



# SSpS MISSION

Called by the Spirit • Embracing the World

Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters | USA & Caribbean | FEBRUARY 2020

## LENT

A Time for  
Prayer & Reflection

*How often  
do I have to  
Forgive?*

*An Introspective Look Into  
Reconciliation, Christ's Love,  
and Our Responsibility*

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## Focus on Mission...

It seems like only yesterday our lives were surrounded with the glitter of lights, bows and ribbons, and the image of Christ, the child of Bethlehem, present in our minds with messages of peace, love, joy, and hope. So soon our focus shifts to the suffering Christ... the Christ who shows through word and example what it takes to be a person of peace, a person of love, a person of hope in our world.

As we "Focus on Mission" through our simple SSps MISSION Magazine, I invite you to focus on YOUR MISSION to be an image of God to everyone you encounter in your daily lives.

The lead article in this issue speaks of "Forgiveness". During the coming Lenten Season, February 26 (Ash Wednesday) to April 12 (Easter), our attention is drawn to Christ, whose MISSION was to share God's love, mercy, and forgiveness to each of us. Therefore, OUR MISSION (yours and mine) is to do the same in the simple activities of our daily lives...

- Taking time out of our busy schedules to share family togetherness;
- Growing in love, as love contributes to the life and well-being of all of creation;
- Expressing gratitude for the big and little blessings of life;
- Offering forgiveness and new life to others.

May your Lenten journey be a time of special blessings for you and may your life be an expression of your MISSION to the world!

Sr. Mary Miller, SSps

# How often do I have to Forgive?

Written By:  
**Sr. Gabriele Hoelzer**

Translated By: Sr. Agathe Bramkamp, SSps



"How often do I have to forgive my brother or sister when they have wronged me?" Peter addresses this question to Jesus and makes him a rather generous and concrete offer: "Up to seven times?" (Mt. 18:21f) That seems doable to Peter. Jesus' answer sounds quite shocking. "Not seven times, but seventy times seven!" And that is independent of the sin, and the seriousness of the guilt. Jesus clearly illustrates this unmistakably in the following parable. There is no excuse and no exception for being unreconcilable. God has forgiven our sin and expects that we too forgive the much smaller failings of others against us. "How often should I forgive?" Not only is Peter asking this question. We all are asking it. And then often we hear the answer: "Enough is enough."

### Reconciliation in the Old Testament

The Bible knows how important the readiness for reconciliation is for all parties involved, so that the people can live together in a peaceful manner and can turn to God with confidence and trust. We find this call to reconciliation in the Old Testament on many occasions. Jesus reinforces this invitation.

The best known and most beautiful story of reconciliation in the Bible is the one between the twin brothers Esau and Jacob. Jacob was so jealous of his first born twin brother, who was most cherished by his father, that he very cunningly, with the help of

his mother, stole the right of the first born and the paternal blessing from him. In fear of Esau's wrath, Jacob fled to a foreign country. Many years later the two brothers met again. Jacob was paralyzed with fear that his brother could hurt him and his family. Esau, however, ran toward his brother, embraced him, kissed him and both brothers wept. (Gen. 33, ff) Esau had already forgiven his brother and was just happy to see him again.

### Irreconcilable Attitude

It is not always so easy to reconcile with people who betrayed you. Some things are just too difficult for which to make amends. (Continued on Pg.4)

“  
*There is no excuse and  
no exception for being  
unreconcilable.*  
”

The Bible nevertheless urges us to think about reconciliation – often that is the most prudent solution in order to avoid a fight that could end in misery and death (*Prov. 6,34 f; 16,14*) like the one between Cain and Abel. Joseph was not killed by his jealous brothers only upon the mediation of his brother Judah. When later a famine came upon Israel and his brothers came to Egypt to buy grain, Joseph saved his people from starvation.

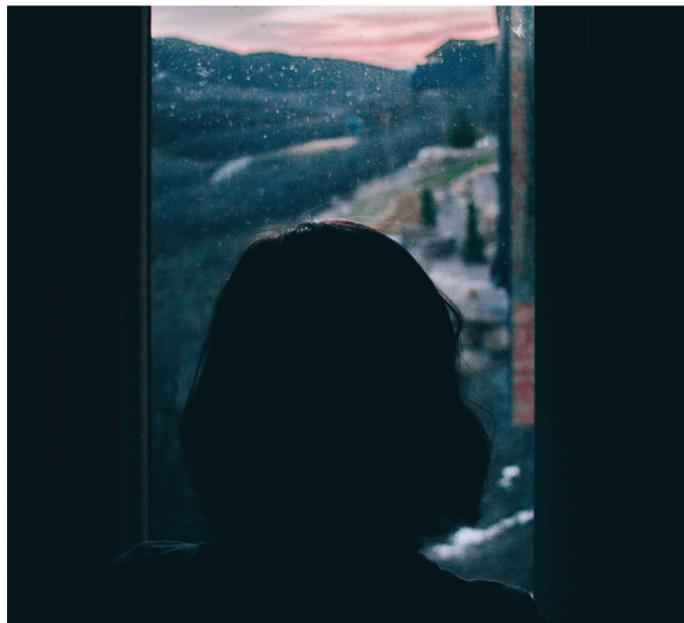
### Reconciliation is possible

The Bible encourages us not to give up on any chances for reconciliation because of misplaced shame. And those who are eager to live in a good relationship with God and strive to be on good terms with their neighbors can rely on God's help in the reconciliation with their enemies.

The Jewish people designated a special day for celebrating the reconciliation with their God: the day of atonement, Yom Kippur. It is a day of fasting and resting. Only on this day was the High Priest allowed to enter the sanctuary of the temple. He offered sacrifices of atonement and put all the sins of the Israelites on a ram and drove him as scapegoat into the desert. (*Lev. 16; 23,26ff*)

### Our God is Always Ready for Reconciliation

The Old Testament already talks about God's love for humankind. The Prophet Hosea describes God's care: *"I drew them with human cords, with bonds of love; I fostered them like one who raises an infant to his cheek."* (*Hos. 11,4*) But the people remain in their infidelity. God persists in his love. *"How could I give you up, o Ephraim or deliver you up, o Israel? My heart is overwhelmed, my pity is stirred."* (*Hos. 11,8*) The prophet Jeremiah reveals God's compassionate heart: *"Is Ephraim not my favored son? The child in whom I delight? Often as I threaten him, I still remember him with favor."* Then we hear of a New Covenant that God will make with the house of Israel. *"All, from the least to the greatest, shall know me, says the Lord, for I will forgive their evildoing and remember their sin no more."* (*Jer. 31,20.34*) The prophet Ezekiel speaks of how God has tenderly cared for the abandoned infant Israel and taken them as his own in marriage. But Israel got involved with alien gods, and yet God renewed his covenant with the people saying: *"I will*



*re-establish my covenant with you, that you may know that I am the Lord, that you may remember and be covered with confusion, and that you may be utterly silenced for shame when I pardon you for all you have done."* (*Ez. 16,62*)

### Jesus Demands Reconciliation

It is striking when Jesus is talking on the topic of forgiveness, how uncompromisingly he demands reconciliation from his followers. Jesus was a keen observer of human nature and not simplistic in dealing with people. He himself knew, what kind of costs reconciliation can demand, but he also knew that the cost of an unreconciled life is even much higher.

Jesus challenges us to eliminate all friction between us and our fellow human beings and be reconciled before we approach God. *"If you bring your gift to the altar and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift"* (*Mt. 5,23f*). He also urges us to quickly seek reconciliation after a dispute and not to let it escalate. *"Settle with your opponent quickly while on the way to court with him. Otherwise your opponent will hand you over to the judge, and the judge will hand you over to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison."* (*Mt. 5,25ff*).

(Continued on Pg.5)

### Jesus Christ the Gift of Reconciliation

Jesus' teaching was always connected to his message of reconciliation. He sat down at table with sinners, he granted them in the name of God forgiveness of their sins and pointed them toward the way of conversion.

No wonder that the first Christians brought this topic into connection with his death. They believed that Jesus had to die in order to reconcile all humanity with God. Rituals of scapegoats and such were not necessary anymore. Jesus had assumed once and for all the sins of humankind to open the way for all to enter into a free relationship with God.

In the 2nd letter to the Corinthians Paul writes: *"God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, as if God were appealing through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."* (*2 Cor. 5, 19-20*) Whoever brings the Good News can regard herself/himself the ambassador of reconciliation and can invite others to accept God's offer of reconciliation.

### Unwillingness to Reconcile is Burdensome

Most probably all of us have experienced in our own lives that there is nothing which can destroy our joy of life and sense of vibrancy in life more easily than an unreconciled heart. When another person does us

wrong we tend to adopt a behavior of avoidance. We cross the street rather than encounter that person.

We try to put that person and the wrong that was committed by him or her out of our minds, which is hardly ever successful. When possible we keep our distance. Within and also without, we are captives of the wrong done against us, and this sometimes for decades in view of the gravity of the betrayal. The prison guards who are mentioned at the end of the parable in (*Mt. 5*), can be representative of our inner tortures which we have to endure if we are not seeking peace in reconciliation.

*"When someone hurts you and then asks your forgiveness, then forgive him for his sake. If he does not ask for forgiveness, then forgive him for your own sake"* a wise man counsels.

Yes, to forgive seventy times seven means to always forgive and that takes a lot of inner work. There might be situations where we give up and that road toward reconciliation seems impossible to walk. In that case, it might be helpful to look at Jesus who died for us with words of forgiveness on his lips: *"Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."* (*Lk. 23,34*)

H. Spaemann, priest and writer, says it this way: *"What we keep in our sight is what shapes us, we are molded accordingly. We go in the direction in which we keep looking."* Let us never lose sight of reconciliation!



# ACCOMPANYING THE PEOPLE OF QUECHUA

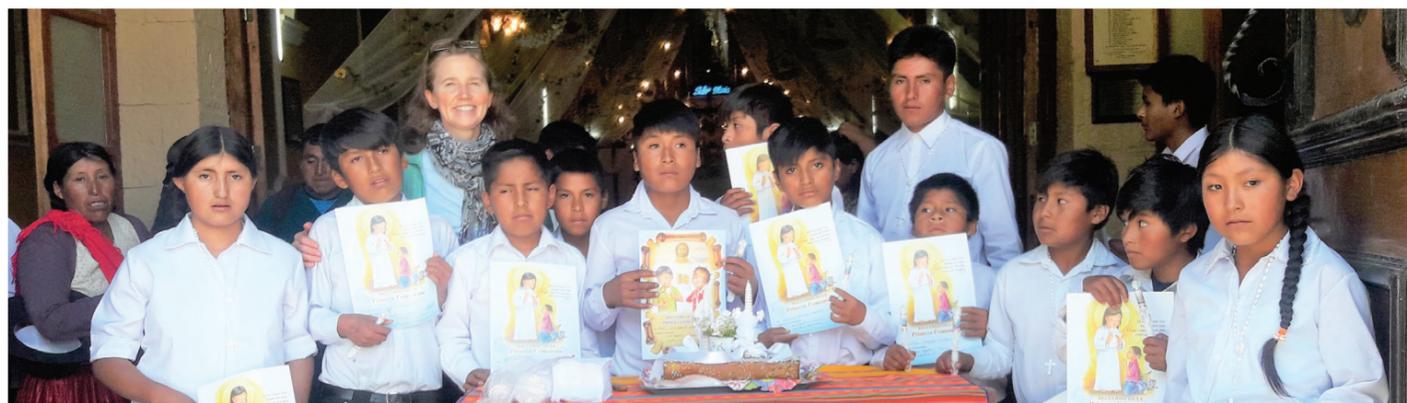
We, the SSpS, have been present in Tapacari, Bolivia since 2002. We work with Monsignor Angel Gelmi Foundation, as we shelter more than 100 young people of Tapacari. While walking through the area, Bishop Angel Gelmi Bertocchi saw that the population of this mountainous region did not even have access to primary education. Therefore, he decided to create a center with the collaboration of his family and friends from Italy. Subsequently, our sisters arrived to carry out this mission and we continue to do so even now.

In this boarding school, students between 6 to 18 years old, receive food, shelter, and an opportunity to go to school. Besides these, they are taught various skills such as baking, sewing, and gardening. The boarding school also promotes Quechua culture, such as its music, traditions and dances, by having cultural nights

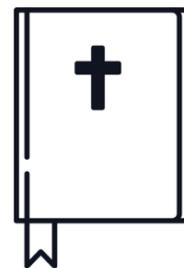
and musical instrument workshops. The Quechua prayers and songs are used for morning and evening prayers. We also promote participation in civic events, where their socio-cultural identity is enhanced and valued. Various meetings between young people from the countryside and the city, promote cultural exchange and create appreciation for this ancient culture.

Various opportunities are provided to prepare the children for Sacraments and to be involved in Eucharistic celebrations and the Missionary Childhood Association. In addition, the center organizes Biblical-Vocational meetings, between two boarding schools managed by the SSpS. We are glad to know that several of our students have completed tertiary studies, and are helping their communities.

*Sr. Joanna Cwikowska SSpS - Bolivia*



Sr. Raquel Zanuttini with students who received First Holy Communion.



## Bible Month in Papua New Guinea

In August, the Bible Month 2019 was conducted at our Convent chapel at Goroka, Papua New Guinea. It was amazing for me to see, hear and participate in sharing the Word of God with the wider community. Through this, the Bible became so alive in the lives of many people in Papua New Guinea. The program was made for the whole month, with a theme each day for different groups like children, youth, etc. Whoever it was programed for on a particular day came prepared with their inputs and activities. For example, there was a "Children's day" on the topic of saints. The elementary children creatively presented about their patron saints. Some men and women expressed that as adults they did not know the story of their patron saints.

'On the way to holiness' was the topic of youth night. Young people shared about their struggles in life. About 80% of these young people who gathered in the chapel

*"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."*

came from broken families. Everyone got up from their seats and with tears in their eyes expressed how hard it was for them to forgive their father or mother. The laity were more alive and they discovered for themselves what it means to strive to be holy. In their sharing they expressed that they felt the presence of God in the chapel, in the sessions and in all they heard and experienced. The Bible Month gave them confidence to stand in public to share the Word of God. The Bible lessons, sharing and activities ended with the Holy Mass, celebrated by Fr Paul Liwun, SVD. Our dining and sitting rooms were open for the closing meal. People came with cooked food to be shared with everyone.

*Sr. Dorothea Mambari, SSpS*



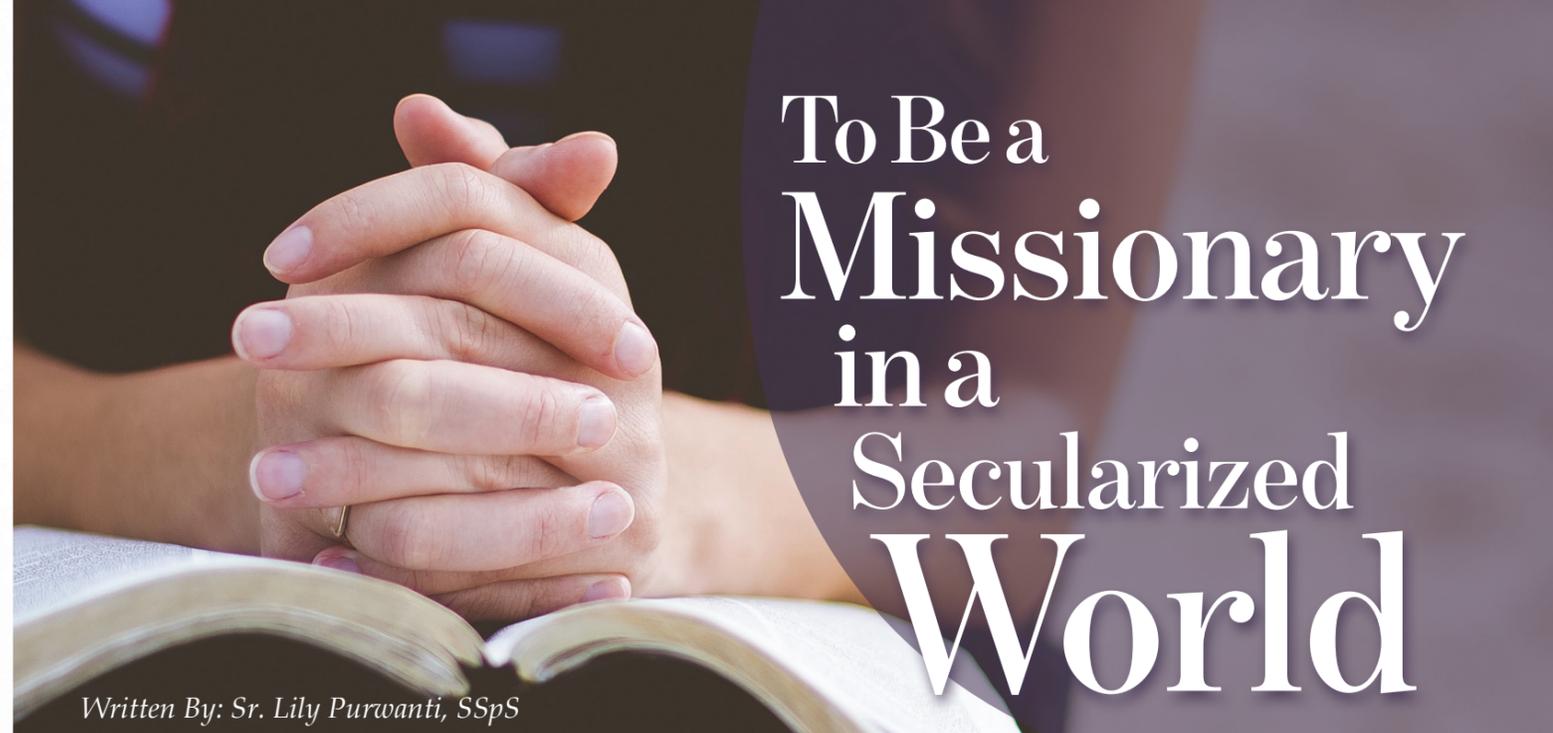
# The Indigenous Recover Their Ancestral Land

*Written By: Sr. Liz Valdez Prieto, SSpS*

The Paraguayan Institute for the Indigenous (INDI), the government body in charge of the interests of the indigenous of Paraguay, illegally encroached 500 hectares of land belonging to Ava Guaraní Tekoha Jejty Miri indigenous community in 1996. The INDI, thus violated the Paraguayan constitution and international treaties related to the rights of indigenous peoples. Twenty years later, in 2016, Jejty Miri families completely lost the ownership of their ancestral territory. A conflict broke out and on more than one occasion, the natives suffered threats and intimidations that ended in a violent eviction in December 2017.

The Holy Spirit Indigenous Ministry Team, worked together with our lawyer and thus the Court of Appeals resolved to return the land to the Ava Guaraní community. This marked the end of a three year struggle in defense of the territory. The success achieved is rare and represents a necessary task in the face of the serious situation faced by many indigenous communities in the country. This event is very significant for the community whose land is the source of its life and culture. If they lose their territory, they lose everything, as has happened to several other communities. Today, people from many other communities are homeless, begging for their living, putting their lives and their children's lives at risk.

This landmark achievement symbolizes a strong hope for other indigenous communities and invites us to sing the Magnificat together. The greatness of God comes to the aid of the poor and the little ones, knocks down the mighty and exalts the humble.



# To Be a Missionary in a Secularized World

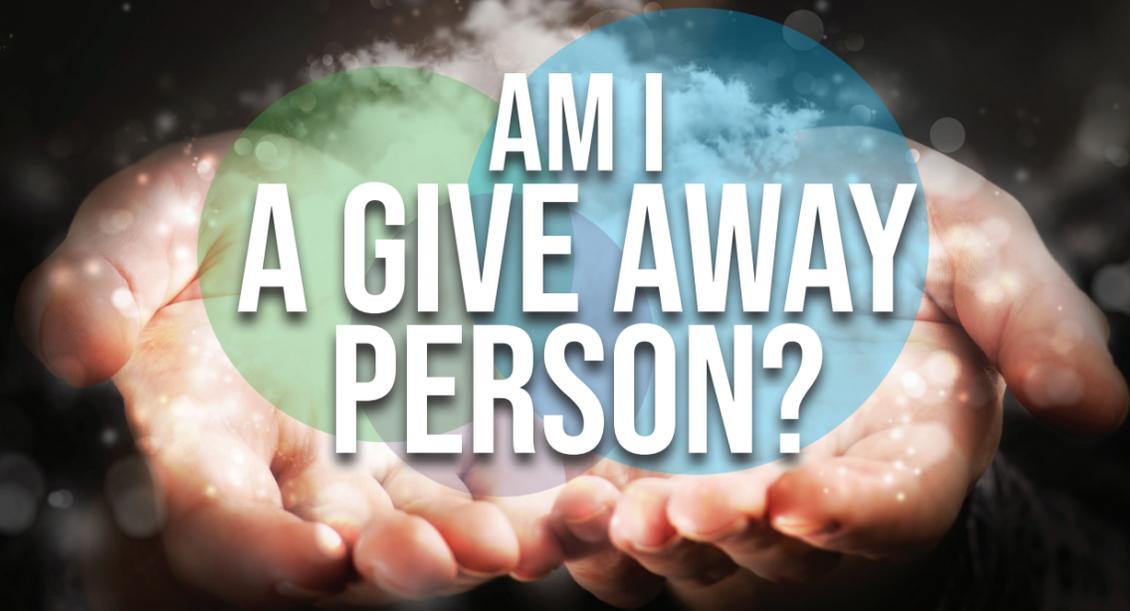
*Written By: Sr. Lily Purwanti, SSpS*

In the past few years, Western Europe has become one of the world's most secular regions. Netherlands is one of those countries where many people do not describe themselves as Christians or practice their faith. Many churches are closed or even destroyed. In the midst of this reality, we, the SSpS, feel called to proclaim the Good News, in the land where the seed of our Congregation was sown. Three of us work in Amsterdam, where prostitution, drugs, abortion and euthanasia are legal is also one of the most secularized cities in the world. It is undeniable that secularization has negative impacts. In this multicultural set up, many people lose their identity and become victims of various addictions and psychological aberrations.



SSpS Srs. Lily Purwanti and Celine Chako, along with other volunteers serving lunch.

We accompany them through our presence and service. We call our project Kiemkracht (Germinating power of a seed) which began at the end of 2015 when the refugee crisis was at its peak. Since then, the parish hall is open every Tuesday for anyone in need. Around 35-40 people visit the parish every week and among them are those who live alone, those who are addicted and those who experience psychological problems. We accept them as they are. It is a mixed group of people in an atmosphere of mutual love and respect. In this parish room, they can enjoy the company of each other over a cup of coffee or tea and free lunch served by our sisters and the parish priest. We are always ready to listen to every single story of their lives, their complaints and worries. The project is a joint venture of the SSpS, SVD and the parish. Through this activity, we want to bring meaning and joy, small as it is, to others, especially to those who are marginalized and excluded.



AM I  
A GIVE AWAY  
PERSON?

*“And I was a constant example to you in helping the poor;  
for I remembered the words of the Lord Jesus, ‘  
It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”*

— Acts 20:35 —

As we move into the Lenten Season and closer to our April General Chapter in Rome, I am very conscious of our goal for the year: *“To Be Immersed in the Life of the Trinity; Sharing in God’s Work of Transforming the World with Compassion.”*

That word ‘transforming’ challenges me to look at what that means in my own life. Fr. Richard Rohr, OSF, in his book, *The Universal Christ*, says: “Authentic Christianity is not so much a belief system as a life and death system that shows you how to give your life away, how to give away your love, and eventually how to give your death away.” (pg.213) To me this is saying, as we give away ourselves, we are more connected to the world, to all of God’s creation and to our God.

If we look at Jesus’ life, that certainly was the message. If we have not loved deeply and suffered deeply, it seems we cannot understand the spiritual life at any depth because these are the basic tools for transformation. Loving deeply and suffering deeply

bring us to a whole other level in our life’s journey. Then I have to ask myself: Am I ready for that journey? If I really believe that everything I have is a gift then why shouldn’t I give it all away? Just as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit came to Jesus in his baptism, we too have that Trinity deep in our hearts. Immersed in our Trinitarian Family, let us enter into our daily lives aware that God does not leave us for one minute but walks with us through every moment and through every happening in our life. As Paula D’Arcy says, “God comes to you, disguised in your life.”

Let this Lenten Journey be an adventure in living one day at a time. Know that sometimes the hardest days turn out to be an unexpected blessing which grows us into a more compassionate, loving, and generous person. Let’s give it a try!

*Sr. Patricia Snider SSpS  
Directress, Holy Spirit Missionary Association*



By: Mr. Alberto Manuel & Mr. Augustinho Colete,  
(Associates) Mozambique

Sr. Marta Maria De Melo, Sr. Alice Lafuente and Sr. Teresita Riedel arrived in the Parish of St. Paul the Apostle, Monapo, in the Diocese of Nacala, Mozambique in 1994. Their arrival marked a new stage of the local Church and community. They accompanied the laity in areas of pastoral ministry, catechesis, promotion of women, youth, justice and peace, liturgy, health, education etc. We, the people of this place, are witnesses to their great concern for the holistic formation of the human person. They understood the situation and felt one with the people.



The sisters responded to people’s dreams of having a secondary school by building three classrooms. They also built a health care center in Napala. They made remarkable achievements in the religious and social life of the people. They provided a water supply in the health center of the district headquarters. Time has passed and the mission has grown.

Today when we look at the 25 years of service of the SSpS in Mozambique, we see that their seeds have sprouted and are already bearing fruit. Their contribution in the formation of different ministries has become an important part of the pastoral care within the parish. With joy, we join with them in the celebration of 25 years as an act of gratitude to God for the life and mission of SSpS in this mission in Mozambique.

**We invite you to join with us in mission through your generous financial support for the Mission Ministries of the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters.**

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