to relate to Him in prayer and in our daily encounters with others. We cannot explain exactly “how”, but we know and believe by faith that Jesus is alive and present in our lives!!! This is what our hearts tell us; this is our faith. We must be witnesses to this, especially though our way of life, living as people who have been saved!

We are drawing close to Pentecost. One of the fruits of the Holy Spirit is joy, the joy of God that impels us to proclaim and bear witness to Christ who died and rose again for the salvation of every man and woman of every age. Children and young people have a great capacity to inspire joy, a simple and genuine joy that both strikes and amazes us, while touching us profoundly and making us participate in the same joy. In these times, still affected by the pandemic, it seems out of place to speak of joy, of joyful witness, but for us Christians it should be something natural, spontaneous, and strengthened precisely in such moments. Therefore, I would like to share with each one of you my joy, the joy that also comes from the many testimonies that reach our International Secretariat from all over the world and nourish us with hope and trust.

This month of May, we celebrate the 178th anniversary of the foundation of the Society of the Holy Childhood and we look forward to celebrating 100 years as a Pontifical Society next year.

It is good to celebrate these anniversaries to commemorate a past rich in graces and blessings, which have been spread throughout the world by children and young missionaries, but also to acknowledge, today, the relevance and value of this Society and its charism.

In this new issue of the Bulletin, we would like to emphasize this vitality through the presentation of what some of the National Directions of the PMS around the world have done during this last year marked by the

pandemic.

Many of us have probably wondered how to live as missionaries when everything is closed, and while it is forbidden to travel and organize meetings.

How do we carry out our missies as “Church that goes forth”? How can we live out our missionary nature if we cannot meet with others?

For every Christian, every situation can and should be an opportunity for proclamation and witness, and the various initiatives presented show that, with the help of the Holy Spirit, creativity has no limits or boundaries. In fact, the reality of suffering and restriction provoked by Covid has given rise to new ways of continuing missionary animation, formation, and cooperation, involving more and more people and awakening in each individual the responsibility of proclaiming the Gospel.

This does not mean that we should wait for difficulties to arise in order to be creative, but that we should never lose hope, because we have faith in the One who conquered death, forever.

In this process, technology has been a great help in continuing the mission *ad gentes*, allowing us to reach a large part of the population present in the virtual world, creating new bonds and strengthening the ties and commitments that already exist.

Certainly the missionary, the baptized person, preserves his or her evangelical style even on social networks, since even on the web what is sought are true witnesses of the Gospel.



SR. ROBERTA TREMARELLI
Secretary General Pontifical Society Missionary Childhood

THE VALUE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF TESTIMONY IN THE LIVES OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS TODAY AND THE ROLE OF ADULTS IN EDUCATING THE NEXT GENERATION IN THESE VALUES

By way of introduction, let us begin by saying that it is not easy to talk about testimony today in the lives of children, adolescents and young people, nor is it easy to speak about the testimony of adults in the lives of the younger generations because our societies are closing in on themselves. Indeed, people are closing in on their egos. The world today challenges us to accept the task of making known the value and importance of testimony (bearing witness) in the lives of our children, adolescents and young people, especially during the season of Easter, celebrating the Risen Lord, even in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Testimony has always had an important place in secular and church history, above all because of the great event of Christ's death and resurrection was and continues to be the foundation of all testimony rendered by the disciples of Jesus Christ. These first witnesses, chosen by God, rightly affirm: "as for us, we cannot fail to bear witness to what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). Therefore, our witness today must come from the one who, for love of humanity died on the wood of the cross and on the third day rose from the dead, giving new light to humanity immersed in the darkness of sin and suffering. We should never lose sight of the fact that nowadays, one of the best ways to make the risen Christ better known is by the testimony of one's life, wherever the Christian may be, whether Catholic or not.

However, we also know that it is not possible to give testimony to what we do not know. Therefore, the importance of listening attentively to the teachings

of the Word of God, Tradition and the living Magisterium of the Church, which have always constituted for men and women of all times, an effective means of proclamation, mission and witness to the Risen One, the Word made flesh, Christ (cf. CCC 53). As the Catechism of the Catholic Church affirms, "God, who creates and preserves all things through the Word, offers to men and women in created things an everlasting witness of himself" (CCC 54).

At this point, we can ask ourselves, "What do we mean by testimony"? Is bearing testimony in our day still a value for adults, young people, adolescents and children? What is its importance today? What benefits does giving testimony to the Risen Christ offer to men and woman of our day? These are questions that we can ask ourselves, which serve to reflect, but not necessarily to give a complete answer, since people, mentalities and ways of bringing the Good News of Salvation to the men and women of our time change.



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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TESTIMONY

After asking some questions in the previous paragraph about what testimony means, we begin by pointing out that the word comes from the Latin *testimonium*, in a general sense, always expresses or implies the manifestation, actual or possible, of something or someone. This manifestation, with its content (that which is manifested or made known) can be manifested in many ways. Thus we speak of testimony of the senses or of conscience, testimony of faith or gratitude, and of monuments that are testimonies.

On the other hand, to speak of testimony in the strict sense is, first of all, from an active point of view, it refers to the act of attesting or testifying, that is, the act by which a person (the witness), who has knowledge of something, manifests it to others. Secondly, it refers passively or objectively, to the means or signal by which that knowledge is transmitted (Cf. A. C. MENDES, 1975, pp. 1456-1458).

From a psychological point of view, the word testimony is generally associated with the person who testifies. It begins in the legal sphere, where we speak of “legal testimony”, which is never seen as an impartial and absolute recollection. Rather, such testimony is always an interpretation, which implies a selective conscious or unconscious intervention of the witness, who reworks the factual truth based on his or her culture, personality and prejudices (Galimberti, 1999, p.1034). In the domain of psychology, testimony, if it is reliable, is applied in forensic psychology and then in experimental psychology. This has led to the development of tests that help to solidify both the testimony and the one/s who asserts it.

Throughout Sacred Scripture, we find various

testimonies, both in the Old and New Testaments. Furthermore, we should not overlook the contribution made by many Popes who speak of testimony in their writings. As the Second Vatican Council states in the Decree on mission, *Ad Gentes* (n.11), *For all Christians, wherever they live, are bound to show forth, by the example of their lives and by the witness of the word, that new man put on at baptism and that power of the Holy Spirit by which they have been strengthened at Confirmation. Thus other men, observing their good works, can glorify the Father.* What interests us is the significance and value of these words for the new generation.

Paoletti (2018) affirms that testimony-bearing witness - characterizes the disciples of the Lord after Easter. They are chosen and sent precisely because both before and after Easter they saw and heard Jesus and ate and drank with him (p. 32).

THE VALUE OF WITNESSING TODAY IN THE LIVES OF CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS, YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS AND ITS PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS

It is important to speak about the value and importance of testimony, the number of faithful who declare themselves Catholic Christians simply because they have received certain sacraments and attend Sunday Mass is increasing. However, many do not allow themselves to be transformed by the Word, even



though Jesus calls his disciples to be the *salt of the earth and light of the world*. (Mt 5:13-16).

THE VALUE OF BEARING WITNESS (TESTIMONY)

The value of testimony is a widely discussed topic today. It has particular significance in the psychological field, because it is directly related to motivation. What, then, do we mean by value?

According to Galimberti (2011), the term value derives from the economic sphere and comes to indicate the price of a thing (exchange value) and its utility (use value). However, in the sphere of psychology, it is associated with meaning both ethical and cultural, and indicates those meanings that function as guides for action and in assessing correspondence to the norms considered valid. From a psychological perspective, another characteristic of values is that they are considered to be anything that is the goal of a need, desire, or interest. (p. 1066). In one of his study sessions, given at the Major Seminary of Christ the King, in Huambo in Angola in 2008, Rev. Dr. João Gonçalves defined value as “an ideal that inspires and guides the way of being and acting of a person, group or community” (Lukamba, 2018, p.86).

The actions of children and adolescents depend in part on the environment in which they find themselves, so it is important to identify what we can call the role of adults in both the socialization and learning of children, adolescents, and youth, as well

as the importance of the value and significance of witnessing in their lives. Adults are primarily responsible for being the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Mt 5:13-14), as the popular saying goes, “children learn more from examples than from words.” It is from adults that children

and adolescents, not to mention young people, learn to give good witness in their lives. As Pope Francis (2018) says in the Exhortation *Gaudete et exsultate*, *We are all called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves* (n.14).

According to Rulla (1987), values are an innate tendency that responds to goals in that they are important (p.125), yet he distinguishes between natural and self-transcendent values, and in the lives of children, adolescents, and young people, this category of values is not absent. For example, natural values may be social, economic, aesthetic, vocational, etc., and self-transcendent values constitute, on the other hand, moral and religious values (p. 451).

Upon closer scrutiny, according to Rulla, it is important to educate the younger generation in both natural and self-transcendent values, since witnessing to the Risen Christ as part of self-transcendent values is linked to natural values. Children, adolescents, youth and adults can witness to Christ by living according to His teachings. As stated earlier, Jesus says, *you are the light of the world, you are the salt of the earth*. Each in his or her own culture, social condition, religion and peer group (Scout, Acolyte, Legionnaire, Childhood and Adolescent Missionary).

Without authentic participation in Gospel values, it is not possible to be true witnesses of the Risen Christ. In fact, we know that the true values that should guide the life of a human being in general and, of a Catholic Christian in particular, are being lost with each





passing day. A good example is the Decalogue (cf. Ex 20:1-17), which stresses the value of and respect for life: thou shalt not kill (Ex 20:13). Unfortunately, many countries have accepted and abortion, euthanasia, same-sex unions, etc. More disturbing is the fact that in many of these countries, Christians are in the majority and some of them occupy prominent posts and positions and give their active assent to these practices. Many of them are “practicing” Catholics who, in order to defend their collective and personal interests, are unable to oppose these trends. We can call this a great counter witness. Nevertheless, we do not fail to praise those who do not tire of defending true values, in the name of their faith and through the testimony of their lives. This is why Pope Francis’ Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit* appeals to young people by saying that the importance of witness does not mean that we should be silent about the word. (n. 176). How do we witness to the value of life in a society where abortion considered legal and normal? However, nowadays, it is becoming increasingly difficult to educate children and adolescents about the value of bearing witness and going against the tide. Despite this, adults are called to help the new generation understand that life is sacred and must be protected at all cost. However, if these values are rendered relative, it affects people’s mental health, because not having concrete guidelines has psychological implications. One can compare this to the classic contradiction when a teacher says one thing to the child and the parent says something else. In some cases, the child is more prone to believe what the teacher says because of the teacher’s academic authority, while opposing the parent(s) whom the



child considers as lacking knowledge on the subject. The same is true today in matters of faith, where some teenagers and young people try to question all the doctrines learned in catechism classes in the face of some philosophical doctrines they study in school. In fact, this is where the testimony of life speaks louder than the parent’s habit of “going to Mass”. Children learn from concrete examples of their parents in daily life and not simply from “going to Mass”.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEARING WITNESS (TESTIMONY)

Once we have clarified the significance of the value of witnessing, we see the importance of witnessing in the lives of children, adolescents, and youth and the role of adults in this mission.

According to Lopez (2016), “the category of witness has gained great importance since the Second Vatican Council. It expresses the Christian way of announcing and transmitting the story of the truth of the faith, thus resulting as an appropriate category, to establish dialogue with men of other cultures and religions”. Pope Francis (2020) ratifies this very well in *Fratelli Tutti* (nr. 280): *It is also urgent to continue to bear witness to the journey of encounter between the different Christian confessions. We cannot forget Christ’s desire “that they may all be one (cf. Jn 17:21).*

In the case of Catholic children, adolescents and young people, the Risen Christ is an indisputable value in their lives and mission, without leaving out the adults who play a fundamental role. The importance of witnessing in the lives of children and adolescents, aims at their



harmonious well-being, to be done in respect of the values in which one believes (Paoletti, 2018) that, once learned, will become an integral part of their lives. In order for children, adolescents, and young people to witness to the risen Christ, *it seems to me that they must recognize it as something good, and to do so they must know it, that is, it must be true and for this it requires the use of intelligence to obtain its knowledge* (Rulla, 1997, p.136). Moreover, the proclaimed Word - the Gospel - and faith are credible only if they are supported by the testimony of life, *since one cannot testify to what one does not know or has never seen; testimony is a testimonial word, an attestation of what has been lived, heard, seen and touched.* (Paoletti, 2018, p.35), just as the disciples did with Jesus and today this happens through the sacraments of the Church.

It seems fundamental to us to speak of categories of importance of testimony in the lives of Christians, whether they are children, adolescents, young people, or adults. Indeed, the motivational base for human behavior is formed by two categories of importance: important FOR ME, which is tied to evaluation and intuitive-emotional needs, and, on the other hand, the

importance of the whole IN ITSELF, which is tied to the rational evaluation and reflection on values (Rulla 1997. p. 142).

What is the priority category when we are called to be witnesses? I believe that it is the whole IN ITSELF, so that it is objective and universal and then they can be reduced to the individual, to each person's life. When we discover the importance of witnessing in our lives, this will lead to taking concrete positions in the environment in which we find ourselves. Therefore, it is a matter of being attentive to God's plans, internalizing God's proposals, leading life according to His values, witnessing to God's life in the simple gestures of daily life - this living in communion with



God will make us authentic witnesses of the Risen Christ. Moreover, for more than 2000 years Christians have been called to bear witness to the Risen Christ, and this witness is given not only with words (the announcement of the Gospel, the mission) but with the way of living itself, which seems to us to be the best witness a Christian can give. As St. Anthony of Padua says, let words cease and works will speak. In his book on the Sermon on the Mount, commenting on the Gospel of Matthew chapter 5, verse 13, Grilli (2016) says, *it is the good works of the disciples that give flavor to the earth* (p.78).

A child and an adolescent of the Holy (Missionary) Childhood society is, first of all, a disciple of Jesus who, more than trying to announce the Good News of Salvation and the great News of the Risen Christ, should try to bear witness in daily life, which translates into being and acting as a baptized person. If this is consistent with the values that they believe in, it has very positive psychological effect, because it produces serenity and reduces anxiety in everyday life. Take, for example, a child who behaves well in front of his parents in order to be praised but in their absence changes not respecting anyone, or an adolescent who behaves well because it is part of his now internalized values, which involve behaving well both in the presence and absence of his parents. For you, dear reader, who is more likely to be anxious? I believe, that regardless of the change in behavior that may vary in different situations in life, one can agree that the adolescent will be more serene, and will not experience great moments of anxiety, because he or she is trying to act in a natural way.





Therefore, dear readers, it is important to arrive at the internalization of true values, whether natural, such as respect for others, or transcendent, such as being a charitable, merciful, believing person because in this way the witness is and will be to be more and more authentic and this will produce well-being. But if the opposite happens, the disciple of Christ risks “becoming insipid salt in the world” (Grilli 2016, p.78).

CONCLUSION

Having reached this point, we can also say that without credible witness, there is no true mission as Christians, since “witness is an absolutely qualified value for articulating the meaning of the Christian faith” (Angelini 2008, p. 51). Sacred Scripture teaches us well that Jesus came into the world to bear witness to the Truth (Jn 18:37). It is important to recall the teaching of Pope Paul VI in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (n. 41), where he teaches that *for the Church, the first means of evangelization is the witness of an authentically Christian life, given over to God in a communion that nothing should destroy and at the same time given to one’s neighbor with limitless zeal. As we said recently to a group of lay people, “Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.”*

It is now time for our works to bear witness to who we are and in whom we believe. It is our works that will determine on a large scale what kind of values we internalize in our lives. In fact, if we love self-congratulatory complacency, it is unlikely to

spontaneously manifest itself in our being and acting. It is our values that move us to take action. Finally, as Pope Francis points out, the value of our testimony does not mean that the word should be silent.

So, dear readers, what does your testimony look like? What attracts people around you more: your concrete actions or your words?

Let us conclude by saying that “whatever you may do or say, let it be *ad maiorem Dei gloriam*” (for the greater glory of God).

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CHILDREN: PURE-HEARTED MISSIONARIES

“Let the children come to me, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 19:14)

It is with these words that Jesus addresses the apostles who, faced with the Master’s fatigue, wanted to act differently. Did they want to prevent children from getting close to Christ, did they want to distance them from Him, perhaps not to make him waste time? On the contrary, Christ claims the rights of children, justifying them from his point of view.

CHILDREN AND THE MISSION OF CHRIST

In my experience, children are the pure-hearted missionaries of whom Jesus speaks in the

Gospel: “Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God” (Matt 5:8). The child is a symbol of abandonment, trust, wonder, spontaneity, simplicity, joy and peace. They possess all the necessary requisites to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

“Above the heavens your magnificence rises. With the mouths of children and infants you affirm your power” (Ps. 8:2).



Children easily become part of God’s plan ... a plan of love for others. I would like to give a concrete example. When I spoke to the children of St. Joseph as a father and patron of families, I asked them if they understood the meaning of **“being a father”**. A 5-year-old boy replied:

“A father is one **who loves all children**, not only his own, but all children!”

In conclusion, children have a more open heart than adults, their love is universal.

The image of the child is used by the psalmist to show his trusting abandonment to the Lord: “Surely I have stilled and quieted my soul; Like a weaned child with his mother, Like a weaned child is my soul within me”. (Ps 130).

When you tell children to pray, they easily fall into the atmosphere of prayer, they trust their prayer and always pray for their parents and





other children. They are ready to help **other children** even with small contributions.

They are missionaries who convert others. For children, anything is possible. They remember perfectly what they have learned from the Word of God and repeat it with conviction to their parents and friends, to the point, for example, that the parents begin to attend Mass again.

THE GRATUITY OF CHILDREN

Children give themselves to the mission and are very faithful. During this period of pandemic I have admired the constancy of the children who have worked to carry out catechetical programs on television.

In conclusion, let the children go to Jesus, they are pure missionaries of the Gospel, they know how to find the beauty of God in all of creation, in people, in birds, in flowers, in water and

so on. They know how to imitate St. Francis of Assisi (see *Laudato Si*).

May the Virgin Mary protect our children!

Sr. Geneviève Uwamariya
Rwanda



TERESITA

LEADING PEOPLE INTO HEAVEN

- *Teresita, what does it mean for you to be a missionary?*

- *For me, being a missionary means leading people to heaven.*

Thus, with a few simple words, a 10-year-old girl managed to express such a true and profound concept. Being missionaries to lead people to heaven, to show them the beauty of faith and the infinite love of those who created us in her image and likeness. And these words of truth which are clear and profound, come from the mouth of Teresita, who at the age of 10, carries the cross of suffering on her shoulders with a smile. Not an angry, theatrical, sterile suffering, but a trusting suffering, full of hope and certainty. A suffering which, although sometimes difficult for us to understand, is a great example of abandonment to the will of the Lord, to be cradled in the arms of the Father without asking questions, but only offering one's pain, certain that it will not be in vain.

«I am offering the illness of these days for the people; for example, for priests and for those who are ill ... I would like to bring others to Jesus, to children who do not know him, so that they may go to heaven happy forever».

Teresita's story, which has already traveled



around the world, offers us an engaging and current testimony of how children can be great witnesses of the Gospel, especially today, in which the simplicity of Jesus' message is replaced by millions of stimuli and by an individualistic egoism which, instead of opening towards the world, now so accessible, paradoxically leads us to close in on ourselves, in search of our own private "comfort zone", to use current terms, which sees in isolation and surrounding ourselves with objects that replace human warmth, a trend that is difficult to stop. Especially in the Western world, where a click and an emoji replace a hug and a phone call, where the concept of paradise seems so distant and abstract, that brings to mind more images of role-playing games than a reality after death.



BUT WHO WAS TERESITA? AND WHAT IS HER STORY?

Teresita Castillo de Diego was a smiling and empathetic child. She was witty, cheerful and affectionate. Teresa went to mass with her mother every day and at the end of the service she went to greet the priest happily, who gave her a sweet.

She greeted everyone and talked to everyone and every time there was someone who sadly sat outside the church door, she stopped to talk to them to give a bit of human warmth, which was often replaced by many with a coin.

She recited her prayers in bed, simple but deep, with great devotion, her mother recalls. She often went to confession and this year she had begun to recite the entire Rosary before falling asleep. Teresita came from cold Siberia, Russia, and was adopted at the age of 3 by Eduardo Castillo and Teresa di Diego, who passed on their faith to her. She lived in Madrid and was diagnosed a brain

tumor that she had been operated on in 2015. Unfortunately, three years later, the illness returned and at the beginning of this year, after a two-month ordeal, the little girl *opened her eyes to heaven* on 7 March, but not before fulfilling her dream - to become a missionary child, to bring others to Jesus.

Yes, because this was her great wish, to become a missionary *in order to be closer to Jesus and to feel holier* – This is what she said in an interview in hospital on February 13 to a catechist – *to bring Jesus to children, so everyone goes to heaven happily ever after.*

In these months of suffering, since the first operation, Teresita had been supported by the prayers of many people, who were touched by her testimony and her firmness in dealing with pain. Her mother says that *she looked like a crucifix, she prayed with the priest daily.* Her illness felt like martyrdom, and every time she walked into the ICU she looked as if she was going up to the Calvary. Despite her severe pains, she prayed in a weak voice saying *Sacred Heart of Jesus, I trust in you.*

DREAMING OF HEAVEN

Teresita often dreamed of the heaven, where she said she felt very good. She had seen her grandfather and, in January, she had asked God to see Blessed Carlo Acutis. When on January 11, on the eve of the operation, her father had encouraged her by saying that everything would be fine, she replied that she wished to go to heaven because she had dreamed of Carlo Acutis - her wish had been granted.





Teresita had, in fact, entrusted her illness to the young Acutis and the venerable Montse Grases (a young woman from the Opus Dei who died in 1959 at 17 years of age due to a tumor). Furthermore, she was very devoted to Saint Perpetua and providentially died on the feast day of the saint.

TO BECOME A MISSIONARY

Also on January 11, Teresita had also fulfilled her great desire: to become a missionary. In fact, on the Day of the Sick, the Episcopal Vicar of Madrid, Fr. Ángel Camino Lamela OSA had visited her in De la Paz Hospital, and was deeply impressed by her faith and determination. Fr. Ángel, who had gone to the hospital as usual to celebrate the Eucharist and visit the sick, was asked by the chaplains to visit a seriously ill child, who the next day had to undergo surgery for a head tumor. The Vicar subsequently recounted his experience in a letter to all the priests of the eighth prefecture of the Archdiocese. The letter highlights the big emotion of that meeting. Teresita, with her head bandaged, lay on her bed with her mother sitting next to her and her face, despite everything had lit up with

joy when Fr. Ángel had announced that he was visiting her in the name of the cardinal archbishop of Madrid to bring Jesus to her. The child had then confessed to love Jesus very much, to pray that many children would know Jesus and that she wants to be a missionary. The Vicar, deeply impressed by that statement, after having administered the Anointing of the Sick, given communion and apostolic blessing, he named her missionary of the Church, bringing her the document of appointment and the missionary cross that same afternoon. A cross that the child





Witnessing Jesus in the family, among friends, in the community, is like throwing a pebble into the water - however small it is, it causes concentric waves that widen, enlarge, expand.

This is possible, today more than ever - and a little girl proved it to us.

will take with her to the operating room, almost a visible symbol of her suffering. Many children, adults and entire religious communities in Spain and beyond prayed for her.

GOODBYE TERESITA

On Sunday 7 March at 9.00 in the morning Teresita, the little missionary, died while she was praying the rosary with her parents. Eduardo and Teresa, they received so many messages from many people who were impressed by this little new protector of the mission, as she was considered. Teresita wanted to be a missionary despite everything, for her being a missionary meant speaking of Jesus and to give joy, to offer her suffering for people, for the sick, for priests, for humanity, even from a hospital bed.

From her bed she encouraged the children to be missionaries, wishing them to be happy, to be able to be friends of Jesus and to be like him.

Her message of love has echoed around the world reconfirming that to be a missionary it is necessary to physically bring the Word of God across the world.



ROMANIA

NATIONAL OFFICE



THE CURRENT REALITY OF THE SOCIETY OF THE HOLY CHILDHOOD



Almost 3 years after its inauguration, the Holy Childhood in Romania is developing with much fervor and missionary zeal, even if the period of the pandemic has greatly reduced the possibility of meeting with children. Despite this, the pandemic has brought with it a new way to connect: social

networks.

This opportunity made it possible to continue the activities and allowed us to meet with children and adolescents much more frequently. Thus, through a guide calendar, we met the children and their animators every week, respecting a specific time. Again through social networks, we promoted Missionary Childhood, which has now developed greatly, especially in areas of Romania where there are Christians of the Latin rite.

BECOMING PART OF THE GROUP

The children are very involved and active, both in prayer and in the activities that are proposed at a national, diocesan or parish level. As for the formation activities, as already mentioned,

ROMANIA





they take place every week through social networks. Furthermore, parishes organize meetings, despite the present reality of a health emergency. Very often we travel to talk to the children, especially at weekends, to do missionary animation and those who wish to know better the charism of the Holy Childhood, leave their

telephone number to be added to the formation group. In this way it is very easy to offer and receive information, especially since the children who are already part of the various groups are very active and communicative with each other and the new members of the group feel at ease and are involved in the specific reality of their age.

NEW INITIATIVES AND THE PANDEMIC PERIOD

Following the reality presented by Covid-19, we have always tried to propose specific activities that can meet the most needy children and sensitize the children of the Society to openness towards others. For example, during the International Day for the Poor, children prepared their own gifts to offer to poor children, of which our country is full. Or, to the offertory, food and other necessary things were brought, then distributed to the most needy of the community.

During the period of Advent, all the young missionaries participated in the Star Missionary activity which through the reflection of the Gospel made by the young people themselves, an act



of charity or a prayer was proposed every day for sick children or elderly people, poor people or marginalized and orphaned. We often went to see some of them to offer them some comfort.

During the period of Lent the activity - *Missionary with Jesus on the Way of the Cross* - took place.

This activity involved the children a lot, who made commitments by writing them on a brick-shaped box. With these bricks an altar was then built to offer all their sacrifices during the Holy Mass. In addition, this year as an itinerary for Lent the children drew two crosses of the same size. On the first they placed Jesus crucified and on the second they represented the Resurrection. Then, again the second cross, was divided into forty pieces, forming a sort of puzzle. Each day, guided by their reflection on the Gospel, the children chose an act of charity, a renunciation of bad habits or a prayer they noticed in a notebook, adding a piece of the puzzle above the cross of Jesus crucified. With every act of charity or devotion, they heal the wounds of Jesus which are actually our wounds.

The meaning of this path lies in becoming aware of one's mission which is accomplished in the Resurrection of Jesus through the cross, which is the symbol of God's love.



EACH DAY HAS ITS OWN ACTIVITY

Since the needs of missionary formation and animation are different, a calendar has been prepared to offer everyone the opportunity to get in touch with the group best suited to their age and needs. Several groups have been created on WhatsApp to be able to develop the activities in an organized way and spread the charism of the PMS. In fact, every Monday there is a meeting with the group of young people who make the path for missionary formation to then enter the Society, doing the rite of joining during the Sunday mass of their community. The first Tuesday of the month is reserved for the meeting with the group of animators, while the last one, for the meeting with the children's parents. On Wednesday we meet with all the missionary members to pray together (in the period of Lent the Via Crucis

was made with reflections written by the adolescent missionaries). On Thursday there is the meeting with the community of young people - Belong (National Office Australia). On Friday we meet with the group of children up to 12 years of age and on Saturday with the teenagers (12-16 years old). All these meetings are nationwide and are held through evening meetings on Zoom.



SOME SPECIAL ACTIVITIES

During the month of October, various missionary activities were organized (Missionary Rosary broadcast via Radio Maria, Missionary Vigil with prayers composed by the children, acts of charity and moments of prayer especially for sick children).

On November 1st we celebrated the Feast of All Saints together and each young child chose a saint as a model to accompany him throughout the year, while on November 2nd - the memory of the dead - we celebrated Holy Mass for all the loved ones of our families and for those who have been defeated by the Coronavirus.

On the feast of Christ the King, we organized the Eucharistic Adoration with the children with meditations composed by them.

The Missionary Star accompanied us during Advent and a competition of nativity scenes was organized that were put up for sale to support the Society. In addition, we organized an online Christmas Concert.

On the first of March, young people from various communities organized a market where they put up typical objects from Romania for sale that symbolize the arrival of spring, which they wear as badges throughout the month of March. The proceeds will be used to prepare the regional meeting of Moldova which will take place by 8-10 April and which is aimed at starting the activities for the National Day of Missionary Childhood 2021.



Memberships Gherăești



Memberships Bucurest



THE CELEBRATION OF MISSIONARY CHILDHOOD DAY 2020

On 23 May 2020 the Celebration of the Day of Missionary Childhood in Romania (ZN CMP 2020) took place at a National level, an event that also marked one year since its inauguration in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova.

The proposed theme “*We are sent to renew the world*” was inspired by the activities of children who, during the year, animated local realities

with great zeal and missionary spirit, despite the pandemic and, at the same time, is a continuation of the theme of the Extraordinary Missionary Month October 2019.

In view of this event, a painting competition was organized in which all children were invited to express their idea in relation to the proposed theme. The beautiful works were judged by the young artist from Iași, Alexandru David. The

design chosen for this year’s Missionary Childhood Day was done by Daciana Pop, a missionary girl from the Roman Catholic College of Saint Joseph in Bucharest. This winning painting represents, through symbols, the idea of fraternity among all the children of the world and has been reported on the subsidiary materials. On the occasion of the Day, a brochure was drawn up containing



historical information on the Society, information notes regarding the activities of the children and some photos taken during the moments of meeting and joining in the parishes.

Due to the pandemic situation and social distancing, the liturgical celebration of May 23 took place online and was preceded by an online preparation process. Thus, during the Holy Mass a group of Romanian children from Romania, Ireland and Italy joined the Society of Missionary Childhood, in the presence of the national director, who entrusted the new members with the mandate of Jesus’ little missionary in the world. The children themselves organized the Holy Mass, proclaiming the Word of God, preparing the liturgical songs and praying for the faithful, all dressed in white.

Despite the conditions of isolation, the missionary children had the opportunity to prepare themselves through both daily prayers and the activities offered online, which guided them throughout this period of preparation. In particular, the children had special tasks during Lent, which they printed and sent to the PMS headquarters to be offered on the altar during Holy Mass on the first day of Easter. On the evening of May 22, a Missionary Vigil took place, in which all the missionary children and their parents were invited to join in prayer.

Eugenio Blaj
National Director



UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL OFFICE



MISSION GOES DIGITAL – AN EVENT THAT BROUGHT TOGETHER CONTINENTS

During the COVID-19 global pandemic over the past year, public and private schools in the United States have had to transfer to a virtual platform for learning. Coordinators of the Missionary Childhood Association (MCA) adapted to the change, holding ZOOM gatherings in place of in-person visits to schools and religious education programs, gathering missionaries with young people in an online setting for the annual celebration of “Mission Month Day” in October, and even creating MCA video channels on YouTube for praying the World Mission Rosary, making mission crafts, and meeting missionaries.

THE INTERACTIVE CALENDAR

The MCA National Office increased its digital resources, including the creation of an interactive “Moments for the Missions” calendar, with opportunities for each day of the month to learn, to pray, to act, to reflect and discuss, and to stand in solidarity with children and families in the Pope’s missions. These “moments” were tailored to be part of a remote religious education program learning experience, or to be the focus of family life on a particular day. Monthly, many

MCA Coordinators emailed to their parishes and schools digital resources that help students to stay connected with the Missions. These resources include prayers, online activities, and information on various missionary saints, as well as information on making sacrifices for MCA.

THE CHRISTMAS ARTWORK CONTEST

Each year, MCA in the United States holds a Christmas Artwork contest. In this way, young people are missionaries through their artwork, telling the “Good News” of the Savior born for the whole world. The contest is really a year-long process, with entries due to the National Office – many submitted online – by the end of each January. Diocesan Mission Offices also seek and judge entries locally, sending their finalists to the National Office in mid-March. Judging follows in the spring, and winners are announced in the fall.

The current contest traces its roots back to 1927 when Christmas seals helped raise awareness of the work of MCA and its support for children’s programs in the Missions. Those seals became printed cards, with artwork created by young people, and today digital e-greetings. The contest continues to raise awareness of MCA, as it provides MCA coordinators an entry point into schools and religious education programs both to discuss the call to young people to join the Church’s missionary efforts, by virtue of their Baptism, and to invite them to be





part of the network of “children helping children” through MCA.

THE LIVE AWARD CEREMONY

Each year in December, the National Office organizes a presentation and Mass at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. to honor winners of the current year’s contest and their families. This in-person gathering, not possible due to the pandemic, would have to be re-imagined for 2020. And it was.

The MCA National Office organized a livestream event on December 16, bringing together MCA children – winners of the 2019-20 contest – with their families, children in Africa, U.S. MCA coordinators, and MCA in Rome. The hourlong program spanned continents and time zones, and gave young people a “missionary” voice as they told about the motivation behind their winning artwork. The program also featured a scannable QR code, encouraging donations for MCA.

“We are delighted to gather as an online community for this celebration,” said MCA National Director Oblate Father Andrew Small. “The joy and hope of the artwork of these young people uplifts us in a special way in these times.” MCA National Coordinator Holly Benner co-hosted the evening event with Father Andrew.

“Thank you all very much for providing us with a live award ceremony!” one family reacted. “Joy-filled! I didn’t want it to end” noted one viewer.

International Secretary General for MCA, Sister Roberta Tremarelli, AMSS, sent a special message of congratulations for the livestream event, noting that MCA Founder, Bishop Charles de Forbin

Janson, would be “very happy and satisfied” with the “commitment to the mission of the Church” from young people in the United States. Messages from children in five African countries – Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Uganda and Zambia – were also featured, along with greetings from MCA Coordinators in Boston, Chicago, Green Bay, Philadelphia, San Diego, San Francisco, and Trenton. Auxiliary Bishop John McIntyre of Philadelphia praised participation in the annual MCA Christmas Artwork contest, noting: “So proud of all of you because the artwork that you produced is first of all very beautiful – it reflects the beauty of God and draws us closer to Him – and it also reflects your own Catholic faith and how important it is to you. So congratulations and thanks so much for participating in the contest.”

A high point of the live program were interviews with 14 of the 24 winners, including one grand-prize winner. Present with their families, these young people showed their winning artwork, featured on commemorative plaques sent to them in advance of the program. Those plaques would normally have been presented at the in-person event at the National Shrine.

The program ended with a slideshow of all winners, accompanied by a live version of the song “Silent Night.” The entire program may be viewed at this link:

<http://bit.ly/MCAArtCelebration20>

In-person or digital, the mission message – and the missionary spirit of our young people – shines through in every season.

Holly Benner - MCA National Coordinator



TUNISIA

NATIONAL OFFICE

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN TUNISIA: HUMBLE PROTAGONIST OF CIVIL SOCIETY



The reality of the Catholic Church in Tunisia is a particular reality: fragile and alive at the same time.

Fragile because it is subject to constant changes; our faithful are partly expatriates who arrive in Tunisia for work reasons and after a few years leave, replaced by new arrivals, partly sub-Saharan students who, after completing their studies, return home. Even the small religious community of a few dozen priests, men and women religious, from 32

countries, of whom only 4 are diocesan priests, fluctuates according to the movements made within the various congregations.

This condition, if on the one hand, forces us to start over each time and shows the precariousness of our being, paradoxically reveals itself as an element of strength, which helps to keep the ecclesial community alive and makes it a Church of presence and not of existence.

Through the school, the Church contributes to educate thousands of Tunisians, in a humble

and discreet way, helping to form generations that are conscious and more sensitive to the concepts of tolerance, mutual respect and the common good.

We do not have a proper Missionary Childhood, because the context in which we live is completely Muslim and the Gospel cannot be announced openly. It is then through our own humanity transformed by the encounter with Christ that young people can get to know something about Christianity. There are numerous charitable initiatives for children and young people that aim to educate to sharing and to witness a coexistence of quality.

Here are some of the most significant activities, which are born almost everywhere where the presence of the Church arrives and which give an idea of the way of sharing and meeting proper to each congregation, according to its own charism.

THE CHILDREN OF TUNIS HELP A SMALL SCHOOL IN GAFSA

One of our schools in the center of Tunis, run by the Egyptian Sisters of the Sacred Heart, has launched a twinning relationship since 2017 with a small school located in the Gafsa region in the south of the country, in a mountainous and particularly disadvantaged area. The project that mobilized the children of Tunis in the collection of food, clothing, medicine and school supplies involves about thirty families and about a hundred people. On his last trip in January after several months of closure due to the pandemic, a local farmer was so impressed by the fact that people from Tunis took care of



the nine schools coordinated by the Archbishopric of Tunis for a total of about 5,700 pupils



visit to Gafsa in January 2021

the needs of children in Gafsa that he offered to contribute concretely to the project.

THE ORATORY OF MANOUBA FOR THE CHILDREN OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD

The school in Manouba, run by the Salesian fathers, opens the oratory every Saturday to the children of the neighborhood and organizes three weeks of games and entertainment for younger children during the summer period. The school has been there for about 100 years in a town on the outskirts of Tunis.

The building, which once belonged to a congregation, was expropriated with independence and is now owned by the town hall. This year it seemed that the municipality was planning to sell the property for economic reasons, but such a popular protest ensued that forced it to retract it for the time being.

THE SCOUTS OF MENZEL BOURGUIBA

In the school of Menzel Bourguiba, also run by the Salesian nuns, a scout group began in 2015 on the initiative of a nun who underwent specific training to become scout leader in 2019. The aim is to have an opportunity to follow and to support their children, especially the most vulnerable and undisciplined and to transmit to them, through their own interests, as Don Bosco teaches, human and Christian values.

THE CHILDREN'S LIBRARY OF LA MARSA

The library in La Marsa, managed for some time by the white nuns, has been transformed in recent years into a library for children and offers a free



the scouts group of Menzel Bourguiba

study support service for the little ones, a team of Tunisian volunteers has formed around the nuns and foreigners.

IBLA OF TUNIS

IBLA (Institut des Belles Lettres Arabes), the prestigious library of studies and research led by the White Fathers, has a 'youth space' where it welcomes teenagers aged 12 to 17. The Institute is located on the edge of the Medina of Tunis at the crossroads of some popular areas where living conditions are precarious, sometimes violent, especially now that the health crisis has aggravated the already very compromised economic situation. Through the teaching of French and English, the goal of the Fathers is that children grow humanly, learn to work in group, to have self-esteem and to open up to other diversities.

*The Most Rev. Ilario Antoniazzi
Archbishop of Tunis
National Director of PMS*



end of the IBLA courses in March 2020

PORTUGAL

NATIONAL OFFICE

MISSIONARY CHILDHOOD

SEEDS OF HOPE IN TIMES OF PANDEMIC



The pandemic is affecting our whole life. It has also brought new challenges in the way we interact with others and in our way of thinking and acting as a Church.

The different groups of Missionary Childhood, scattered throughout the various dioceses of the country, reflect this same commitment to continue to be seeds of hope. Here are some of the initiatives that we have received in recent months.

On January 2, 2021, a Diocesan Meeting of Missionary Childhood and Adolescents (IAM) took place, held on digital platforms. The meeting was attended by three groups of the IAM, from the Diocese of Porto: Estrelas Missionárias, Parish of Pinheiro da Bemposta - Oliveira de Azeméis; Sementes da Missão, Parish of S. Martinho da Gândara - Oliveira de Azeméis and Sementes Missionárias, Parish of Vilar do Paraíso - Vila Nova de Gaia.



On January 3, 2021, the Missionary Childhood groups of Our Lady of Fatima, Ílhavo, Gafanhada Ecarneção, Nariz, Santa Joana Princesa and Sozadella Diocese of Averio, celebrated the Epiphany in their parishes.



The parishes of Ílhavo, Nariz and Soza, also in the Diocese of Aveiro, handed over their piggy banks with offerings for Missionary Childhood.

On January 16, 2021, the Missionary Childhood group of Ribamar, S. José - Póvoa de Varzim, Diocese of Braga, held a meeting through the Zoom platform to reflect on the theme “How to forgive with joy?” Listening to the parable of the prodigal son we understand that it is important to forgive one another as the father forgave his son. With this parable Jesus, once again, teaches us to love. How good it is to learn from Jesus!



On Saturday 20, February the Parish of Vila do Conde and Póvoa de Varzim, Diocese of Braga, brought together the Missionary Childhood and Adolescent groups to make known and talk about the life of the two holy shepherds of Fatima (Francis and Jacinta), as models of all Christians. The groups of Balasar (the rowdy missionaries), of Estela (the missionary archers) and of S. José di Ribamar (the missionary adventurers) were present.

from the Report of the National Director



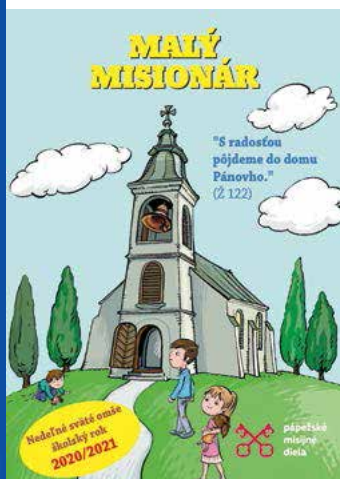
The Missionary Childhood of the Diocese of Aveiro on February 16, delivered about 50 pillows to the hospital of Aveiro. They were made by the children, adolescents and missionary families of the diocese who dedicate themselves with generosity and joy to cutting, sewing and stuffing cushions. To implement this initiative, the donation of cotton fabric, a washable antiallergic material, was fundamental. The heart-shaped pillows were intended for women undergoing treatments and will use them for their therapies. They will be used to rest the arm undergoing surgery and thus help rest, ensuring greater comfort to the patient.



SLOVAKIA NATIONAL OFFICE



The National Office of Pontifical Mission Societies in Slovakia was born in 1992. We began to develop the Pontifical Association of the Missionary Childhood in 2018 by publishing a notebook and stickers for children in local parishes and named it **LITTLE MISSIONARY** - "We shall go to the house of the Lord with joy." We kept doing the activity every year since then and about 20,000 children took part in it. We do not directly enroll children in the Missionary Childhood in Slovakia, but there are various activities and competitions for them in which they can participate. During the pandemic when we weren't able to attend churches, we broadcasted Holy masses from "The chapel of Light" at our National office in Bratislava. Every week after the mass there were different tasks for children, but we also involved their parents. It was a very popular activity.



LITTLE MISSIONARY 2020-2021

More than 25,000 children and 420 parishes took part in the pastoral activity. Every child received a small notebook for collecting stickers after every Sunday Mass from September to June 2021. The notebook



and pray for missions, especially during October's Missionary Month.

PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD

During the Advent season, we did an online activity called *Prepare the Way of the Lord*. Every day, as a way to prepare our hearts for the coming of the Lord, we published a thought from the Gospel and the task of the day on our Facebook page.

included the respective Sunday Gospel with pictures, quotes and short thoughts to reflect on. Children were encouraged to participate actively on Mission Sunday





THREE KINGS STAR (STAR OF BETHLEHEM)

The coronavirus crisis made our homes a place of prayer. We read the Holy Scriptures, spiritually connect at celebrating Holy Masses via television and the Internet. In this context, several creative themes for domestic devotions arose at PMS. One of the activities was called the Three Kings Star (Star of Bethlehem) and it supported the fund for the Missionary Childhood Association. The Activity lasted from the Epiphany until the end of January. Traditionally, the blessing of a house is done by a priest but it can also be done by lay, father or mother of a family. The blessing is a way of prayer and devotion of a family to God. Families need blessed water and/or a lit candle as a symbol of Christ and the attitude of a believer realising God's presence and his love.

We distributed 40,000 copies of house blessing prayers in Slovakia. The packet included:

- A house blessing prayer

- The icon of the Holy Family (A5 format card)
- A door sticker in the pattern 20+C+M+B+21*
- A leaflet explaining how to support missionaries

THREE KINGS CAROL - COMPETITION

We organized the first year of the competition in singing carols Trojkráľová koleda (Three Kings carol). It was an online competition and was intended mainly for children but all ages could take part.

from the Report of the National Director

* C - CHRISTUS
M - MANSIONEM
B - BENEDICAT
(Christ bless this house)



SPAIN

NATIONAL OFFICE



Missionary childhood in Spain continues its four-year journey through Jesus' childhood. In 2020 (course 19/20), the entire pastoral plan revolved around the journey of the Holy Family to Egypt.

The National Direction of the PMS proposes materials and programs. The delegations are responsible for missionary animation in the dioceses, mainly in schools and parishes. The goal is not to create missionary groups for children in Spain, as parishes and schools already have too many groups. But to enter with missionary animation in a transversal way in those already existing groups. Therefore, beyond Missionary Childhood Day, we publish the activities on a bimonthly basis, so that different realities can incorporate the missionary charism into their ordinary activity.

My name is Sofia Ventura, I am from Zamora and I am 12 years old. I have been involved in missionary childhood since I was 7 years old. I would like to reiterate why I like it so much when we become little missionaries for a day and we, with our offerings and our prayers, help other children in the mission territory. In Zamora, we celebrate Missionary Childhood Day with the participation of all the children of the Diocese. First we go to the cinema with a solidarity ticket and then we have a meeting at San Atilano Seminary-Casa de la Iglesia de Zamora.



I really enjoyed these last few years because we remembered the life of Jesus within the four-year plan of Missionary Childhood:

The first year was "With Jesus in Bethlehem". The seminary was decorated to create the surroundings of the city of Bethlehem. Each child had to dress up as a character from Bethlehem and work on how that character received the news of the birth of Jesus. So we represented the birth of Jesus and all that it meant in our life. I dressed as a shepherd.

In the second year "With Jesus in Egypt". The setting of Egypt was incredible and we were transformed into refugees on the run. We created an Escape room, so that we can know how we might feel when we flee because they are chasing us; just like Jesus when he had to flee to Egypt. But we also worked on welcoming, because God always welcomes us and it is important to welcome others.

This year the theme was "Jesus in Nazareth", the family goes back home. It was completely different because due to the pandemic we are experiencing there was no gathering or encounter with children. But I was able to prepare and experience it from home, with all the material that was sent to us: how Jesus is in my family, how he protects us and how he is present in our prayers. I hope I can continue to participate in Missionary Childhood every year and remain a missionary girl.

Sofía Ventura





TCHAD

NATIONAL OFFICE

MISSIONARY CHILDREN? IT'S POSSIBLE!



As every year, in preparation for National Missionary Childhood Day of 7 February 2021, the National Direction of Chad, helped by the Diocesan Direction of Lai, proposed a booklet containing three meetings based on the Word of God and the teaching of the Church, accompanied by questions that each animator adapted to their listeners. Last year, the theme of Missionary Childhood Day was "Children, baptized and sent to be witnesses of holiness in the world". This year focuses on witness as baptized and, therefore, called to bear witness to the Resurrected. In the Bible, Jesus teaches us that He is the Way, the Truth and the Life (Jn 14: 4-6). Whoever believes in him, even if he dies, will resurrect on the last day. In this perspective, the Church invites us to bear witness with joy to others of the resurrected Christ.

The themes of the three moments proposed to the animators to help develop the theme of the Day were:

1. Child, be a witness of the Resurrected in your parish, following the example of Mary Magdalene;
2. Child, bear testimony at school through daily life;
3. Child, be the bearer of the light in society through your testimony

AM I READY, AS A CHILD, TO RESPOND TO THE CALL OF THE LORD AND TO BE A MESSENGER OF THE GOOD NEWS OF THE RESURRECTION?

To bear witness, age does not matter. Children and adolescents are missionaries and witnesses of the resurrected Jesus as much as adults. As children of God, we are called to be missionary disciples, as Pope Francis says. Every day we are tempted to distance ourselves from the missionary mandate (Mt 28: 19-20).

We are all called to bear witness, in the truth of Christ and in love, offering personal sacrifice in our daily occupations. Wherever we are, we must bear witness to our faith and it is there that the duty for the Church to spread the faith and the salvation brought by Christ derives. On the one hand, by virtue of the explicit

mandate that the apostles inherited and on the other, by virtue of the vital force that Christ communicates to those who follow him. Given that the theme of the animation for the World Day of Missionary Childhood for 2021 is witness, we are all called to be men and women of integrity and faithful in our commitment to following Christ and it is impossible for us to keep silent about what we have seen and heard, following the example of the apostles (Acts 4:20). Although every disciple of Christ is invested in doing his part to share the faith, Christ calls all men and all women of all backgrounds to send them to preach the Good News to the pagan peoples (cf. Mk 3:13).

Thus, God inspires the missionary vocation in the hearts of individuals and, at the same time, in the Church people are entrusted with the mission of evangelization. Therefore, children and adolescents, we are all called to the missionary mandate of Christ. The Church commits all the people of God to the fulfillment of her mission. Jesus launches a heartfelt appeal to each of us, invites us to be missionaries to our companions, friends and parents, wherever we are.

THE MISSION IS FOR EVERYONE, INCLUDING CHILDREN

Discover the three "P's" of Missionary Childhood, an entire program. Make our children the protagonists of the Gospel proclamation to their peers, help them both by supporting them from a practical point of view and by teaching them to pray; this is the action of Missionary Childhood. And, therefore, here are the three "P's" necessary to become young evangelizers in action: *PRIER, PARTAGER, PARLER* (pray, share, talk).

Evangelizing in daily life. Each one, through baptism, becomes a "missionary disciple". The child is invited to testify to his faith both with his friends and in the family. In this way, he discovers that mission has always been an integral part of the life of the Church. In this sense, he too is sent, to be a witness of the Good News.

Don Barthélémy Kikina Vang-Tou
National Director

AUSTRALIA - NATIONAL OFFICE



TO WORK WITH CHILDREN AND SCHOOLS

DIOCESE OF CAIRNS

In our Diocese, the Catholic Mission's work with children is mainly through our connection with schools. In 2020, we were given the opportunity to deliver several mission formation sessions to children from age 5 to 12. There are schools who are still not engaging with Catholic Mission and run their own missionary activities themselves. For them, we assure them of our prayerful support, which is the first act of mission.

FORMATION OF THE CHILDREN

For the children from 5 to 7 we organized a story telling on the parable of the mustard seed, ending the session by giving each child with a seed for them to plant at home or at school.

A workshop for making sacrifice beads was organized for the children from 7 to 9 years old. Sacrifice beads is one of the legacy that St Therese the Little Flower has gifted us. The children thoroughly enjoyed this particular session and the concept of offering a sacrifice or a good deed to Jesus was clearly understood by children (photo attached in the email).

For the slightly older children (9-10) we there was the workshop on "Haves and Have Nots" – children was given a mini-immersion experience about life in the developing and developed countries.

Finally, for the age group 10-12 we held the Socktober Song Writing Competition – children expressed their thoughts on

how they would like to help other children like Darra, the featured story for Socktober 2020.



A SESSION ON ST. JOSEPH

During the feast of St Joseph, a school invited Catholic Mission to offer sessions focusing on St Joseph. We offered the following activities, according to year levels. Prep and Year 1 should make a 3D St. Joseph's Altar, while the formation session for Year 2 was "Tools to Do God's Work" – any carpenter needs a toolbox but this one is like no other. Year 3 should make a St Joseph's Shrine and Year 4 a devotion to the Sleeping St Joseph. Lastly, the School Captains had to share a meal to experience St Joseph's Table.

Anna Jimenez
Director – Diocese of Cairns



Julia is in Year 10 at Freshwater Christian College, 15 years old and is part of the Reach Youth Ministries in Cairns. She serves as one of the mission ambassadors in Cairns by delivering mission appeal talks with the family and/or give out the appeal envelope to the members of congregation. She tells something about her experience of Jesus today:

As a child that is born in the period of Gen Z, many people see us differently and I can definitely tell why, we are technologically advanced and some of us even have created a business in our teens. But to me, I'm aware that we are still children of God, that didn't change. God made us all an influence to young children, we all have some sort of faith in our lives and know of missionary nature whether it be from knowing it from media or you've grown up with this nature.

As a Gen Z teen, I know that even with a quick glance I can influence a child's character. Jesus was the man who was the human embodiment of God, we may not be Jesus, but we can influence. As a teenager, I understand that kids look at me, I may be a stranger that they find cool by the clothes I wear or my tone or a person the child sees as an 'older sibling figure'. It's important to me, personally, to treat others like how you want to be treated, I always remember Mark 12:31 'Love you neighbor like yourself', I want people to be treated how I would like to be treated with respect and kindness and for that, we need to have faith in God.

I love my faith dearly, it means a lot to me but expressing that depends on who I'm with. At

home, I can freely talk about my faith because I love and trust my family. My school, I feel like I'm judged for my faith because it's not a trend or something that is popular. My youth group is a place where I can grow my faith because the people that are there want to grow their faith. Not everyone is like this, it's how you react and act upon the missionary nature, with this the possibilities of how we show our faith can be endless.

How we live with the missionary nature is very confusing to me. We all know that there is that side of the internet and that missions and miracles are happening. But it depends on if we take it because the internet's algorithm will see us engaging with that topic and proceed to show us more of that. For me, I have engaged with that and I sometimes just watch testimonies of people, miracles that happen and prayers and I have also grown up with this nature in my house. We go to mass every Sunday and I have done the sacraments. This can vary from person to person depending on how you have engaged with this side of media.

(Note: I'm having trouble coming up with a conclusion)

CANADA (FRENCH SPEAKING)

NATIONAL OFFICE



Every year Mond'Ami, which represents the Pontifical Society of Missionary Childhood in French-speaking Canada, proposes a "shared-project" (Projet-Partage) to help specific projects. Throughout the year, young missionaries are invited to discover the country, testimony of the campaign, by visiting the website of the National Direction.

In this context, the children of a Latin American parish in Montréal were shown the video of a project in favor of a school for deaf children in Haiti, run by the Filles de la Sagesse, consisting of primary and secondary school, boarding school and professional school. The young Canadian missionaries wanted to do something for these deaf children, because they were very touched by their situation. Thus, they participated, in their own way, by selling food to raise funds and contributing to the large piggy bank for the children in the world (Universal Solidarity Fund), offering

them some support.

Some of these children wanted to tell their experience:

*Hi everyone, my name is **GABRIEL**, I am 11 years old and I am a boy who comes from Mexico. I recently received my first communion in the church of St. Gregorio Magno. Before this very important day for me, all the people and my family brought games they no longer used and sold them so that everyone could buy new games they like. One day all the members of the church prepared a large buffet. My mother, my sister and I made a fruit cocktail. We made a large bowl and then divided it into 30 small containers for everyone to enjoy. My catechism friends and I support Mond'Ami and "Children help children" (that is, the Society of Missionary Childhood). Three of these catechetical friends are: John-Alexis, Cristina and Juan-David. David and John are my cousins and Cristina is my sister. I am very happy*

to have helped sick and disabled children and I want to continue helping children.

*Hello, my name is **JOHN-ALEXIS** and I am 10 years old. I recently received my first communion. Over the past year we have*



CANADA (FRENCH SPEAKING)

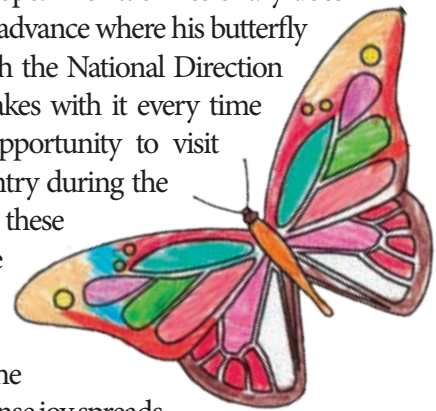


caramel. I really enjoyed this experience because I was able to help sick and disabled children. I attend the church of St. Gregorio Magno. My catechism friends and I participate and support MondAmi and children help children.

Another activity proposed every year by Mond'Ami is the "Butterfly of Hope" (Papillon d'espoir). Each child is invited to write a message for another child in the world. The animator explains the content of the message to be sent to a poor or sick peer and the child writes a

organized activities to raise money to help children. The activities are: sale of milk pudding, items we no longer used and caramelized apples. The latter are apples dipped in chocolate. The church I attend is called St. Gregorio Magno. My catechism friends and I participate in MondAmi's proposals, the aim of which is for children to help children. I feel so good helping other children in the world because all children will be happy and that gives me the joy of continuing to help them.

message of hope. The little missionary does not know in advance where his butterfly will fly, which the National Direction of Canada takes with it every time it has the opportunity to visit another country during the year. When these butterflies are delivered to children around the world, immense joy spreads in one fell swoop.



Hi everyone, my name is CRISTINA and I am 8 years old. I recently received my first communion in church. Last year I sold some food. I sold the games I no longer used. We also sold caramelized apples. They are apples dipped in chocolate and

Children love this activity very much, which unites them with other children in the world.

*from the report of the responsible for Missionary Childhood
Ginette Coté*



ORIENTAL RUSSIA

DIOCESE OF ST. JOSEPH



In the Diocese of Saint Joseph, Irkutsk, Father López José Luis, IVE organized last year various activities with children and adolescents, such as oratory activities in the parish, according to the school holiday periods. To the program collaborated 2 priests, 3 sisters and a few faithful, who came to help as volunteers.

From November 2019 until March 2020 we had 47 days of oratory, while as during the pandemic period – which means until August, every activity was forbidden. Nevertheless, the little that we could organize before was meaningful to the children. The first of November 2019,

solemnity of All Saints, they dressed up as a saint of their devotion and commented about their lives to the others. Further, a Christmas play was organized, while from January 2nd to January 13th 2020, we organized various activities in the Parish and a group of children stayed overnight. They participated daily in the Holy Mass, breakfast, catechism, games, lunch, excursions to museums, sports and other.

Since April 2020 the restrictions of the Pandemic of the corona-virus started also in Russia. During this time, we were not able to organize specific activities with children and youth. Nevertheless, the children, together with their families, were able to participate in the Holy Mass, which we sent out over Instagram. We were also teaching catechism to a few adolescents by Skype or WhatsApp calls. Further, we were able to organize only very small groups and made few outings with the children in the nature.

This year a group of new children started to frequent our church and two girls have received baptism and followed catechism to receive the Holy Communion.

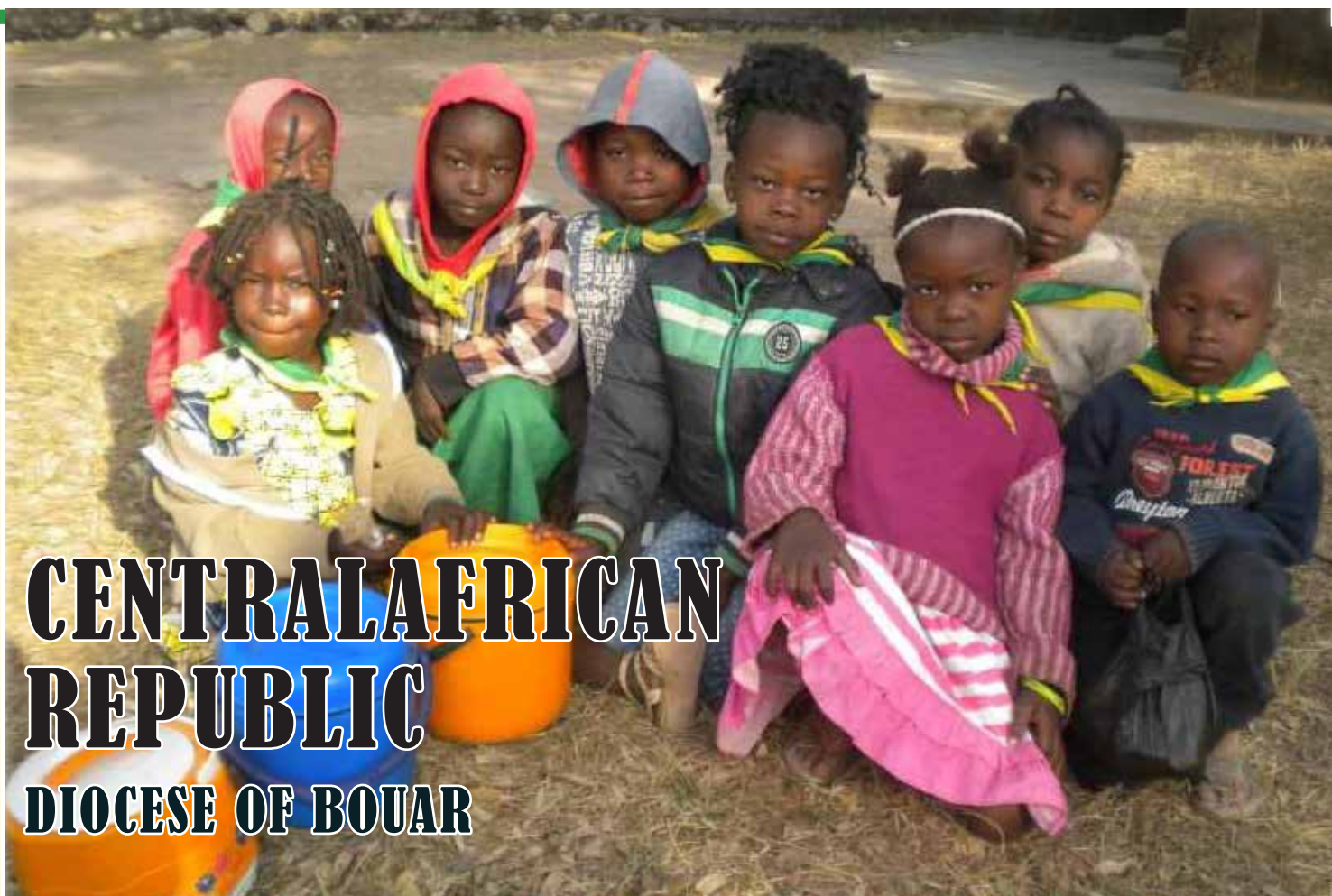


Valentina is 13 years old and became the apostle of her family. In February 2020 her grandmother came to live with them in the poor one-room apartment. Irina was very sick, with a terrible cancer and oftentimes Valentina would help to take care of her grandma. During those times, she would express to her grandmother that she wanted her to go to heaven. As grandmother lived under communism most of her life, she did not know much about God. She was baptized in the Orthodox Church in a faraway past. Valentina explained her, that in order to be able to go to heaven, we have to prepare ourselves well, and ask God forgiveness for our sins. Grandmother listened attentively and one day, as her illness was advancing, she asked Valentina if she could confess with the priests of our parish, as the girl oftentimes talked about them. She phoned us and we organized to go with Fr. Geovanny, who brought healing to this suffering soul. Grandmother passed away very peacefully and we may trust she is in heaven now, thanks to the little apostle of the family.



On January 12th 2020, Feast of the Baptism of Jesus, Kyra (6) and her sister Victoria (13) received baptism. The two girls had started to come to our oratory in the summer of 2019 and one day they had heard Fr. Geovanny preaching that God is our Father. Both girls were abandoned by their different fathers and live with their mother alone. Kyra overheard a conversation of Vicka with their mom: "Mom, I want to be baptized, as I want God to become my father, since I have no father." Kyra thought this was a wonderful solution and started to ask the same gift from their mother. Anastasia finally gave in and came to church to talk with us, as her daughters daily, for various months, had been asking her permission to be baptized. Nobody in the family was ever baptized, so, why should they. The mother really didn't know what it would mean, so she said to her daughters "next year", thinking that they would soon forget about it. But the children didn't forget. As soon as it was New Year, they asked their Mom again. Finally Anastasia gave her consent for baptism and passed the whole day with the children in church. The girls were so happy with their heavenly Father and that their souls were now "as white as snow". They have been very good girls and are continuing their catechism to receive the Holy Communion. God has blessed both of them in a special way, as they were able to meet their natural fathers, after some research. This was a prayer answered.





CENTRALAFRICAN REPUBLIC

DIOCESE OF BOUAR

The Diocese of Bouar, created on February 27, 1978 includes two prefectures: Ouahm-Pendé (Bozoum), except the sub-prefecture de Paoua, and Nana Mambéré (Bouar). The population of the Diocese exceeds 500,000 inhabitants, of whom more than 110,000 are Catholics, spread over 12 parishes and 220 communities without priests. The staff of the Diocese is made up of 52 priests (religious, diocesan, fidei donum), more than 70 nuns belonging to 10 religious Congregations and 276 catechists formed in the three schools for catechists that exist in the Diocese. Three quarters of the population are young people and children. Pastoral activities and the formation of young people and children take place regularly in all parishes. In villages where there are Christian communities and schools, this formation is sometimes interrupted or prevented by armed groups. The conflicts that took place in the past have left traces in the hearts of children, causing the degradation of the living conditions of the population.

During this pastoral year, the country has had to deal with the problem of the coronavirus pandemic, which appeared at the beginning of March, with restrictions imposed at the end of the same month. We did not remain with our arms crossed - the Diocese tried to animate the children, through broadcasts on the "Siriri" Diocesan Radio, for example with school courses, and prayer during the period

of the pandemic.

Due to the pandemic we were unable to continue the activities scheduled last year and, therefore, we will resume them this year, given that in our region and in our country the restrictions related to the coronavirus have decreased and the children have been able to go back to school, and also pastoral activities have begun again in the parishes and communities. The obligation

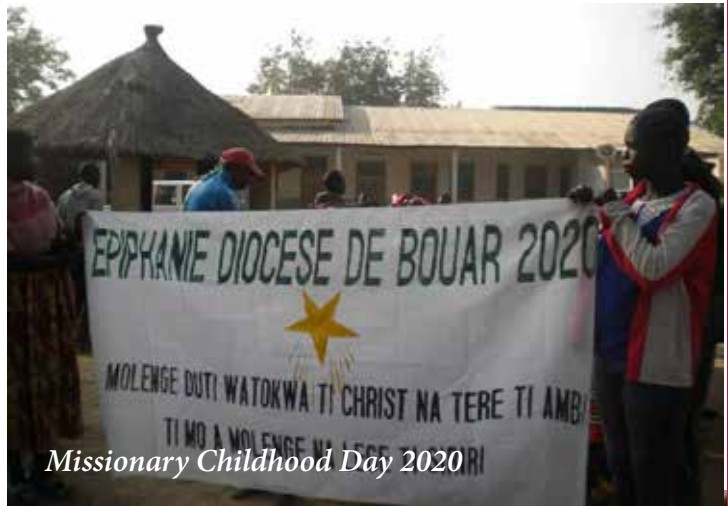


to wear a face mask and hand washing are still in force, but they are not always respected, especially the former.

The school year began last October and even parents were able to return to work in the fields, in various companies or in offices. The situation worsened in December, when the rebels began to occupy the territory of the country, calling for the cancellation of the elections on December 27, 2020. Still today the country is paralyzed by the rebels and people live in terror in Bangui. Even the Diocese of Bouar has not escaped this sad fate. But we do not despair. It is now that people, especially children, need to be accompanied. Therefore, we have sensitized the faithful and distributed the letters among the friends of the missions. Missionary Childhood Day was celebrated in the Diocese and there were many gifts.

However, we hope to be able to resume some activities which were scheduled last year and interrupted due to the pandemic, such as:

- ⑥ Gather children with their (previously Christian) families, removed from the community;
- ⑥ Revitalize the accompaniment of children, members of various movements, the choir, dancers and others;
- ⑥ Organize a more intense formation of missionary animators of the 12 parishes of the Diocese: one session in the Diocese and three sessions in the three deanates of the country;
- ⑥ Raise children's awareness of the missionary spirit and universal solidarity on the occasion of Missionary Childhood and African Child Day;
- ⑥ Formation of pastoral agents and carers of children on the subject of the protection of minors.



MISSIONARY CHILDHOOD IN ITS ORIGINAL FORM

FRANCE - DIOCESE OF DRAGUIGNAN



THE LITTLE SISTERS OF CONSOLATION OF THE SACRED HEART AND THE SACRED FACE

The community of the Little Sisters of the Consolation of the Sacred Heart and the Sacred Face was founded in 1989, recognized by the Diocese of Fréjus-Toulon, in France, and currently based in Draguignan. It is a religious sisterhood of “missionary nuns” in the spirit of Father Charles de Foucauld. Their contemplative existence is open to an apostolate compatible with their life of prayer.

The Little Sisters of Consolation are not cloistered nuns, in order to foster a flexible apostolate, eager to radiate the love of the Sacred Heart in children (oratory aged 4 to 7, catechism), young people (group retreats, pilgrimages and camping), adults (spiritual meetings, pilgrimages, workshops), the elderly and the sick (visits).

In 2003, our community of the Little Sisters of the Consolation of the Sacred HEART and the Sacred FACE relaunched Missionary Childhood in France in its original form following a speech by St. John Paul II.

On January 6, 2003, on the occasion of the 160th anniversary of the Pontifical Society

of Missionary Childhood, the Holy Father addressed the missionary children: “Dear boys and girls, missionary commitment helps you to grow in faith and makes you joyful disciples of Jesus”.

On April 2, 2003, 36 children from the oratory committed themselves for the first time.

We propose to children to become part of Missionary Childhood to open them to the universal dimension of the Church. We have three groups of missionary children as part of our 3 oratories in Draguignan, Toulon and Saint-Raphaël.

The children commit themselves to praying for a diocese in the world, which is entrusted to them. They pray one Hail Mary a day and invoke three missionary saints: St. Francis



missionary commitment February 2020



Xavier, St. Therese of the Child Jesus and Blessed Charles Foucauld. The commitment lasts one year and the children can renew it every year.

Some children belong to practicing Catholic families and pray their missionary prayer every evening as a family, during the evening prayer. Others find concrete means of not forgetting it by taking care of it personally.

“In my room I have a luminous rosary - when I look at it I think of my prayer” (Théo, 10 years old)

“I put a sheet of paper on my bed that says pray” (Alexis, 8 years old)

“I received a missionary rosary when I committed myself, in February, and I put it on my pillow, because this is how I remember to pray for my diocese” (Enguerrand, 7 years old)

“I set the alarm clock. It rings at 4 pm. I leave school at 3:50 pm and I am home at 4 pm - then I can say my prayer”(Arthus, 11)

Every Wednesday, when the oratory is held in the monastery, children can visit us throughout the day. In the afternoon, from 2:35 to 3:00, there is the “moment of Missionary Childhood”, which takes place as follows:

- Meeting in the garden: the children are positioned according to continent, according to the dioceses for which they pray. The Pontifical Mission Societies of France have made scarves of different colors for each continent.

- Procession during which the song of the Missionary Childhood is sung, composed by the nuns:

“Being a child who vigils (enfant veilleur) close to Your heart, becoming better for your Sacred Heart, Jesus adored, knowing how to pray every day, knowing how to forgive and faithfully give”. (first verse);

- Arrival at the chapel: two missionary children animate the missionary prayer;
- Listening to the Gospel of the following Sunday. I comment on the passage, obtaining a concrete teaching for the children;
- Choosing a missionary child randomly who shows on the large planisphere where his diocese is located;

- Missionary story (5-6 minutes). This year I recounted the life of Pauline Jaricot, who will soon be beatified - an episode every Wednesday;



Missionary offer: the children offer their sacrifices for the missions, pledging to give one euro a month.

As they deposit them, we sing “Baptized, sent, you are not too small to praise and announce Jesus to your friends” (composed by the National Direction of the PMS in France for the competition on the occasion of the 2019 Extraordinary Missionary Month);

- Conclusion: final song “*The Cross at the side*”. “*Our ideal on earth, we dare to behave as missionaries!*” (inspired by the song of Father Henry, O.M.I., missionary in the Great North).

THE STORIES OF THE MISSIONARIES

The life of missionaries is a good way to awaken great desires for holiness in the hearts of children. The missionaries are courageous, they are not afraid to travel kilometers on foot to announce Jesus (San Jean de Brébeuf); they are not afraid of dying to carry the sacraments



in the middle of an epidemic of yellow fever (Monsignor Melchior de Marion Brésillac); they forgive their executioners (Isaac Jogues); they dedicate themselves to the poor and orphans (Cardinal de Lavigerie) etc.

Every year I make the children discover a missionary congregation. I see in their eyes a great desire to be better, to forget themselves for others, to love Jesus and Mary passionately, as the missionaries loved them.

“Pauline Jaricot said to make a living rosary - it makes me want to do the same”. (Erwan, 9 years old);

“Now I always ask for forgiveness when I quarrel with my brothers and sisters” (Alexis, 8 years old);

“When Pauline Jaricot put miraculous medals on the road, I thought that miraculous medals are important - I wear it around my neck” (Maylis, 8 years old);

“When Monsignor de Forbin Janson wrote to the Pope to find out if he should go to China or stay in France to evangelize, he obeyed and stayed in France - this helped me to obey”. (Enguerrand, 8 years old).

“Thanks to Pauline Jaricot, I am



approaching the Cross” (Constance, 10 years old);

“Making people near you pray - Pauline Jaricot is a beautiful example that encourages me” (Mahault, 10 years old).

THE SPIRIT OF SACRIFICE

Missionary Childhood arouses the spirit of sacrifice. Children are responsible for their prayer for a diocese and this teaches them to offer their sacrifices for their diocese.

“I offer this service for my diocese” (Ronan, 9 years old);

“When I do not want to do something, I offer it for my missionary diocese” (Albane, 10 years old).

THE OFFER FOR THE MISSIONS

The children have to contribute one euro a month for the missions. Some are generous and donate the five euros their grandmother gave them for their birthday. Others help the parents and they give them 1 euro at the end of the month:

Blanche, 7, she collects her dog's needs in the garden every Saturday

Baptise, Mahault and Alexis, who are siblings, wash their parents' car - *“we get 2 euros for the small car, 5 euros for the big one. I save them for Missionary Childhood”.*

Ombeline, 10 years old: *“I iron for mum”.*

Erwan, 10 years old: *“I take the pennies from the piggy bank where I put the ones that the “fairy mother” brings me when I lose a tooth”.*

The generosity of some encourages others to come up with ideas to raise money for missions.

THE MISSIONARY ROSARY

The World Week of Prayer for Missions, in October, is a very important time for missionary children. On Wednesday 14 October 2020, the





children ensured a continuous rosary from 2pm to 5pm. The groups took turns to intercede for the world, for the priests, for their missions.

CONCRETE MISSIONARY ACTION

In January 2021, during a period of isolation, a priest from another diocese asked the missionary

children to make drawings for lonely people in retirement homes. It was necessary to send 500 drawings to bring joy and love to these people tried by illness or loneliness. For three consecutive Wednesdays, the children prepared these drawings, experiencing the joy of making someone else happy.

“I told myself it was a fantastic thing, that made people happy, giving them back their self-confidence” (Aliénor, 8 years old);

“Perhaps these drawings will help them to pray and regain their strength” (Constance, 10 years old)

The task of Missionary Childhood is to help children talk about Jesus around them. For Easter each child received one or more images to give to someone who does not know Jesus; to donate to the baker or to neighbors, or to a school friend who does not believe. This year, missionary children are invited to announce the meaning of the Easter egg, a symbol of life and resurrection.

Since 2003, eight hundred children have been involved

in the Pontifical Society of Missionary Childhood.

- ★ Missionary Childhood of Draguignan: commitment of 10 February 2021 = 29 new children (and 56 renewed membership)
- ★ Missionary Childhood of Toulon: commitment of 13 February 2021 = 26 new children (and 29 renewed membership)
- ★ Missionary Childhood of Saint-Raphaël: commitment of 13 February 2021 = 18 new children (and 21 renewed membership)

It is always exciting to see “old” missionary children, today students or young parents, who remember their diocese.

“Sister, I have finished my studies. I was a missionary child and my diocese was Popokabaka, Congo - I still remember it!” Clémence C. (missionary girl in 2006).

Sr. Gabrielle du Rosaire (responsible)



commitment and renewed memberships February 2021



ALGERIA

DIOCESE OF LAGHOUAT - GHARDAÏA



Our Diocese, although it is one of the largest in the world, is essentially made up of religious communities that put themselves at the service of the population which try to reach the most destitute and bear witness to the presence of God in Jesus Christ.

Its geographical area covers more than two million square kilometers. The population, about 4.5 million inhabitants, is almost totally Muslim (<0.01% of the Algerian population of the diocese is Christian). The Christian communities are widespread and in order to visit them all, the bishop and the other leaders must travel thousands of kilometers across the desert. Only Tamanrasset in the far south is served by an airport. The presence of the church is minimal and the total number of permanent Christians working within the diocese is decreasing and does not exceed 50 people. Yet we recognize that the Lord has entrusted all children and their parents to us, whatever their faith.

THE ACTIVITIES OF THE DIOCESE

The activities of the Diocese are above all oriented towards meeting and interreligious dialogue, as well as helping those most in need. For a certain number of charitable activities we are able to obtain the help of various Christian organizations, but it is difficult for them to support the modest activities we organize for children, or for the livelihood

of the priests, men and women religious who carry out these activities. The funds of the Diocese are insufficient for this. Thus, the aid for Missionary Childhood is an indispensable help to maintain the basis of our activities in favor of children, both in the homes and in the cultural centers of Ghardaïa and Ouargla - and it is through children that we can get closer to their parents.



THE NEEDS OF CHILDHOOD IN ALGERIA

We do not have children from Christian families, but the needs of children in Algeria and even more so in the south (the Sahara) are immense. So this small fifty or so Christians are working to respond to the needs: school support courses, assistance to children with severe disabilities, help with the schooling of children from poor families, organization of extracurricular activities.

The activities we carry out concern only Muslim children and there is a great demand, a sign that the trust they place in us is without border. The Covid-19 pandemic has forced us to reduce our activities and also the number of children per course. We have equipped ourselves with temperature measuring devices and respect social distancing.

AN ISLAMIC-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE

Childhood and the activities organized in its favor represent the most important part of our mission. It is thanks to children that we are able to have a relationship with parents who, seeing our supportive actions, allow us to walk together, in an Islamic-Christian dialogue. Culture, teaching methods, religious differences and respect for these differences are part of the contributions of communities to a better “living together” today and for future generations.

THE ORDINARY SUBSIDY FOR MISSIONARY CHILDHOOD

The ordinary subsidy for Missionary Childhood is essentially used to welcome children in libraries and diocesan premises, especially disabled children, and for the organization of school and extracurricular support activities. In this context, we are truly happy to have managed, despite everything, to raise a small sum to support the Universal Fund for the Solidarity of Missionary Childhood.



TESTIMONIES

BURKINA FASO

DIOCESE OF DEDOUGOU

THE TIONKUY CATECHISTS FORMATION CENTER



The Tionkuy Formation Center for Catechists (CFC) was founded in 1961, to support the mission and Christian vocations in the Diocese, through the formation of catechists, auxiliaries in the pastoral care of priests.

In Burkina Faso the catechists are couples, already parents at the time of accessing the Formation Center and, therefore, some of them may already have two or three children.

To allow catechist pupils and their spouses to carry out their studies in peace and to foster a quiet and recollected atmosphere, necessary for prayer and work, the leaders of the Center have entrusted the children of the catechist pupils to the hands of a group of 3 animators, in order to ensure their awakening to faith and mission.

In order to achieve all this, it is necessary to equip the CFC with a large room created specifically for the children of catechists and their companions from the village, who are increasingly flocking to the Center.

In order for this project to be realized, before the subsidy granted by the Pontifical Society of Missionary Childhood, we sought a local contribution. Therefore, three awareness raising meetings on the issue were organized, in order to mobilize local resources:

★ *“Mission and necessity of the Pontifical Mission Societies in the universal Church and, above all, in mission countries” animated by the Diocesan Director of the PMS, on 30 September 2020;*

★ *“Mission, objectives of the Pontifical Mission Societies and the commitment of children, today, in the proclamation of the Gospel”, animated by the Director of Catholic Education, on 3 October 2020;*

★ *“Opportunity to build a home for children at CFCAR: challenges and appeal to missionary commitment”, animated by the Director of CFCAR, Fr. Bertin Dieme, on 17 October 2020.*

These awareness-raising activities to get to know the Pontifical Mission Societies better, so as to mobilize the necessary local resources, have achieved their purpose.

In fact, the celebration of Missionary Childhood Day had an unprecedented participation on behalf of children, as well as the celebration of Christmas for children.

THE CELEBRATION OF MISSIONARY CHILDHOOD DAY

From the first return to school, in light of the awareness work carried out on the Pontifical Mission Societies and, above all, on the Society of





Missionary Childhood, as well as the beginning of the construction of the “children’s home” at the CFC, children were given, at all levels, the place they deserve. Their parents and grandparents were determined to support them unreservedly. In addition, the children were at the center of the animation of the week of Missionary Childhood through the daily prayer of the Rosary, meditation on the Word of God, biblical competitions, missionary outings, etc. They also prepared and supervised the interventions of the Sunday liturgy of the CFC’s Missionary Childhood. This mass was presided over by Don Cervace Traore, formator of the Small Seminary of Tionkuy.

THE CELEBRATION OF CHILDREN’S CHRISTMAS

Thanks to the construction of the children’s home,

there was a lot of enthusiasm in the preparation of the children’s Christmas and no CFC child wanted to be told about the events. Nativity scenes flourished everywhere, this time not in straw, but in small bricks. Because each child tried to imitate as much as possible the workers they saw at work during the construction of the children’s home. As for children’s Christmas, it was celebrated on 10 January 2021, the feast of the Baptism of the Lord. All the children of the CFC (all the students, without distinction) and a good part of those from the village of Tionkuy prepared and animated together this Sunday’s liturgy and cultural evening. Their parents were very proud of them and of their commitment to carry out spiritual and cultural activities marked by an increased spirit of fraternity and solidarity.

*Fr. Bertin Dième
Director of the CFC*



I was chosen as the head of the CFC’s children and pupils group. In addition, I take care of the animation of the choir. Initially it is not easy to understand each other between children or young people, much less being a bridge between adults and children. Although sometimes this discourages me, as Saint Paul says: “When I am weak, that is when I am strong” (2 Corinthians 12: 9-10). I got up and continued. I am very happy to have these responsibilities, which have been entrusted to me by God.

Alfred Belemou

I was given the task of forming the children of the village in the missionary spirit, assisted by five children. Every day after 5 pm, during the week of Missionary Childhood, we go to the village to pray the Rosary with the village children. After the prayer, we try to teach the little ones the usual prayers, and the songs to the older ones. I am happy I offer this time to God, helping my brothers and sisters to get to know Jesus, His Church and the Pontifical Mission Societies.

I am happy to see that Jesus does not make my efforts in vain. Seeing that the little ones learn prayers better and better and that the older ones are able to animate the Mass with their songs, makes me happy and satisfied.



Amandine Gnoumou



I was very touched by Missionary Childhood Week this year because a house was built for us children, inside the nursery school. They told us that this house is ours, that it is like the crib of the Child Jesus that we love to build every year.

It is a beautiful house with beautiful images on the walls. We love to go in there and have fun. Don Tonton told us about this house and told us to tell our friends about Jesus, at school and everywhere.

Cécile Sama

BANGLADESH

DIOCESE OF MYMENSINGH



BANGLADESH

The Diocese of Mymensingh in Bangladesh counts 12.000 tribal children under the age of 14 who benefit of the ordinary subsidy granted by the Pontifical Society of Holy Childhood. This subsidy is used for Holy Childhood programs in the now 18 parishes of the Diocese. The 17th parish was established in December 2019 as Saint Mary's Parish in Gazirvita (bifurcated from Biroidabuki Parish) and is staffed by Claretian (Cmf) Fathers from India. The 18th Parish in the Diocese was established in November 2020 as Blessed Guido Maria Conferti Parish at Noluakuri, P.O. Seedstore (bifurcated from Mymensingh Cathedral Parish) and is staffed by Xaverian (SX) Fathers. Unfortunately though, the terrible impact of Covid-19 forced us to cancel much of the normal Holy Childhood programs here in 2020, and concentrate on relief efforts.

As of January 2021, there are about 85.000 Catholics (98% of them Mandi-Garo indigenous) and 30.000 other Christians (Baptists, Church of Bangladesh, etc.) living amid a total population of 18 million (about 90% Muslims and 8% Hindu) in the huge area of Mymensingh Catholic Diocese. When Holy Cross (CSC) Fathers, Brothers and Sisters began the Catholic evangelization of the Mandi-Garo indigenous people in 1910, they found the Mandi-Garos economically fairly self-sufficient (with vast tracts of land available for them to practice slash-and-burn agriculture) but almost entirely illiterate and

disease-ridden. From the beginning, the Holy Cross Congregation tried to establish Catholic Primary Schools in as many villages as possible, and also dispensaries to improve the health of the people and combat disease.

These evangelization efforts suffered severe setbacks at the time of the Partition of India in 1947, which divided the Mandi-Garos and left the majority of them in the Indian States of Meghalaya and Assam, and a minority in East Pakistan. Other setbacks occurred at the time of the Indo-Pakistan War in 1964, and at the time of the Bangladesh Independence struggle in 1971, when many Mandi-Garos had to flee to India and a good portion of their ancestral lands were taken over by land-hungry Muslim settlers. Indeed in the 1970s Holy Cross personnel needed special permission even to visit the formerly flourishing Mandi-Garo parishes they had establishes right on the new border with India. Many Mandi-Garos became landless day-labourers receiving salaries of less than One U.S. Dollar a day, making it almost impossible to feed, support or educate their then big families! Without the help of the Church, and the system





of Boy's and Girl's Hostels, dispensaries and other facilities that were set up at almost all of the parishes, it is quite possible that out of economic desperation, many or even most of the presently 85.000 Mandi Garo Catholics in the Diocese would have had to flee to India.

Today, the Diocese of Mymensingh is very active, concerning the children animation. It counts 135 Primary Schools, 4 Middle Schools, 10 High Schools and two Colleges (Notre Dame College-Mymensingh and Don Bosco College in Utrall staffed by the Salesians), with 17.000 students in 2020. Of these students, while the majority was Catholic of Christian, there was also a substantial minority of Muslims or Hindu, who appreciate the opportunity to study in Catholic schools. It remains true though, that most of the Mandi-Garo children in the Diocese under age 14, whose parents are often illiterate day labourers earning little more than one US Dollar a day, would without the help provided by Holy Childhood and other generous foreign donors, be unable to study.

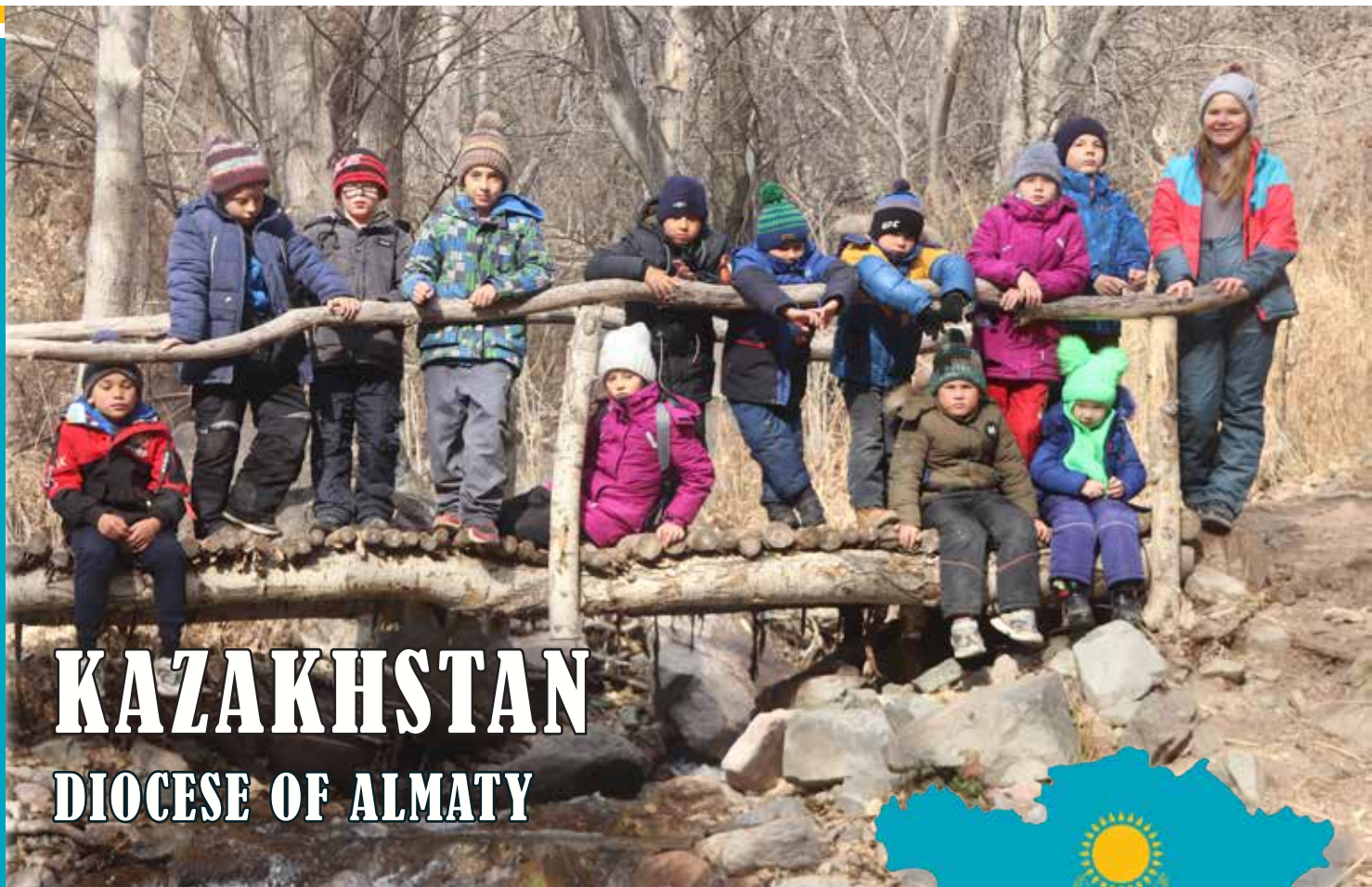
From January to March 2020, the bishop visited Boruakona, Baluchora and Bhalukapara Parishes, and administered the Sacraments of First Confession, First Communion and Confirmation to a fair number of children and adolescents. The first months of 2020, the normal Holy Childhood missionary animation projects were proceeding smoothly in all the parishes. The onset of Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020, plus additional disasters such as Typhoon Amphan in June 2020 and flash floods, disrupted all of our programs in 2020. Because of Covid-19, all of our schools and hostels have been closed these past 10 months. Many of the 20.000 Mandis who worked in the cities have lost their jobs and still suffer terrible economic hardship. Nevertheless, the indigenous children contributed with 500 dollars to Holy Childhood's Solidarity Funds in 2020.

Several times a year, we have run programs for the Holy Childhood Animators (the Sisters,

catechists, teachers and other collaborators) at the Pastoral Center in Mymensingh and at other locations in the Diocese. While these programs were disrupted because of Covid-19 in March 2020, we were able to have good four-day courses for as of our 40 catechists and 250 teachers in October 2020.

In 2021, we hope to resume monthly Holy Childhood programs and missionary animation programs, where the children have catechism classes and realize that they also are called to be missionaries and proclaim the Gospel.





My name is Father Artur Zaráś and I am a parish priest in Kapshagay, Kazakhstan. My ministry in Kazakhstan began in November 2013, when I came from Poland in order to work in the diocese of the Holy Trinity in Almaty.

In my parish there is “the Hearths”, who always help children, young people and mothers who find themselves in difficult life conditions. We now have 5 houses in Kapshagay, a dining hall for 100 people, a parish house and a church. We welcome to “the Hearths” children of all ages, nations and beliefs. There is also a house in Almaty for students from other cities and villages who come to the city to study in colleges and universities.

The mission of our parish of the Immaculate Conception of the BVM in Kapshagay is

caring for children w h o come to us from struggling, often pathological, families. Therefore, the children under our care require special concern. We are trying to make them feel like at home. Our daily life consists of different activities: working together at home, sharing meals, prayers, doing homework, playing, resting. We are taking care of 50 children, from new born to 14 years old, which we raise in the spirit of Christian values.

At the beginning of 2020 year children from our parish children’s home started a new semester at school. Every one of our pupils has a chance to improve their talents.

Since March, Kazakhstan was in strict quarantine. Children stopped going to school and the lessons were conducted online. We had to manage without sufficient number of



computers so that the children could attend their online classes and be able to handle all of their responsibilities. We have succeeded! Despite the difficulties, our children finished school year 19/20 and now school half-year 20/21 with good grades. Children's achievements always make us proud.

Before quarantine we all participate in the life of the parish – we celebrated the rosary and Holy Mass every day. For the duration of quarantine, churches and mosques were closed for parishioners. During this time thanks to the fact that there are 3 priests in our parish (Fr. Gregorio from Spain, Fr. Rafał from Poland and me), we could still, and in accordance with the restrictions, participate in Masses. Two priests celebrated mass in children's homes and one priest prayed in the church transmitting the rosary and the Holy Mass each day online for parishioners and diocesans by Facebook. We have had an open church since September, even though the authorities did not allow liturgical prayer, I convinced them that if I sit with my children at

the same table in the dining room or while studying, I can also pray with them in church. The church was open, and children and several parishioners attended Mass.

The summer holidays 2020 were different this year. Every year we organize camps and trips that we could not do due to the pandemic. Children don't fully understand the restrictions and prohibitions and that's why we try to organize their time in a way that doesn't conflict with quarantine's regulations.

In June 2020, when the quarantine in Kapshagay was temporarily lifted, we celebrated Children's Day. But the joy did not last long as soon after that quarantine resumed, and it lasts to this day. Daily statistics show that the epidemic in Kazakhstan developed the most in July and it was difficult for the state to contain it. Hospitals were overcrowded, people were sent home, pharmacies were short of medicines, and it was exceedingly difficult to get medical help at home.



Easter 2021

Christ the Lord is Risen!!!

Dear Friends from Pontificium Opus a Sancta Infantia

This year we are celebrating Easter in the conditions of an ongoing pandemic that fills everyone with fear and separates us from our loved ones due to the restrictions and of strict quarantine. The closed church and the inability to participate in the liturgy of the Paschal Triduum fills the hearts of many with sadness and apathy. Our spiritual life is helped by Pope Francis, who this year consecrated all the families of the world to the intercession of Saint Joseph, the Spouse of the Virgin Mary.

In the message of Pope Francis Patris corde ("With the Father's Heart") we read: "Joseph teaches us that faith in God includes the conviction that He can work even through our fears, our weaknesses and frailties. He also teaches us that in the midst of life's trials, we should never be afraid to let the Lord direct our lives. Sometimes we want total control, but God always sees the bigger picture." These words teach us to trust God - because everything is in His hands - and to humbly accept God's will.



The residents of the parish orphanage express to You, great gratitude, because through your charity and care for us, God removes from our hearts fear for the future life. We believe that this beautiful work of Our Lady will continue, because it is not the work of human, but of God. God brings hope that even in this difficult time of global pandemic, we will not be left without help.

At the end of February 2021, the situation with the coronavirus in Kazakhstan stabilized. Children in grades 1 to 5 and students at College began going to school, churches were open and services were allowed. The stores were open, and we managed to buy clothes and shoes for our children. Every Saturday we went with the children to the Magnum Market to buy groceries, cleaning, and hygiene products.

Some of the children attended the children's creativity Centre, where they took part in activities. In mid-March, when the warm spring came before the Kazakh holiday of Nauryz, a lockdown was announced. We thought it was just a restriction due to the traditions of lavish celebrations of this most important holiday in Kazakhstan. During this time, people visit each other





and meet with family, so the lockdown was introduced. The festival of Naurys is over and the hospital in Kapchagay is overcrowded and cannot accept any more patients. Schools and Colleges have switched to online education. Bazaars and shops are closed again.

Children are on spring break. At that time, there was an online Lenten retreat for young people and parishioners, led by Fr. Czesław Pawlukiewicz from Belarus. Our parish received a proposal to prepare the Way of the Cross for the whole of Kazakhstan in a live broadcast on the YouTube channel “Catholics of Kazakhstan”.

At first all parishioners joined, but last Friday only the residents of the orphanage were praying due to the lockdown.

During the spring holidays we went out of town with the children to feel easy and run in the steppe with our dog Kuzia. Many children who stayed at home for long periods suffer from depression and smartphone addiction. That is why we decided to take our children away from online learning to get some fresh

air in nature. So much fun: we ran on the rocks and ate potatoes baked on the campfire.

From the bottom of our hearts, we would like to express our gratitude to you for your help and best wishes for Easter 2021.

Fr. Artur Zaráś



EDUCATION AND FORMATION FOR NEEDY CHILDREN OF AI NGHIA PARISH

DIOCESE OF ĐÀ NẴNG
VIET-NAM



Sr. Maddalena Hoang Ngoc

Ai Nghia Parish Church is located in the center of Ai Nghia Town in Dai Loc District, 22km west-southwest of Đà Nẵng's Diocese. Ai Nghia Parish was established in 1930. The parish comprises of only 425 families with 1,326 faithful. All of them are practicing Catholics.

The majority of the people of this area is still very poor. Most of them live on farming, the main income of the people depending on agricultural labour and this alone is not sufficient for all their needs (food, education, health, maintenance family etc.) This area is facing floods every year and the seasonal agriculture is very often greatly affected by heavy rains. The condition of the village's roads is very poor and there is lack of road safety. Many young families moved to the big city to find job and left their children with the grandparents. The most part of the children are not able to go

to school, because they have to care for their siblings or help in the house or in the fields. The parish is well aware of its duty to educate the poor, give them faith formation through catechisms, Bible seminars, retreats, camps during holidays and summer classes for Catholic children and non-Catholic children. This is a very important way of evangelizing the children and youth in the pastoral plan of the parish. Through these small groups, the children can learn to live in communities.

This project has given hope to the needy children by paying their school fees, uniforms and bicycles, giving them the opportunity to go to school and participate in extracurricular classes.



NEWS FROM BANANA CAMP

DIOCESE OF VANIMO

Do you remember Sr. Adelaida and the Children of the Banana Camp in Papua New Guinea in Bulletin n°7?

Here are the thank you letters that our Secretariat has received a little after the publication of the article, along with a letter of Sr. Adelaida. Michael writes few meaningful lines in a roundish handwriting, all “I” embellished with round dots, while Becky writes her heartfelt letter in Pidgin – English translation by Sr. Adelaida.

*Dear Sister Roberta,
 Happy Feast of the Presentation of the Lord!
 This letter is about the collection of the children from Banana Camp for the Holy Childhood.
 Before I started to collect their contribution, first, I invited the Mothers of the Children from Banana Camp and Transmitter resettlement areas for a meeting. The majority of attendees of our meeting were the Mothers of the Children from Banana Camp and only three Mothers came from Transmitter. The meeting was not only about the contribution to the Holy Childhood, but catechesis as well. They agreed to my suggestion to give their Children 10 toea, 20 toea or even bigger amount as a weekly offering of the Children for the Holy Childhood.
 This collection of the Children’s contribution for the Holy Childhood every Saturday is also one way of educating them from an early age to be generous to the need of others and their parish Church. And I am hoping that once they are grown up, they in turn will cultivate the virtue of generosity toward others and be supportive to their own parish Church...
 The love offering of the Children and their Parents during the kissing of the image of the Baby Jesus after the mass on the feast of the Holy Innocents on 28 December 2020, and at the same time their Christmas party as well*



was also placed in the coin bank of the Children from Banana Camp.

On behalf of the Children and our community, once again thank you for helping us in our catechetical apostolate. May God bless the missionary activity of the Pontifical Mission Societies especially the Missionary Childhood!

Sr. Adelaida de Lumen MCST

*Dear Sister Roberta,
 Greetings from Vanimo, Papua New Guinea!
 I am Becky Paiye, grade 3 at Holy Cross Primary School Damili. I am staying with my family at Stoney Cave.
 Together with other Catholic Children who were attending the catechetical instruction of Sister Adelaida MCST at St. Anthony Pilgrims House Compound, we would like to thank the Staff of Missionary Childhood Office for the rosaries, pencils, colouring books, pens and snacks served after catechesis.
 We include in our rosary the intention of Pope Francis, all the Cardinals and Bishops throughout the world, the Staff of the Missionary Childhood Office, the Donors of Missionary Childhood, all Christians living in Muslim countries, all the Members of the Missionary Childhood, our Families and our own country.
 May God bless your good work.
 God bless.*

Becky Paiye - 22 November 2020

Dear Sister Roberta, I Michael Manulla, a sister Edilida student would like to say thank you for the stationaries that you have given us. I thank you for your kindness and your Parish member for help.

Michael Manulla

THE SMALL COIN

*I am a penny, I am little,
but I thank the one who created me
because the good Lord of something humble
often does great things...*

*The drop of water laughing on the grass,
reflecting a glimmer of sky,
recalls the magnificent river
that follows its eternal course...*

*Yes, the superb bags
repel me from their treasure,
but take me by the hundreds
and you will obtain coins of gold...*

*I'm a penny, nothing more, I say,
and yet with me you can make
a great miracle,
because you can spread the faith.*

(From the Annales of the Holy Childhood
of the Diocese of Québec 1925, p.56)



**PONTIFICIUM OPUS A SANCTA INFANTIA
SECRETARIATUS INTERNATIONALIS**