



## INFORMATION BULLETIN

of the

## MISSIONARIES OF CHRIST JESUS

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### ***With a faith like Abraham's... (Const. 36, 3)***

These days in the readings of the Mass we contemplate the figure of Abraham

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and I remember that in our Constitutions we have Abraham as a model of faith, who trusting in the word, leaves the safe and goes where God shows him.

Contemplating Abraham not only drew my attention to his faith, but also other lessons that he is giving me these days. They are helping me and I want to share them.

"Leave your land, your country and your father's house, towards the land that I will show you." Gen 12,1

God always invites us to uninstall ourselves... to let go.... to move... What land does he invite me to leave? Why so much resistance to stay safe? What strengthens my ego? What gives me power, control? ... I remember Jesus who tells me: "the Son of man does not even have a stone to rest his head"... Our language has changed, I often hear: "my..." What is mine? ... Everything we have achieved, the missions, the

works, are they ours?... "Our ability comes from God" 2 Cor 3, 5 b

Lord, give us the ability to see what you want to show us in this moment of the Institute ... May your Holy Spirit give us courage to tear ourselves away from our settled state, open our understanding to grasp your will.

I contemplate Abraham with his brother Lot in Gen. 13, 2, 5 - The greatness of Abraham's heart chooses to save the brotherly relationship. Only a heart that truly loves is capable of bridging differences. When love is small, our response is small. I can be absolutely right ... Where does it take me if it does not help me to forgive, heal the wounds and my wounds? When we strengthen ourselves by understanding reason, we will always look at the differences that do not unite but separate. Abraham does not compete with Lot. Only a person stripped of his pride, with humility and love capable of saving relationships ... This scene led me to contemplate our realities: sometimes due to differences of opinion, ways of thinking and doing, we compete to see who is right... Abraham teaches me to look for what unites and what strengthens fraternity.

Abraham's faith, linked to full confidence in what God tells him, does not eliminate his anxious human part that does not see God's promise being fulfilled, which seems impossible to him. He asks God to bless Ishmael the son that he got outside the path of the covenant with God. God says: No (Gen.17, 9 -10)

When the waiting becomes hard and it makes it impossible to see what I want, what do I do? How do I act?

Having faith in God is not having everything safe, it is learning to walk mindfully, it is learning to trust the mediations that we are finding, to be with open eyes, with attentive ears, with an open heart to grasp what God is showing us, no matter how uncomfortable it may be. If it is from God it generates life in us and in our environment.

Come Holy Spirit to our aid, our faith is weak. Align us with the will of God. Make of our hearts a capacity, so that ***Free and available, like the people of the Exodus, WE GO FORWARD IN HOPE.***

*Kikumua*

# LETTERS FROM SPAIN

Dear active sisters, those who write in the Bulletin and those who do not and especially the young ones:

You have to know that in this Community of grandmothers, we deeply appreciate the news that the Bulletin brings us.



We too have a mission and we want to be faithful to it. But our situation requires something to feed it because if we do not, we the blind, lame and deaf, easily slip into and limit ourselves to our small or big problems, which we certainly try to overcome, but which are still a stumbling block in our life although we try to take it with good humor and we do not lack joy.

But do you know how happy we are to read your news! The eagerness and enthusiasm in your missionary vocation, the work, the successes and failures and everything that makes up your life and that of the peoples in which the Lord has placed you ... I assure you that we always look forward to it and as soon as we smell its arrival, we almost fight to get it to be able to read it.

Thank you Sisters, you are great missionaries! And much encouragement to continue in this line, do not ever think that it is not worth it. A fraternal hug to each and every one

Maria Gloria Xirinachs

## THE DOORS OF THE EVENING

It is the title of a book that Dolores Aleixandre dedicates to that last stage of life, which some say usually begins when "Instead of going up the steps two at a time, you stop after every three; when they give you for the first time a seat on the bus and when everyone tells you "How fine you are!"

In the presentation she says: We can ask ourselves: Won't the Gospel have the ability to challenge us to carry faith, hope and love up to the last consequences? Won't the *life in abundance* that Jesus promises also make *an old age in abundance* possible? The whole book was an inspiration for me, to encourage me to write, but what I say now is only from my present experiences.

It is a *very beautiful and very difficult stage*, a stage to live "*Joyful in hope, courageous in tribulation and constant in prayer*"

(Romans 12, 12) which is very well portrayed in that photo of Ana María in the garden. A stage with many flowers and a curved back, a stage in which we feel the affection of the entire Institute, that has prepared a beautiful house for us, with a lovely garden and now they, both the younger ones and the caregivers, care for and pamper us.



In Javier we experience: *Joyful in hope*, with a large community of mutual support, where (as I said once) those who can do little help those who can

do less, where we do not lack anything and we have all the facilities to overcome ourselves.

But also (and that is the serious thing) we have to live: *spirited in tribulation*, because tribulations are not lacking. We notice our weakness; we feel the annoyances of "if it weren't." I'm fine, if it wasn't.... for the cholesterol; well if it wasn't for rheumatism and many etc.... It is hard to experience it not only in yourself, but it often comes to a very dear sister. It is very hard in a short time to say goodbye to a sister and recently in a short time we bid farewell to Margarita Coll, Elena Albizuri, Amparo Alandes, Nuria Cabeceran and Dolores Aloy. We said goodbye to them with applause for what they have been, for what they have given to others and for their encounter with The Fullness of

Love and happiness in the resurrection with Christ. Knowing that they are happy makes us happy too.

That bittersweet experience for many, like me, makes us think: And when will it come to me? Will I suffer a lot? Recently a sister told me: "I have doubts of faith" and I answered "I, too", it consoles me that St Teresa of the Child Jesus and St Teresa of Calcutta also had them ... Is it something very common when facing the unknown? The only thing left is "Lord, do with me what you want..." We have just celebrated the Easter cycle ***constant in prayer***, we have had very good liturgies, we have been filled with the Spirit that is poured out in his Church at Pentecost, and finally the Trinitarian Mystery has been the occasion to share in the Liturgy of the Anointing of the Sick.



The whole community was present and we all received the Holy Oil, which the priest explained to us very well and imposed on our foreheads, which represents all our thoughts, ideas and feelings, and on the hands that represent all our activity and life. It began with the anointing of the sisters who cannot move from their place. I was moved by the fervor

with which a very dear sister received it, who at times seems to no longer understand or pay attention to anything. She extended her hands, received the anointing and said "Thank you very much Father" then she remained in an attitude of prayer. (Still remembering it I am moved). Then all the sisters passed by, also some very young who expressed solidarity with all of them.

Spring has already come to Javier with its beautiful colors in the panorama, the green of the grass, the yellow of the field where the ears of wheat sway in front of our windows and many colors in the flowers of the garden. It is a pity that due to the corona virus you still cannot come to see it! But it seems that already in August many will be able to come for the Spiritual Exercises. We very much want to meet all of you, perhaps with luck, also those congregated in the General Assembly for which we pray so much.

Here, this house of Javier always awaits you all with open arms

Carmela Taravillo

## IN THE WAITING ROOM

If we stop to think about the Waiting Rooms through which we have passed throughout our lives, my God, how many they have been!

And for very different reasons

Between the years 1961 to 1967 I frequented many waiting rooms to get benefactors for our mission in Japan. We had the construction of the Onoda School as our objective.



I remember in the Waiting Room of a major construction company, I was somewhat nervous and in a great hurry and I prayed to find adequate and convincing words while waiting to be received, because I realized that I was asking in favor of a more developed country than ours.

I also visited artists in Valencia, accompanied by M<sup>a</sup> Isabel Quesada and the truth is that these waitings were a bit of fun. We asked them to give us a painting so we could organize an exhibition and then raffle them off and thus be able to pay for a missionary's trip to India. We got 100 paintings! And Carmen Oblanca went to India. And what about the Waiting Rooms in clinics and Hospitals or at the Dentist? Here it was a feeling of fear, worry, certain anguish in the face of physical suffering, especially if the waiting was to receive the result of a biopsy...

Years later, from 1974 to today, my objective was “Pueblos Hermanos” and Africa. Obtaining subscriptions for PH meant going to many houses and waiting excitedly and somewhat self-consciously in the reception rooms of some friends and acquaintances. Now if I could explain vividly: The importance of helping Development Projects in those countries where we Missionaries work and the need to have a considerable number of members to be credible.

I think the emotion and excitement was indescribable in the Waiting Room of the Airports when we went on mission or returned to our country for a few months of rest. Finally, let me tell you about the waiting room in which I am at present: It is the Waiting room of Heaven, where I hope to be received, not by my own merits, but by the love and mercy of God. Because please tell me, at 90, what else can you expect? And ... what are my feelings in this my last Waiting Room? I sincerely tell you that like everything that is unknown I have some fear while at the same time I am overwhelmed by an immense trust in Our Father God.

Maria Salud

# LETTER FROM CHILE

On the first of March we landed in Santiago de Chile!

We arrived full of enthusiasm and grateful because the restart of our presence in Chile was possible after more than 30 years.

From Bolivia we had been cherishing this possibility without being able to specify it until, in the midst of the Pandemic, what we had to postpone on previous occasions became possible.

Veronica Cortes was waiting for us at the airport, who with the help of Sara Rivera took us directly to the house that became, from that day on, “the new community in the Region of Latin America”.

Going straight to what will be your home when you are going to start a new foundation, is to be thankful, we came to a house set up, but not only that, also to a set table and beds made; Well, Veronica had taken care to have everything ready for when we arrived.

And she was also responsible for all the steps to make our return to Chile possible: she was in charge of looking for contacts, possibilities and spaces from which to restart our journey here.



And as a result of the search we are living in a house that belongs to the Archdiocese and that is in the limits of the parish of Santa Catalina de Siena. For many years this house was occupied by the Sisters of the Assumption. They have done a good job with a lot of impact and a community of lay women and men who take on their charism and spirituality as a way of life; For the last three years, two persons from the Order of Consecrated Virgins have been living there, but they had to leave it because they could not respond to this commitment. They were the ones who made us the proposal. They left the house with many repairs and renovations done and with an economic contribution that allowed us to go through the initial time without worries.

The bishop, the vicar of the area and the parish priest also cordially welcomed us and we had some meetings to specify the basics of our beginning.

The people of the parish also express their welcome and their closeness, but for now the activities are virtual and we are slowly getting to know this new reality.

Moving around in times of a pandemic is not easy, many have experienced it personally, so we are grateful to have been able to make the trip, reach our destination and be well received.

As soon as we arrived, we celebrated our feast: a different March 14 because of the quarantine and because we were newcomers.

The commemoration helped us to recall and remember in a more profound way our beginnings in Javier. Saving the differences, we saw some coincidence: here we were also three starting the community. In prayer we reflected on some parts of the testimonies of Mother Camino in which she referred to the beginnings of our mission in other countries: the uncertainty due to the political and social situation, obstacles for visas, planning to go to one place and it ends in another; anyway.

In this our time and at this moment we are trying to walk together with the Chilean people, a people that, as many slogans that are heard say, "They have woken up". The neoliberal model seemed to have reached its maximum splendor and the country was set as an example. What has not been said is that all this was at the cost of having the majority of the population in anguish and subjected, feeling exploited. That majority woke up and is designing strategies to continue on the path of improving their history.

Our desire is that, overcoming ideologies, political trends, selfishness and authoritarianism, Chile will move towards the building of a more just and fraternal society and from now on, we feel privileged to be able to share this path and we feel God walking alongside us.

The community of Santiago:

Pili Acebo, Vero Cortes and Julia Zamora



# LETTER FROM BOLIVIA

## SHARED MISSION

Dear sisters

I share with you a bit of the mission that I live here in a small place in the Bolivian Amazon. This year I am one more member of the community of San Ignacio de Moxos, formed by two Jesuits Fr. Fabio and Ramiro (SJ a student), Mauge (an Argentinian lay person) and myself. Very recently, 3 Dominican Sisters of the Rosary arrived to be part of the parish. This month we also have 5 Jesuit Tertiaries who came to have their mission experience.



With Fr. Martin (Guatemalan) and Fr. Jose (Brazilian), we had to go to the community of San

Lorenzo de Moxos, where the Daughters of Charity have their mission.

In this first mission experience outside of San Ignacio, we visited 14 indigenous communities; some are reached by water in canoes and others by land on horseback. These Communities are far away, it takes 2 days to reach the most distant and others a little less. The people: Chimanes, Yugacares and Trinitarios Mojeños are welcoming and the families are large.

Being remote communities with difficult access, they are rarely visited. They do not have health posts, education only remains in dreams and they say that the teacher will arrive, but he does not arrive

throughout the year. The basic services can be imagined as they are: they do not have electricity, they consume river water. Each indigenous



community has its own lifestyle, its place where its tent made of tacohara, with a jatata roof is pitched. They live from hunting and fishing. These communities are being threatened by interculturalists for their timber wealth and their lands because the government does not grant them their deeds.



At night the chickens, cows, ducks, jochis, taitetus were the ones that housed us and live together with us and share their place.

Contemplating a small part of the Bolivian Amazon is recognizing the mystery of God, this sacred mystery that is shown to the world with all its splendor and drama, the struggle for the rights of the poorest, of the native peoples. Preserving its cultural richness, caring for its beauty and natural life and Christian communities inserted in the Amazon which give the church a new face with Amazonian features, are the dreams of Pope Francis for our DEAR AMAZON.

It was and is a new and good experience in my missionary life. On the night of May 3rd, we returned to San Ignacio with Martin and Jose and the next day we met with the other three Jesuits to share our experience. It was with great joy I was one more of the group of tertians and I received formation about the entire trajectory of the presence of the Jesuits here in Moxos. Last night we ended with a prayer of thanksgiving.

Early tomorrow, the tertians return to Cochabamba and those of us who remain, in the afternoon, have a meeting to organize the new outings, with the Dominican sisters.

A big hug for all

With love, Eli Zambrana

# INDIA

## EFFORTS TO COUNTER COVID OF MUMBAI UNIT



Being such a rich and diverse group, my contributions are very different from the rest. Much has been done through networking and collaborating with various organisations in Mumbai.

From **Avehi Abacus**, where I have been working for many years, we have our team of about 80/90 girls and boys (our field workers) who, because they cannot visit the classes due to lockdown, visit the slum communities allotted to them regularly. As our work is in all 24 wards of the municipality in Mumbai, we still use this as our current scope. As we are an educational NGO, most of our initiatives and interventions are educational.

In all the slum communities we work in, we were able to put up posters in educating people on the Covid crisis, and safety measures on how to look after themselves. The threefold posters in simple Hindi are uploaded here in case anyone would like to use them. We put them up in all the public places like temples, shakhas ( Shiv Sena Newspaper reading stops) , community rooms, bus stops... anywhere where people can read and study them.

Through our team we are able to use 380 oximeters, bought for an amount of Rs 3,80,000.00 donated by one of our major funders. Our team members use these, as well as e thermometers, to check if people have Covid when they are on their rounds educating them.

They also help the people they are involved with to fill in the Co Win forms for vaccination, in case they have a difficulty there, which is almost always the case.



We have designed a workbook for our children as they are out of school. We have put in short, what they would have been doing in school, would the schools be open. But an important component of this workbook is on Covid, and how to interact with it. Our workbooks are normally for the whole family, as the children have to ask the elders in their families questions and also do activities with the whole family pertaining to Covid.

We give dry rations regularly to about 75/80 families of pavement dwellers. This is not our style of working as we are an educational NGO, but as people are so desperately in need of food, we cannot turn a blind eye to this..

All this is the effort of the core team of four to which I belong.

On the CRI level, we have had a Webinar to motivate our members in Mumbai, particularly those who are scared of leaving their convents..... We had invited four resource persons, two doctors from big Municipal Hospitals here in Mumbai, a spokesperson of the Diocese and another youth leader of the diocese. The intention was to share best practices and so give our members a broader outlook on what they can do. We also got the youth to help various communities in their area in their outreach programmes.

One highlight of the contributions of our communities here is a religious community which has a community fridge, where people from the locality could put in what they would like to share, and the sisters distribute them at the allotted times of the day to those in need.

The meeting was well attended by 99 local communities.

We have donated a substantial amount to the sisters in Dharavi to continue their work particularly in the Dharavi slum which is the biggest slum in Asia.

I also interface with the Archdiocesan Covid Health Outreach programme and helped in the planning of the same. Besides assisting in getting cheaper medicines, they look for hospital facilities, and offer psychological counseling, which seems to be the need of the hour, after the trauma people have had. They either provide free medicines or put them in touch with pharmacies where they can get their medicines at a subsidized and affordable price. I put poor people of all faiths and also those of no faiths, in contact with their team members who help those who cannot afford medicines and also help in counselling those who cannot contain their grief. This in Hindi and Marathi.

Currently, 5 of us are working on organizing an All Faith Healing Service for families and friends of Covid victims which will be conducted in a fortnight from now

I shall upload the link on our WhatsApp group. You are all invited.

Noella

## **Nirmali Society of Christ Jesus Hope Story on the online launch of the CCBI - pan-India Ecological movement on Saturday on 5th June 2021.**



North East India is the land of a rainbow of cultures, over 200 tribes and sub tribes in this small geographical area each with its unique language and culture. Lack of documentation the history of most of them still remains in the dark. They are agrarian societies. Jhum or slash, burn or shifting cultivation is the most popular.

The tribals have an eco theandric view towards reality and nature occupies an important place in their existence. All is connected with nature like their legends, folkdances, customs, music, festivals etc. Nature enters into their religious beliefs and it plays a sacramental role in their life. They have an integral sense of culture. Culture of preservation of living and non-living things, Culture of tolerance which respects persons and their feelings, a humane culture which is person oriented and a God- oriented culture which places God at the head of everything.

Some parts of North East India are still the only virgin green areas on the globe. Today the people feel the urgency to become aware and assume responsibility for the economic crises, the decadence of the environment and those who indiscriminately have exploited natural resources making bad use of money. Care for our common home is spelt out in Mawlynnong a model village in East Khasi Hills, Meghalaya known for its cleanliness. Waste collected in dustbins made of bamboo which are directed to a pit and then used as manure. A community initiative mandates that all residents should participate in cleaning up the village. Smoking and use of polythene is banned while rain water harvesting is encouraged. Travel magazine



Discover India declared the village as the cleanest in Asia in 2003 and the cleanest in India in 2005.

Every household in the State is given the two colour dustbins and the people are very dutiful to segregate their garbage. The headman (Village leader) has to organize periodical cleaning of the surroundings. The inhabitants sprinkle lime on the borders of the fencing wall to inhibit the growth of wild grass and plants. People are educated to grow in awareness in order to preserve their land and its environment for the next generation. In most of the North Eastern states if you cut a tree you have to plant another one. In Arunachal Pradesh if you cut one bamboo you have to plant seven.



Modernization has highly affected the spirit of the people. A consumerist attitude is catching up fast with the tribal people and as a consequence the natural environment is equally affected due to onset of the 'Use and Throw' culture.

We the **Missionaries of Christ Jesus** at our General Assembly in Spain took a stand to work more for saving our planet with a phrase that is incorporated into our official document which states: "**Right Relationship with the Cosmos**". Each of us in our own milieu took up the care for our common home in small ways in the mission places we work.

**The Vision of our NGO in Shillong namely Nirmali Society of Christ Jesus is:**

To use this decisive moment to end our superfluous destructive goals and activities in order to cultivate values, connections and activities that are life giving.

The model Community is Mawkasiang village in East Khasi Hills, Meghalaya which is a much neglected rural area about 13 kilometres

from urban Shillong. It does possess good prospects for developmental growth in the future.

- The Nirmali Society of Christ Jesus began its work in this village through health camps for the poor and needy. These camps carried out through the village governance and the awareness building seminars and workshops held in collaboration with the State Centre for Science and Technology helped us to situate ourselves. We were able to extend help to the crying needs of the time. Their basic and first need was to have good and healthy sanitation in the village.

**The Twin Pit Low Cost Latrines** were constructed for each household. The contribution of the local Govt was the demonstration while the actual carrying out of the programme was done by the villagers and financial help from Nirmali Society of Christ Jesus. This programme benefited seven villages and their primary schools.

- A Community Multipurpose Hall for Adult Literacy for women was built. In order to get these women motivated and avail of the literacy programme we added subjects like Home Science, tailoring and knitting.

A young village leader got enthusiastic and asked to use this hall for 'Apmasi boys' (boys who look after the cows on the hill side) and thus began the evening classes to help these boys to read, write and count.

- Agricultural Science and Technology department helped the villagers to set up domestic smokeless fire places for cooking.
- Hostel for girls from the interior the villages of Garo Hills, East and West Khasi Hills and Jaintia Hills was set up. These girls are given a space to study in further.
- The Society conducts the Industrial Sewing Machine Operators' (ISMO) programme in collaboration with the Government of India through DB. Tech. They find job replacements in and around Meghalaya.
- Rain water harvest was done in the centre as a model to encourage people to do likewise.
- In collaboration with Indian Council Agricultural Research (ICAR), we now attend seminars with village leaders to gain information from School of Natural Resources Management. The workshop on Farmers

Awareness Programme cum field demonstration on crop intensification has helped to make people understand usage of land and enhance productivity with seasonal rotation of plantation.

- We also have poultry farming following the Deep Litter Bedding which does not smell, saves money and is easy to clean. To make this 8 to 10 inches bed a mixture of wood shavings, wood chips, saw dust (the saw dust of only non poisonous trees.) straw, leaves, pine needles and hay is used. When it's dirty additional layer can be repeated when the need arises. This makes a compost as the chickens turn it when they scratch, thus aerating it. Some feed on it, this entices them to do more of the churning. This Bedding is healthier for the chickens. It is comfortable, and makes a warm area in winter. The dry top makes it less likely for the chicks to develop feet problems. The active composting attracts bugs which the chicks scratch and eat. This adds proteins to their feed. In the rainy season a little more bedding is added to make sure it stays dry. In the hot climate you can water it a little. It is good for holding nutrients needed for fertilizing the garden.

Same method can be used for a piggery,

Our organic garden receives the fertilizers from the Deep litter bedding.

- Mushroom Cultivation: Keep the mushroom seeds in a cold storage. (shelf life is 1 month) Cut straw into tiny pieces (can be done manually or with a machine) put this in a gunny bag and boil it to disinfect it. When it is still warm arrange it in a polythene bag which is special for growing mushrooms. Layer straw and seed in the bag till the bag is full capacity. Tie the mouth and the base of the bag. Poke holes into the bag with a big nail. Hang the bag on a string, one bag over the other. The room has to be dark, damp and disinfected. After 15 days sprouts peep out. Best months to cultivate are Oct/Nov/Dec/Jan/Feb.

This venture that in every village one model family is chosen as an incentive for others to follow, how we can live in an Eco friendly environment by having these methods implemented. This will serve as a help to other families to enhance sustainability in daily life. It has slowed down to the Pandemic.

Jane Fernades



# JAPON

## Following the path of St Francis Xavier



About 30 years ago, when I first went to the Castle of Xavier, I met a Jesuit named Jose Luis Alberdi. When the tourists who came to the castle asked him his name, he used to respond with friendly gestures, saying: "I am the ghost of the Castle."

He added with a laugh: "More than fifty years ago, I was asked to serve as a guide in this Castle for three months. And I have to be a Ghost because I'm going to serve 50 years later." He had reached quite an advanced age, but he felt very natural, childish, sincere and a pure "real religious".

Inside the Castle there is a statue of Christ on the cross with a calm smile on his face. It is dimly lit.

At that time, there was a mass every morning and I went. On the way out, the Ghost called me and said, "A group of Japanese is coming today!"

I asked him: "Why are you so happy when Japanese come?" He laughed and said: "Xavier loved Japan very much, and these are his fans from Japan."

Guided by the Ghost, I entered the museum of the Castle of Xavier. Many famous cultural items from 16th century Japan were on display. My eyes were fixed on a small map of Japan posted on the wall. It was a map of Yamaguchi Prefecture and it was written on it: "The path that Xavier walked".

The name of the place where I was born and raised was on it. He certainly walked the path in front of my house. And I was immersed in something strange that helped me come to the castle where Xavier was born and grew up.

If I had traveled back in time 450 years ago, I might have met Xavier at the place where I was playing and on the way to school. I made a great discovery, and since then Xavier has been very close to me.

Xavier's mission in Japan was extremely tough, and the seeds he sowed were trampled on, as he was.



The Church in Japan where Xavier had expected so much development will have the testimony of many Martyrs who carried on his destiny to respond to the faith, shortly after he left Japan.

"Nobody can do what Francis Xavier did and nobody can live as he did without the grace of the Holy Spirit. (Francisco Mansiliyas)

The Church in Japan is now obliged to work in Asian countries to bear witness to its faith and the service of the Gospel.

I would like to share with you the experience of following in the footsteps of Francis Xavier, the great Missionary who gave his life.

Yasuko Tanaka

## The juniors of Japan write

### EXPERIENCE OF THE FOOTPRINT OF SAINT FRANCIS XAVIER IN THREE PLACES : SHIMONOSEKI, IWAKUNI, YAMAGUCHI

*“What will one gain by winning the whole world if he destroys his soul? Or what does a person give in exchange for his life” <Mt.16, 26>*

In every age since Christ sent the Apostles to go and preach the Good News to all nations, there have been saintly and heroic men and women, who have journeyed to far distant lands in order to bring new peoples into the Christian fold. Among those who labored most zealously was the Jesuit, Francis Xavier, who was named by Pius X as official patron of the mission lands and all works for spreading the faith.

First of all we give thanks to God for giving us the chance to experience his love through the model of the great saint Francis Xavier, who was so dedicated and enthusiastic to do the service of God. We are grateful to the Provincial, the Junior Mistress and all the sisters of Japan for giving us the opportunity to see

and experience the places Saint Francis Xavier walked through to preach the Gospel. We also had the opportunity to learn and deepen our knowledge about the traditions and cultures of Japan.

Arriving in Japan in 1549, St. Francis Xavier played a key role in the early history of Christianity in Japan. It was so tough and difficult to convert the faith of the people here because the Japanese culture is based on nature worshipping like the tree, rock, animal, sun and so on, and especially because of the influence of Buddhism.

The missionary work of St. Francis Xavier includes Hirado, in the Northwest of Nagasaki Prefecture and several places where Christianity took root firmly where the Christians in hiding preserved the faith during centuries of prohibition. Among these places, we have to mention Yamaguchi, a place where Saint Francis Xavier taught and spread Christianity.

We would like to share with you all about the three important and memorable places of St. Francis Xavier in Yamaguchi prefecture we visited:

### **The 1st trip: 17th March - Shimonoseki.**

Shimonoseki is famous for boating and attractive scenery along the Kanmon



Straits. The city also witnessed many important events in Japanese history. We started our trip by walking along the Kanmon strait tunnel that was constructed undersea, crossing the border of Yamaguchi and Fukuoka prefecture. The construction took about 21 years and was completed in 1958.

The arrival of Saint Francis Xavier marked a major historical turning point for the remote Kyushu Island as it developed into a center of Christianity in Japan. The sightseeing is really beautiful. After lunch we came back to Shimonoseki by boat, of course for some of us it was the first time. We visited the monument marking the arrival of St. Francis Xavier that has been laid by the government.

### **The 2nd trip: 26th March -Iwakuni**

We started the trip from our own place to Iwakuni by train. Iwakuni is a city well known for its historical cultural heritage, and a rich natural environment. Of course in the olden days there were no vehicles and the only thing St Francis Xavier could do was walking from one village to another barefoot in spite of the cold in winter. Therefore, his footprints have been sealed and the seed of faith which he sowed has sprouted. Nowadays, its popularity is growing more and more as the number of Christians is increasing.



Luckily, our journey was set up at the same time of the cherry blossom, which is the most famous flower in Japan. Therefore, we took the chance to visit the main attraction. We visited the Kintai Bridge, one of the three finest bridges in Japan, and the Iwakuni Castle, which features the Japanese sword displays as well as the traditional paintings and calligraphy.

### **The 3rd trip: 8th April: Yamaguchi city**

Yamaguchi is one of the important historical places for the Jesuits and our congregation, as we often hear about it from our sisters. At present, two of our communities Hofu and Onoda are situated in this Prefecture.

Yamaguchi at that time was a very important town, being the seat of the mighty Ouchi clan which ruled not only the Province of Suwano but also a number of neighboring provinces on the mainland of Honshu and the island of Kyushu. After many efforts, Francis Xavier got the permission to preach freely among his people here. Ouchi donated a piece of land for the construction of a church and a convent and within two months, about 500 people were baptized. Unfortunately, Francis Xavier spent not more than six months among his beloved flock in Yamaguchi.

We visited the memorial Church of Saint Francis Xavier where mass was celebrated for the first time and of course numbers of the faithful were



baptized. In front of the Church, stands the monument statue of St Francis Xavier with his hands holding the Bible, which is built next to the baptism well. When we looked at the statue the question arose in us: what are we carrying for our journey in mission?

It has been many years, yet St. Francis Xavier's memory never dies. Therefore, in 1923, Father Villion proposed to the City authority of Yamaguchi to erect a monument in honor of Xavier, and it was completed in October 1925. It is a large cross of granite with the bronze bust of the saint in the center and his coat of arms on the back. The

monument was set up as a Park which was named as Saint Francis Xavier Park.

We went on pilgrimage to the Park and it was a long walk about 2 hours and half to reach the Park from the Church. As humans, we felt exhausted, hungry, and thirsty. However, these feelings made us reflect on the attitude that St Francis Xavier had gone through. If we were there at that time, our human tendency would have given up everything.

As we went through the three places in Shimonoseki, Iwakuni and Yamaguchi, even though they have changed, developed and become so beautiful and convenient, the footprints of St. Francis Xavier always remain. The government constructed the memorial monuments and statue of Saint Francis Xavier and is taking care of them, which is the great attitude of honor of the Japanese that we should admire.



We felt privileged to have visited these places which made us reflect and question ourselves:

Do we have faith in God totally?

Do we have enough dedication for the mission that is entrusted to us?

Do we dare to put aside our own will, our egoism, background, cultures... to adapt to others especially the mission country which we are living?

At the time of St. Francis Xavier, the way of doing mission was different but nowadays our task is not asking us to do the same as St Francis did. We are called to find new ways of evangelization by our way of living, adapting to the

culture such as language, customs, foods etc. and take it as our own. Especially as we always say that our first mission is inside the community.

These are our experiences that we went through and we would like to share with all of you. We pray that we will be able to follow the footsteps of St Francis Xavier in our journey as MCJ. Thank you very much!!

### **Thuy and Lien**

Dear sisters,

I would like to share with you the emotion of following the path traveled by Saint Francis Xavier, the first to transmit Christianity in Japan.

We were not able to follow Xavier's entire journey, however, it was a great pleasure to walk in Yamaguchi prefecture, where we live.

What impressed me was the little seed he planted in the hearts of the Japanese. "The Kingdom of Heaven is similar to the mustard seed. If a person sows it in the field, it grows and from being the smallest it becomes a tree in which the birds make their nest." And also: "If a grain of wheat does not fall to the ground and die, it does not bear fruit. But if it dies, it will bear much fruit."



Xavier's stay in Japan was only for two years and three months, but the seeds he struggled to sow are now bearing fruit in Japan.

Less than 1% of the population are Christians in Japan, but I am impressed by the eagerness of the Japanese people that I see, and thank God, even non-believers come to Church seriously, and we often see them listening carefully to the teachings of God.

In Xavier's time there were no roads. We imagine that he walked up a steep path. It is said that he walked while the pure, white snow fell, with blood on his feet ... In winter the cold in Japan is severe.

How hard it was to shiver with hunger and cold! In addition, he ran the risk of being attacked by thieves.



We, the juniors, only followed that path by train, but I understood that Francis did not give up and walked to the end, that's why I was able to come to Japan and preach now. It is not a comparison between then and now, but seeing his steps gave me hope and courage.

In Yamaguchi, as much as Francis tried, he did not bear fruit, so he decided to go to Miyako (Kyoto), where the Emperor lived. When he arrived to obtain permission from the Emperor to publicly preach God's teachings, the emperor was no longer there, and he gave up on the plan.

In Miyako he discovered that there was no peace and they were not sufficiently prepared to accept the Gospel, so he went to Mr. Ouchi, who had power at the time.

At first, his evangelising work didn't work out either. Xavier was provoked by a listener mocking him and spitting in his face as he preached to the town. Xavier cleaned himself up in silence and continued to preach calmly and a young man who was watching said: "I was impressed by this burning faith and I thought it was the true religion."

During Xavier's two-month stay, up to 500 people were baptized. I was touched by Xavier's burning passion for missionary work and his ability to act.

In Shimonoseki, we prayed in front of a commemorative statue of Xavier. I was also impressed by the large number of tourists who visit here. I was very encouraged to follow Xavier's path as a missionary.

On any difficult road, I can feel once again that trusting God gives me the strength to make it through to the end. I can't do it like Xavier, but I want to do what I can now with love, as much as possible, even if it's small, with God's grace.

God chose Francis Xavier to build a Japanese church. Xavier's life is like that of Jesus: "A Grain of Wheat ...". I would like to ask for the blessing to be able to become that "wheat".

Jeanne Luhasu

# NEWS

## OF OUR FAMILIES

### Those gone to the Father's house

Johna Machado, mother of Theresa Lopes on May 13, 2021 in India

Marisa McNully, sister of Lydia Sobrado, on May 17 , 2021 in USA

James Nangcas, brother of Thelma (Vietnam) on May 24, 2021, in Philippines

*Those who trust in him will know the truth and the faithful will remain with him in love, because his chosen ones will find grace and mercy. Sat 3.9*

### TRAVELS:

María Jesús Sorozábal, on May 16, from Kinshasa to Madrid

Ximena Cabezas, on June 17, from N'Djamena to Santiago, Chile

Emma Limorte, on July 17, from Caracas to Madrid

## The Ocean of Love

You are in me  
and I in you  
like the lotus  
on the surface  
of the water  
without water  
the flower withers.  
Without you  
my life disintegrates  
into nothingness.  
My love for you,  
is like the running

stream that flows  
to be one with the river;  
and the river  
ceaselessly moves on ,  
to be one with the sea.  
So my soul yearns to be  
one with you  
in that ocean of true  
love.

Much love,  
Marie