World Mission Sunday
October 19th 2014
Father Alex is in Africa visiting various mission projects that PMS Canada has sponsored. His regular article will appear in the next issue.

**Missionary Prayer Intentions**

**SEPTEMBER:** That Christians, inspired by the Word of God, may serve the poor and the suffering.

**OCTOBER:** That World Mission Day may rekindle zeal in every believer for carrying the Gospel into the world.

**NOVEMBER:** That young seminarians and religious may have wise and well formed mentors.

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**Remembering the Missions in your Will**

Help the missionaries of the future through
- a specific bequest **amount**
- **securities** bequest
- all or part of the **residue** of your estate
- **real property** (e.g. a building) bequest

**In your Will use our legal name:**

The Society for the Propagation of the Faith for Canada, English Sector

Registered Charity BN 12888 2883 RR0001
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Vol. 72, No. 3  Fall 2014

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Missionaries! When I hear that word I remember all the foreign missionaries who visited our schools and told us of the harrowing circumstances under which they lived. They spoke of poverty, war, persecution, hardships of living and eating really weird things! They highlighted the practices and customs of people who seemed so very different from me and the need to convert them. I was left thinking that these missionaries were really unique and special people but they certainly had nothing to do with me and my life other than that I should try to contribute money to support their work.

As usual, God smiled and had a missionary plan for my life which I would never have dreamed of in a thousand years.

I wanted to be a Sister but for a variety of reasons every group of Sisters I approached did not feel I had the qualifications or aptitudes for their way of life. All the doors seemed to be closing and I was discouraged and frustrated. Then, in the Catholic Register newspaper I saw a tiny advertisement for the Missionary Sisters of the Precious Blood saying “No talent too hidden or humble that cannot be used for the Kingdom of God”. I remember thinking “Well, if they can find it, they can have it.” I wrote to them and that was it; the kid who wanted nothing to do with “missionaries” ended up on fire for the spreading of God’s Love throughout the world.

Suddenly my whole world vision changed as I learned that being a missionary was not the exception, but rather the essence of being a Christian and a Catholic. I learned that Jesus has called us as a church to live a loving and respectful life which radiates our joy in being Christian and our happiness in knowing the Lord. We are called to be so excited by our gift of being a Christian that we want to share this with everyone we meet. “Our mission territory is the world…and you are missionaries everywhere!” Francis Pfanner

We see this missionary attitude in the life of a mature man who spends his days on the streets of a large Canadian city working tirelessly to help elderly homeless men who fall through the system and do not get government assistance. The young people who offer a year of their lives as lay missionaries in faraway countries. Missionary attitude also is evident in those who have retired from one career only to take on another in service to God and others. I know a fellow Sister who has retired from her career in teaching but is in no way ‘retired’. Now known as the “Eveready Nunny” for her tireless energy, she advocates for refugees, immigrants and women in despair. There is the mother of four young children who still finds time to serve at a Franciscan meal service and brings her children with her so that they learn to help others; the young family that moves to a remote northern area to share the love of Jesus in the small community there. Consider the case of the Sister from Idaho, USA, who left for Africa at age 21 and spent her entire life helping others, especially orphaned and rejected children. At 83, she was murdered by young hoodlums who thought she had money in the children’s home. At her funeral the comment was made that she would be the first to plead for mercy for the boys who hurt her, to understand that their living in poverty, gangs, addictions and unemployment had affected them and she would ask us try to find a way to help them. These are disciples and missionaries.

What makes us missionaries and not just good people helping others? It is that spark of the Holy Spirit that sings of our love of Jesus in our lives and in our actions. “Missionary zeal does not grow out of intellectual beliefs, nor out of theological arguments, but out of love” – Roland Allen

We may not be able to go to foreign countries, but we might be able to be friendly to the person in the supermarket who seems to be struggling to reach items, or push a cart, or deal with toddlers. In our own church community there may be people or families who do not quite feel at home. Could I speak the gospel message to them by welcoming them or inviting them to events, even if they are different from me? Could I be tolerant of slow moving seniors or mothers with dawdling children? Could I offer help and a smile? Pope Francis is teaching us by example – just be warm, loving, friendly, compassionate, and don’t be afraid to say “God Bless You”. Be proudly and humbly a follower of Christ.

Let us all remember this: one cannot proclaim the Gospel of Jesus without the tangible witness of one’s life. Those who listen to us and observe us must be able to see in our actions what they hear from our lips, and so give glory to God! I am thinking now of some advice that Saint Francis of Assisi gave his brothers: preach the Gospel and, if necessary, use words. Preaching with your life, with your witness.

(4/14/13)

Yes, we are all disciples and missionaries!
Missions Today

This is an edited version of the original story that appeared in CNA/EWTN on-line news.

Chiang Mai, Thailand, Jul 15, 2014

The bishop of Thailand’s northernmost diocese, which is largely rural and dominated by hill tribes, has begun himself working in the fields alongside his flock, in recognition of the importance of agriculture there.

“I try to understand the farmers, and to promote Catholic social teaching so that they can contribute to a holistic human development, can work for the common good of their family and for the entire nation,” Bishop Francis Xavier Vira Arpondratana of Chiang Mai told CNA July 10.

The diocesan economy is largely agricultural, and the mountainous region lacks many amenities such as electricity and modern communications and highway infrastructure. Relating how he began to work in the rice fields with his tribal flock, he said that “in fact, I did not want to work in the field, but I would like to support them; and one of the local nuns encouraged me, asking, ‘bishop why don’t you work with us?’”

And so Bishop Arpondratana took to the rice paddies with gusto. “When someone asks, I would like to open my heart and mind and be with them,” he explained.

His work with farmers has inspired both them and catechists in the Chiang Mai diocese. He has organized a Lenten rice campaign in the diocese centered on prayer, penance, and alms giving.

Out of his concern for the well-being of the local people, the Bishop is helping develop a strong sense of solidarity among the local ethnic groups: “I am aware of the economic situation of Europe, so we cannot ask help from there. We have to make the local people understand they must help each other locally, and not only receive help from afar.”

Bishop Arpondratana, 58, was ordained a priest of the Bangkok archdiocese, 430 miles south of Chiang Mai, in 1981, and served there until his appointment as bishop in 2009.

“I like to be with my people to understand them, even though it took time to learn the language; but understanding their current

“We are a missionary land”

Thai Bishop Sows Seeds of Evangelization in Mission Diocese

By Antonio Anup Gonsalves

Above: Location of Thailand. Map by TUBS, [CC-SA-BY-3.0], wikimedia.org

Right: Diocese of Chiang Mai – Map by wikimedia.org

Hilly Terrain typical of Chiang Mai Province – Photo by Takeaway, [CC-SA-BY-3.0], wikimedia.org
situations and just to be with them” is important, he emphasized. “I have committed to doing my best with the more than six tribal ethnicities.”

The six largest hill tribes, all of whom live within the Chiang Mai diocese, are the Akha, Lahu, Mien, Karen, Hmong, and Lisu; each have their own language, customs, and traditions.

“One of my prime challenges is that we have no priests to speak in Akha,” Bishop Arpondratana said, “and so on feast days during my homily, native lay catechists translate it into two or three local languages such as Akha and Lahu… This is the biggest challenge to my pastoral role in the diocese.”
Nearly all – 95 percent, in fact – of the 61,000 Catholics in the diocese are from the hill tribes, the bishop explained. These form a little more than one percent of the total population of the Chiang Mai diocese.

The local Catholics are joined by more than 1,000 catechumens, most of who also are from the hill tribes. “The catechumens are waiting for religious education and catechesis, but we lack priests who can speak the local languages,” the bishop reiterated.

The largest groups among the Catholics are the Karen people, at 55 percent, and the Akha, at 20 percent.

Catechists in the diocese are charged with bridging gaps among the tribes, and connecting faith formation, liturgy, and education in life skills.

“I have to empower the catechists, and have also to encourage the local religious”, Bishop Arpondratana said, explaining that his catechists undergo theological preparation at the National Catechetical Center in Sam Phran and Bangkok.

During his 28 years as a priest in Bangkok, Bishop Arpondratana led the Thai catechetical commission; during that time, he saw that most catechists in central and eastern Thailand work part time in schools, in addition to their duties as catechists.

On the contrary, he said, in the Chiang Mai diocese most catechists in the city are women, while most in the villages are men who are given full time to their apostolate. “So the role of the lay people as catechists is indispensable, as they dedicate their apostolate in the mountain villages to the tribes.”

The 61,000 Catholics were served in 2006 by only 72 priests, most of whom were religious. The diocese had 32 parishes, though Bishop Arpondratana explained that there are more than 470 total chapels throughout the nearly 35,000 square miles of the Diocese of Chiang Mai.

“We are a missionary land, and we walk miles in long journeys, even though we have missionaries in Thailand, and especially in Chiang Mai.”

Bishop Arpondratana has made a priority of travelling his diocese to visit his flock. He is committed to throwing himself into shepherding of the diocese, knowing that the harvest is plenty, but laborers few. “I feel that we have to still achieve our mission, for we have not yet reached a level such that we can confidently stand on our own,” he reflected.
The New Evangelization:
Update on Roman Catholicism in Spain

Missions Today first reported on the mission work in Nagaland Province, India, in our Summer 2013 issue. We are pleased to present this update from Rev. Fr. Francis Yimso.

This article is gratefully reprinted with the permission of First Things on-line magazine

Is Spain Regaining Its Faith?
By Filip Mazurczak

Like Quebec, Ireland, or Boston, Spain has epitomized the fading of Catholic faith. In the twentieth century, religious practice in Spain fell sharply, especially as the country transitioned to democracy and resentment of the Church’s support for Franco’s dictatorship surfaced.

Recently, however, the downward trend has stopped and is recovering. According to Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS), the proportion of Spaniards attending Mass has increased from 12.1 to 15 percent between 2011 and 2012. In absolute terms, the number of Spanish Catholics attending weekly Mass grew by an astonishing further 23 percent between 2012 and 2013, according to CIS. Meanwhile, between 2007 and 2013 the number of Spaniards contributing part of their taxes to the Church rose from eight to nine million.

Not only are Spaniards attending Mass more frequently, but also youths are rediscovering the priesthood and religious life. In 2013–2014, the number of Spanish diocesan seminarians increased for a third consecutive year to 1321, a steady growth from 1227 in 2010–2011. Active female religious orders are also vibrant—each year, about 400 Spanish girls become non-cloistered sisters, a slowly increasing number. The number of women at the Poor Clares Convent of the Ascension in Lerma has surged from 28 in 1994 to 134 in 2009. One of the Lerma nuns, Sister Verónica, created her own community, Jesu Communio. The Vatican approved the rapidly growing order, known as the “sisters in jeans” because they wear denim habits, in 2010.*

Immigration cannot explain this growth in monastic and priestly vocations. Today, young Spaniards are leaving the country for the more prosperous parts of Latin America (especially Chile) and for Germany and Britain. Considering Spain’s massive youth emigration and the fact that the country has one of Europe’s lowest birth rates, Spain’s youth population is shrinking, so this vocations rebound is more impressive.

Perhaps no one puts a more attractive face on Spain’s return to Catholicism than Olalla Oliveros. Last month, the 36-year-old Spanish model stunned Spanish society by becoming a nun of the semi-cloistered Order of Saint Michael. Perhaps Oliveros did this out of frustration? On the contrary, she was at the height of her career and was recently offered a lead role in a big-budget film. Oliveros experienced a conversion several years back and made her decision after much thought.

Some would dismiss these recent developments as resulting from the economic crisis. Currently, unemployment in Spain is almost 27 percent; in the European Union, only Greece suffers from a worse jobless rate. Spain plunged into recession in 2008, with anemic GDP growth in recent quarters. Perhaps Spaniards are rediscovering the pews and seminaries because economic hardship is leading them to look for a last resort in religion.

There are several reasons why this is not the case. First, economic hardship is nothing new to Spain. In the early 1990s, Spain also suffered from severe recession and unemployment reached 23 percent in 1993, nearly the current rate. Yet throughout the 1990s, rates of religious observance and vocations to the priesthood and religious life declined.

A more dramatic example is the Great Depression, the worst recession in Europe in a century. The 1930s did not revive Spanish religiosity. On the contrary, anticlericalism then arguably reached its climax in Spain’s history. In 1931, Prime Minister Manuel Azaña declared, “Spain has ceased to be Catholic” and purged Spanish public life of anything Christian. Meanwhile, during the 1936–1939 Spanish Civil War anticlerical, communist-sympathizing Republicans murdered 7,000 priests, nuns, and seminarians with extreme brutality. In his 1938 Homage to Catalonia George Orwell was astonished by how quickly Catalanian society was discarding its Catholic identity.

* A Poor Clares Sister – Photo by Eugenio Hansen OFJ [CC-SA-BY-3.0], wikimedia.org

Lerma
Furthermore, Spain is not only experiencing a religious revival of its society, but its public sphere is also turning away from the moral relativism of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero’s government (2004–2011). In 2005, Zapatero legalized same-sex “marriage” and the adoption of children by homosexual couples. In 2010 Zapatero’s government legalized abortion on demand. In addition, Zapatero made “express divorce” legal, ended mandatory religious education in schools, and removed crucifixes from public buildings.

However, today’s government of Mariano Rajoy is challenging Zapatero’s revolution. Currently, it is pushing a bill banning abortion except when the pregnancy results from rape or threatens the mother’s health or life. The bill would make Spanish legislation as pro-life as it has been since 1985. Spanish elites feel that Zapatero went too far in de-Christianization.

Ireland, too, has also suffered economically. However, Irish Catholicism remains in the doldrums since the economic collapse; no trends similar to the Spanish ones can be observed there. The number of Irish youths entering seminary remains depressingly low; many Irish parishes are closing; popular and political pressure to embrace same-sex “marriage” and abortion are mounting; Mass attendance in Dublin is fast approaching the single digits with no end in sight. Ireland demonstrates that economic depression does not necessarily cause religious revival.

What, then, accounts for this surprising turnaround in the state of Spanish Catholicism? Perhaps it can be partially attributed to Pope Benedict XVI, sometimes criticized by some for excessively focusing on the re-evangelization of Western societies, being a Don Quixote trying to resurrect Christendom where it is obviously dead. Yet Spain mattered to Benedict. He visited the country three times, attracting some of the largest crowds of his pontificate.

Spain’s slight retreat from secularization can’t simply be chalked up to economic difficulties. Something else is at play, whether a response to Benedict’s summoning of Europe to return to its roots, a rediscovery of the beauty of religious life, weariness with Zapatero’s secularist aggression, or something else entirely.

For some time, many had predicted that Spanish Catholicism would share the fate of the woolly mammoth and that Gothic churches in would be turned into pizzerias and discotheques. However, Spanish Catholicism is regaining a vibrancy it has not seen in decades. When Pope Francis visits Spain next year, he will find a struggling local Church, but one where Catholic culture is being visibly reborn.

*The number of Poor Clares in the Convent of the Ascension has grown from a 28 sisters in 1994 to 139 sisters in 2009. Source: ChristianPost

Filip Mazurczak has an MA in international relations from The George Washington University. He is a regular contributor to Katolicki Miesięcznik LIST and has published in a variety of magazines, including The European Conservative, Visegrad Insight, and Tygodnik Powszechny.

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MISSIONS TODAY

NIGERIA

Contribution of English Canada U.S. $ 345,379.00

PROJECTS

- Construction of a Catechist centre for national social formation
- Construction and Renovation of 4 convents
- Construction of two presbyteries
- Construction of four chapels
- Construction of 2 multi-purpose meeting rooms
- Support for educational programs on Justice, Peace and Youth Development

INDIA

Contribution of English Canada U.S. $ 481,942.79

PROJECTS

- Construction of 8 presbyteries
- Construction of 4 convents
- Construction of 7 churches
- Support for two Centres for Social Communication
- Support program for women in social transformation
- Production of documentary on marriage
- Support for the media program for youth
- Support programs for catechists and community leaders
- Support for media education for teachers

CCCB PASTORAL FUND

Contribution from English Canada – $ 205,185.00

The CCCB Pastoral Mission Fund helps mission countries on all continents with grants, primarily in programs for faith development, missionary formation and catechetical training.

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An easy way to help the missions is to preauthorize a monthly payment plan for them. To join this plan complete, sign and send us either Form A or Form B. You can change your mind, or the amount to be given, at any time by sending us a note.

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Monthly Giving Plan – Form A - Bank

FORM A – BANK

Yes, I hereby authorize the Society for the Propagation of the Faith for Canada, English Sector to draw on my account #____________________ on the __________ day of each month for the amount of $__________________.

NAME: ____________________________________________________________

YOUR OFFICIAL SIGNATURE: _________________________________________

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A blank cheque marked VOID is attached

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We can help because of your generosity

Thank you and may God bless you abundantly
MISSIONS TODAY

We can help because of your generosity.

Thank you and may God bless you abundantly.

PAKISTAN

Contribution of English Canada U.S. $ 437,778.21

PROJECTS

• Support the purchase of audiovisual equipment.
• Support for training of trainers in media education
• Support for the production of song books
• Support the purchase of 2 vehicles
• Construction of 3 houses for catechists
• Construction of 6 churches
• Support for the training of lay ministers

NIGERIA

Contribution of English Canada U.S. $ 622,630.00

PROJECTS

• Construction of 10 churches
• Construction of 5 presbyteries
• New Roofs for 3 chaplaincies
• Construction and Renovation of 4 convents

World Mission Sunday collections are sent to the National Office of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, Toronto, ON.

Every year in May National Directors from around the world meet in Rome to approve projects submitted for financial assistance. Specific projects submitted for financial assistance. Specific projects are allocated to specific countries for financial support. The money is sent directly from the National Office to the country of the approved project. The money is not sent to Rome.

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Thank you, Canada!
From Propagation of the Faith

WORLD MISSION SUNDAY COLLECTION

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<td>166,987</td>
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<td>9,252.63</td>
<td>111,000</td>
<td>Fr. Luigi Filippini</td>
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August 31, 2014
Note: In some Dioceses, total collection includes monies for World Mission Sunday received in our offices directly from parishes.
KRAKOW, POLAND - In a press conference held earlier today (July 3) in Krakow, Poland, Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz presented the official logo and prayer for the 31st World Youth Day slated to take place there in 2016.

Announced by Pope Francis during the closing Mass for World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro last summer, the Krakow event is expected to draw millions, and follows the canonization of Polish Saint John Paul II earlier this spring.

The image is composed of a geographical outline of Poland inside of which there is a yellow cross, representing Jesus Christ, who is the soul of World Youth Day.

Present inside the country’s outline is a yellow dot, which both marks the position of Krakow on the map and serves as symbol for the youth.

The red and blue flames are the flames of divine mercy that emerge from the cross, which represent with their colors the phrase “Jesus, I trust in you” that accompanies the image of divine mercy revealed to Saint Maria Faustina. Another reason for choosing the colors of yellow, red, and blue is that they are the official colors of Krakow and its coat of arms, the cardinal noted.

The logo was designed by Monika Rybczynska, 28, from Poland’s small mid-west town of Ostrzeszow, following the canonization of St. John Paul II.

Cardinal Dziwisz also announced the official prayer for World Youth Day 2016, which is an entrustment of humanity and the youth to Jesus’ divine mercy, asking for the grace to obtain a merciful heart. It also invokes the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. John Paul II, who is the patron of World Youth Days.

World Youth Day is a gathering of young people from all over the world to pray and meet with the Pope in order to build and strengthen the bonds of faith, friendship, and hope, symbolizing the union between people of different cultures and countries. An edited version of the original report, taken from CAN/EWTN News 07/03/2014

World Youth Day 2016 Official Prayer:

“God, merciful Father,
in your Son, Jesus Christ, you have revealed your love and poured it out upon us in the Holy Spirit, the Comforter.
We entrust to you today the destiny of the world and of every man and woman”.  
We entrust to you in a special way young people of every language, people and nation: guide and protect them as they walk the complex paths of the world today and give them the grace to reap abundant fruits from their experience of the Krakow World Youth Day.
Heavenly Father,  
grant that we may bear witness to your mercy.  
Teach us how to convey the faith to those in doubt,  
hope to those who are discouraged,  
love to those who feel indifferent,  
forgiveness to those who have done wrong  
and joy to those who are unhappy.
Allow the spark of merciful love that you have enkindled within us become a fire that can transform hearts and renew the face of the earth.
Mary, Mother of Mercy, pray for us.  
St. John Paul II, pray for us

WYD 2016 Logo – Source WYD Krakow website

WYD 2016 Banner - Source: krakow2016.com
Holy Childhood programs in the Sylhet Catholic Diocese

This large diocese covers a total of 12,595.95 km² (4,863.32 sq mi) in land area and contains 9,807,000 people! Now try to imagine how big that is. There are seven Parishes in the Diocese of Sylhet. At the moment, there are six Parishes under the Oblate Fathers and one Parish under the Holy Cross Fathers. All together, there are just 45 priests and members of religious communities serving a little over 16,000 Catholics in the entire area.

One of the projects HCA Canada supports in Bangladesh is the training of religion animators, or teachers to help the children across this vast diocese learn about God. Here is a report from Father Lawrence Toppo, the director of the Holy Childhood Movement in Sylhet Diocese. After reading his report, you will see how busy the animators are! Missions Today wishes to thank Father Toppo for providing us with the photographs used in this report.
The children are taught to concentrate while praying. Srimangal Parish

The confirmation class. Animators play a major role in the children’s preparation for the sacraments.

The Holy Childhood animators gather for a group photo. December, 2013

Child animators present a Christmas drama for younger children.

The children welcome Bishop Bejoy D’Cruze to a Holy Childhood celebration. Note the colourful costumes worn by the children representing their tribal heritage.

Large numbers of children attend classes in religious instruction thanks to the Holy Childhood Animators Program.

The Sylhet Diocesan Animators attending the National PMS program at Mymenzingh. Father Lawrence is standing on the right hand side of the picture.
ETHIOPIA – Missionary children evangelize their peers with the first Bible in Oromo language

Kofale - The first “little missionaries” left from Kofale, in the Arsi region of Ethiopia, ready to evangelize their peers in Gode. With their notebooks, in which were represented the most salient scenes of the first Bible for children in Oromo language, these young missionaries attended the Mass celebrated by Father Bernard Coccia, a Capuchin missionary pastor of Kofale. Father Coccia, assisted by the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Christ present in the same community, helped the little missionaries take their first steps with the Gospel in their hands to deliver it to their peers in Gode, some of whom are still illiterate.

“(This is) an opportunity to teach the young ones how to read through coloring and animated cartoons, (while at the same time) proclaiming the Word of the Lord”, stated Sister Offale, the head of the region’s mission animation. “Our children from Kofale have been committed for over a year to prepare for this ‘missionary mandate’; they worked with me and father Bernardo for the success of the event. This land is predominantly Muslim, and especially in these poor villages everything is really complicated, from education to food and daily survival, but there is a lot of solidarity. And this event was just a proof, through which a small group of ‘apostles’ showed the presence of the Lord and boundless faith in His love”, concluded the nun. Source: Agenzia Fides 05/19/2014.

ITALY – Beatification of Mario Vergara, PIME martyr and Isidoro Ngei Ko Lat, first Burmese Blessed

Rome– On Saturday, May 24, 2014, in the Cathedral of Aversa, Father Mario Vergara, missionary of the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions (PIME) and his catechist Isidore Ngei Ko Lat will be beatified. They both died as martyrs in Burma in May 1950.

At the end of the general audience on Wednesday 21 May, Pope Francis commented on the beatification with these words: “On 24 May, PIME missionary Fr Mario Vergara and Isidore Ngei Ko Lat, his faithful catechist, will be beatified at Aversa. The two were killed in 1950 in Burma, out of hatred for the Christian faith. May their heroic fidelity to Christ be an encouragement and example to missionaries and especially catechists in mission lands who carry out important and irreplaceable apostolic work, for which the whole Church is grateful”.

Father Mario Vergara was born in Fratamaggiore in 1910. Ordained a priest on August 28, 1934, at the end of September that same year he left for Burma where he was entrusted with the district Citaciò in the mountains and forests of Soku. With the help of catechists he faced countless hardships. During World War II, in 1941 he was interned, with all the Italian missionaries in British concentration camps in India, where he stayed for 4 years. Following his release, he spent some time recuperating in Italy. He then returned to Burma, and went on a new mission among the Red Kayin people, in the area east of Loikaw, near the Salween River.

After independence from England (1948), riots and civil war broke out between the newly established Burmese government and
Kayin rebels. Father Vergara was very much hated by the rebels operating in that area because of his defense of the oppressed. On May 24, 1950 Father Vergara, together with the catechist Isidore met with Richmond, the rebel leader to demand the release of another catechist who had been arrested. Richmond had them interrogated, following which he arrested them and had them killed, probably on or around May 25. Their bodies, sealed in a bag, were thrown into the river.

Not much is known about the life of the catechist Isidore Ngei Ko Lat, who was the first Burmese faithful to be beatified. Baptized on September 7, 1918, Isidoro belonged to a family of farmers, who converted to Catholicism. As a child he attended the missionaries and often went with them. He entered the minor seminary in Toungoo, demonstrating zeal and commitment, but because of poor health he had to return to his family. Dedicating his life to the Lord, he never married and later opened a private free school where he held catechism classes. In 1948 he met Fr. Vergara, who invited him to act as catechist in Shadaw. An edited version, taken from Agenzia Fides 05/23/2014.

CAMEROON - 100 years of evangelization in Bamenda

Yaoundé – Cameroon’s first missionaries were from the Dehonian order, which originated in Germany. The Cameroon was a German colony at the time of their arrival in 1912. However, the First World War disrupted their mission. His Exc. Mgr. Cornelius Fontem Esua, Archbishop of Bamenda explains that, “After the first world war, with the defeat of Germany, the German missionaries were forced to abandon the current Cameroon. For a certain period of time, up to 1922, this area was left without priests, until the arrival of the Fathers of the Society of Mill Hill, followed by missionaries from other congregations”.

“Currently in our archdiocese there are missionaries of at least 15 different congregations. They are helped by 70 diocesan priests (religious priests are about fifty) while vocations are increasing. The Archdiocese of Bamenda hosts the Major Seminary of the province that currently houses 70 seminarians.

Mgr. Esua also states that “20 percent of the population in Bamenda is Catholic, in fact, out of a total of 1 million 300,000, 300,000 are Catholics. The other two major Christian communities are Presbyterian and Baptist, Muslims account for 5 per cent, while the majority of the population belongs to traditional indigenous religions”.

With regards to evangelization in Bamenda, Mgr. Esua says: “We place great emphasis on inculturation of faith in our apostolic activities. (For example, the scriptures are being translated into several local languages.) Ed. Also - he adds – “our activities of human and social promotion help us in the first evangelization. We have 145 primary schools with 26,000 pupils, 13 secondary schools with 7-8,000 students, some institutes for professional formation plus the Catholic university that opened its doors four years ago. With regards to health care we have 17 health centers and two hospitals,” says the Archbishop of Bamenda. An edited version, taken from Agenzia Fides 05/27/2014.

JAPAN: Japanese samurai put forward for beatification

Takayama Ukon, a 16th-century Japanese samurai who faced exile rather than give up his Catholic faith, is being considered for sainthood because of his fidelity to Christ and his Church.

The Japanese bishops’ conference submitted a 400-page application for the samurai’s beatification to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in 2013. Takayama’s life is an example of “great fidelity to the Christian vocation, persevering despite all difficulties,” Jesuit Father Anton Witwer, general postulator of the Society of Jesus, told CNA.

Takayama was born in 1552, three years after the Jesuit missionary St. Francis Xavier introduced Christianity to Japan. When he was 12, his father became Catholic, and Ukon was baptized as Justo by Jesuit Father Gaspare di Lella. The Takayama were daimyo, members of the class of ruling feudal lords who ranked second to the shogun in medieval and early modern Japan. Daimyo held vast estates and were entitled to raise armies and hire samurai.

Given their respected position, the Takayama were able to support missionary activities in Japan, serving as protectors of Japanese Christians and of the Jesuit missionaries. According to Father Witwer, they influenced the conversion of tens of thousands of Japanese.

In 1587, when Takayama was 35, Japan’s chancellor, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, began a persecution of Christians, expelling missionaries and encouraging Japanese Catholics to forsake their faith.

Father Witwer recounted that Takayama “did not want to fight against other Christians, and this led him to live a poor life, because when a samurai does not obey his ‘chief,’ he loses everything he has.” In 1597, Toyotomi ordered the execution of 26 Catholics, both foreigners and native Japanese; they were crucified Feb. 5.

Despite the threat of such a fate, Takayama refused to leave the Church, choosing to live as a Christian until his death. When the shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu definitively banned Christianity in 1614, Takayama went into exile. He led a group of 300 Catholics, both foreigners and native Japanese; they were crucified Feb. 5.

Causes of Saints in 2013. Takayama’s life is an example of “great fidelity to the Christian vocation, persevering despite all difficulties,” Jesuit Father Anton Witwer, general postulator of the Society of Jesus, told CNA.

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I read James Foley’s last letter to his family this morning while at breakfast. I recognized him as the American photographer who was kidnapped in 2012 by the radical Islamic group known as ISIS and who they recently executed in a brutal manner.

What I did not know was that he was a devout Roman Catholic and I found myself deeply moved by his calm and reassuring demeanor as he addressed his family back home.

I am constantly searching for “the right way” to pray. From my earliest memories of practicing rote prayers from the Catechism to now, I have been in search of how best to pray. I have long since stopped praying for good things to come into my life or for bad things to stay away. Instead, I long for a dialogue with God, and the harder I try, the less it seems to come. Perhaps you share the same struggles, as do I. I offer no answers, other than the effort to connect with God remains a constant in my life. Thomas Merton does offer some consolation. The pious monk also struggled with prayer and came to the conclusion that all of us, “… do not want to be beginners [at prayer], but let us be convinced of the fact that we will never be anything but beginners, all our life!”

The darkness that surrounded James Foley in his final hours is of a depth I cannot begin to penetrate. I wonder if God provides the James Foleys of this world to instruct us in the way to prayer. His final letter, in this context, may be his greatest accomplishment.

Rest in Peace, James Foley.

Paul Coady
Editor
In Remembrance

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“I have fought the good fight. I have finished the course. I have kept the faith.”

2 Timothy 4:7
“All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization”

Pope Francis I

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