



# SSpS MISSION

Called by the Spirit • Embracing the World

Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters | USA & Caribbean | MAY 2020

# PENTECOST

Letting Things Go  
In Order to Receive God's Gift

*We Serve in  
Different  
Ways*

*A Compelling Glimpse  
into the Philippine  
Tertianship Program*



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The Descent of the Holy Spirit by Titan in  
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**Editor:**  
Sr. Mary Miller, SSpS

**Art Director:**  
Andrew Dixon III

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## Focus on Mission...

The celebration of the Feast of Pentecost, which celebrates the gift of the Holy Spirit, reminds us that the Spirit is Christ's special gift to each of us. May the gifts of the Spirit (wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, fortitude, awe and piety, and fear of the Lord) guide us. In a special way we are invited to trust in the power of these gifts for they bear fruit in our lives in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. At this time of the coronavirus pandemic, let us also ask the Holy Spirit to guide medical scientists and other medical professionals in their efforts to find ways to control the coronavirus.

In the midst of this turmoil and the inability to pray and worship together in our faith communities, we trust in our personal relationship with God in prayer. Much like the ancient stories of the Scriptures, God invites, God calls, and God is WITH US! **TRUST!**

Now, with many of our lives "on hold" and "hunkered down" OUR MISSION is prayer! We keep in our prayers all healthcare workers and first responders who assist the sick and vulnerable in our world community. Let all of us accompany the many families who experience the death of a loved one. And may our prayers cry to heaven for the health and well-being of all peoples, of all creation.

This month, the reflections of Sr. Agnes Benedicta Lauer and Sr. Gabriele Hölzer's "Saying Good Byes" and "Leave Your Homeland" as well as Sr. Erlinda Kemper's "The Gift of Letting Go" comfort those who have recently lost loved ones during this season while encouraging others to give of themselves however they can as Christ Jesus our Lord leads us.

Sr. Mary Miller, SSpS



## We Serve in Different Ways!

*A Glimpse into the Philippine  
Tertiaship Program*

*By: Sr. Rebecca Chaan David, SSpS*

*Sr. Rebecca Chaan David, SSpS, has been in the Philippines since September 2019 as a participant in our Congregational "Tertiaship", a program for Sisters in preparation for their profession of final vows.*

As part of the program of preparation for our profession of final vows as a Holy Spirit Missionary Sister, our group of English-speaking Sisters came to our SSpS Province of Philippines South in Cebu City to deepen our spiritual relationship with God, our understanding of the vowed religious life, and

experience life and mission in another culture.

After a time of orientation and coming to know one another within our formation group, our tertian group began our ministry at the "Balay Samaritano", the House of the Good Samaritan. It is a shelter for the homeless who come

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during the day to have rest, meals, and care for other basic needs. Balay Samaritano was started by Fr. Heinz Kulüke, SVD, and the manager is our tertian directress, Sr. Ewa Lidia Mazur, SSpS, who has a big heart for the homeless and is an icon for the poor of Cebu City.

Fr. Heinz has a profound history in the area. He gathers the homeless from the plastic trash at the dumpsite of Cebu. He finds jobs and rental houses for them, and commutes some children to school. He also helps to protect others from human trafficking. Some of the survivors of trafficking are now helping others. The shelter for the homeless also has many committed volunteers who help. Fr. Heinz and the Justice and Peace Office from Germany are the backbone and life-giving source to the poor, marginalized, and excluded. His idea gives hope, dignity, and healing to many homeless who come from the plastic trash site and merge into the community where they live ordinary life again.

We tertians are also committed to offer these special services to our brothers and sisters who are homeless in Cebu City. We serve in different ways. We give showers to children and comb their hair. We entertain them with musical instruments, singing and dancing. Sometimes we participate in the Eucharist with the poor of Balay Samaritano. The children crave to be shown love because they do not get enough attention and love from their parents on the streets. Sometimes we help to hold the babies while their mothers are taking rest because they have sleepless nights. The children feel acceptance and love and easily fall asleep. It is incredible to experience how human touch can give such comfort and affection to others!

Every Saturday we have special ministry with Badjao families who come to our Bl. Maria Helena

*“It is incredible to experience how human touch can give such comfort and affection to others!”*



Community. One of our tertians from the Philippines South Province, Sr. Alma Tecson, is a teacher. We and the Badjao sit in the same class. They learn English and we learn Basaya and Badjao. Because they do not have an opportunity for schooling, they are very eager to learn. After our class, we all share a meal. They feel ‘at home’ and share joyfully while socializing.

I pray the rosary with devoted, faithful elderly where they daily pray before the image of Mary, our Mother, placed in the corner of their home. During these times of prayer, I experience the great faith of these elderly women. They cling to their faith no matter what happens in their lives. They smile. They pray. No matter how little they receive, they are grateful! They simply endure and their inner light continues to shine. It is a joy to offer help to the women in the kitchen, serving food to the homeless, cleaning dishes and cleaning the house. Our presence with the people is wonderful! It gives all of us the sense of being one big family, inspired, connected, and happy. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve and share God’s love with the needy.



Sr. Rebecca Chann David, SSpS (Second from the left) with the Philippine community (Cebu City).



# Saying Good Byes...

By: Sr. Agnes Benedicta Lauer, SSpS  
Excerpted and translated by Sr. Agathe Bramkamp, SSpS  
(Geist und Auftrag, 4/19, pp.14-15)

There is a song by the French chanson (folk)singer, Mireille Matthieu, which goes a bit like this: “To say Good Byes belongs to life, as does the word Farewell”. We can also say: Whatever has a beginning also has an end. Every evening reminds us of this fact, and every autumn has a way of saying it, too. Life is a continuous letting go and every Good Bye reminds us of life’s transitory nature. As believers we can say that God wants us to be people of new beginnings and remain as such till we are taking our leave from this earth. This seems to be the only way that we can keep growing and become mature human beings.

But still we pray to ease our pain when we have to take leave from people and places that we were familiar with and called home. When death calls on friends we pray in gratitude and awe remembering all the gifts we received through them from the giver of all good things. When we are deprived of our place of work and are overcome with discouragement and a sense of displacement and uselessness, we pray for hope and the power of God’s life-giving Spirit to dare new steps in the direction opened for us.

All of salvation history tells us about this “picking up and going” into the direction of God’s promise. God spoke to Abraham: “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land I will show you...(Gen. 12,1-4)

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Abraham is on his journey in hope and with a promise he received from God: the people after him will be blessed and there will be a great multitude of them.

We live in a time when people are fleeing from wars, hunger, violence, persecution and poverty. People are on the move with the hope of a better life. Some of us even might have experienced flight in the face of danger, being driven from home and country by a hostile force or by hunger and poverty. Those who flee know what it means to have to leave their home land, to go into a future with great uncertainty, and to live in a strange land.

## Go Forth!

“Go forth!” Abraham hears; and he goes in faith. God gives him a promise on the way: “Count the stars in the sky.” Which means to say: I am with you; I will not leave you with your questions and doubts. I am present to you.

“Go forth!” Every serious decision we make in life is a “going forth” from something familiar into something yet unknown. We too, like Abraham, are on our way our whole life through, waiting, hoping, burdened, and blessed. We leave the narrow confines of our ego and our narrow mindedness. This seems to be the only way leading us closer to our God and creator.

“Go forth” can also signify God’s call away from our family, away from life as we know it now. God wants to take us into his service, wants us to become more and more mindful of God’s work.

*Abraham builds an altar for God; he expresses gratitude for the guidance on his way and leaves a testimony of it. At the end it is not important how many years you lived, but only how well you lived the years that were given to you.*



# LEAVE YOUR HOMELAND



Arranged by: Sr. Gabriele Hölzer, SSpS

Translated by: Sr. Agathe Bramkamp, SSpS  
From (Geist und Auftrag 4/2019, pp.12-13)

## GENESIS 12; 1-2

The history of the Jewish people, the life of Jesus and the story of the first Christians all tell again and again of leave taking, and new beginnings. Saying Good Byes and moving on make new beginnings possible.

## MIGRATION OUT OF PARADISE

It starts with the distrust of Adam and Eve who up to now had trusted God. Now they wanted to be like God. God does not judge nor kill the people because of this, but from now on they will always be challenged to stay with God or turn against God. They will have to work hard for their daily bread and bear children in pain. Yet God still stands with them; God does not withdraw his promised blessings.

## THE GREAT FLOOD AND A NEW BEGINNING

The great flood is an archetype of all catastrophes human kind has to endure, being threatened by an uncontrollable universe. But God is full of mercy and compassion toward his creation. We are safe in his saving hand and can hope for a second chance.

## ABRAHAM SETS OUT...

God commands Abraham to leave his land, his relatives, the house of his father and “go to a land that I will show you.”(Gen 12,) Abraham does not know where this journey will lead him, what will await him there , and what is the reason God bids him to leave. He has to say good-bye to all that is familiar to him and all that he loves. He has to step into the unknown, because God calls him to a new place and makes an extraordinary covenant with him.

## JACOB GOES TO EGYPT

The sons of Jacob go to Egypt to buy grains. Their brother Joseph, whom they had sold to Egypt, demands from them now to bring their father Jacob and their youngest brother to Egypt. God assures Jacob in a dream that his tribe will become a great people in Egypt. God also promises to lead his people out of the strange land again. Jacob and his tribe get land to cultivate and settle in Egypt. The Israelites learn many things from this new culture that is surrounding them.

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## LEAVING SLAVERY BEHIND

The country that hosts them soon begins to enslave the Israelites. God calls Moses who had trained at the court of the Egyptian King to lead his people to freedom. When the people reached the Red Sea they see the Egyptians in pursuit of them. Fear grips them and they call to the Lord. Obeying God's command, Moses leads his people through the Red Sea and all the pursuing Egyptians drown in the returning waters. (Ex 14,15f)

## TAKEN INTO EXILE

Many prophets had admonished the people to be faithful to the Lord and live according to their covenant with him. The King and the people refused to listen. They deemed themselves invincible, but Nebuchadnezzar took Jerusalem and defeated its army. The king and all the survivors of the battle were taken to Babylon. Only the poor people, those who owned no land, were left behind to tend to the fields and vineyards. In order to preserve their faith in the multicultural realm of Babylon, Jewish scribes and teachers of the law stressed and taught the singularity of their faith. The Torah and studies of the law became the center of their lives. The time of Exile in Babylon is seen as the most fruitful period of Jewish theological studies. Since there was no temple, the first synagogues were built during the exile.

## JESUS' LIFE IN DANGER

In Jesus' life, as well, these things - leaving, escaping, and living life without a home of his own - play a big role. He is born in a stable when his parents are on the way to Bethlehem. Herod, hearing from the wise men about the birth of a new king, kills all children of the approximate age of Jesus. The evangelist Mathew tells about the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt. Joseph is instructed in a dream to take Mary and the child and flee out of the reach of Herod. The family returns only after the death of Herod and finds a home in Nazareth. (Mt 2, 13-23)

## JESUS' FAREWELL SPEECHES

Jesus' life is threatened again and again. The Pharisees and teachers of the law want to stone him or push him down the mountain. Jesus moves through the crowd and walks away. Jesus talks repeatedly to his disciples about his immanent suffering and death. John, the evangelist, gives us the last speeches of Jesus addressed to his disciples. He tells them that he has to leave them and return to his Father. If he does not go away the Spirit will not come over them. Jesus encourages them and promises not to leave them orphaned, but to send another helper, the Holy Spirit, who will remain with them. They are never to forget that the Father himself loves them. Jesus then prays for all his disciples and for all who will come to believe in him.

## JESUS' DEATH AND THE APOSTLES' DEPARTURE

Jesus is taken prisoner, his trial and public execution have shaken his disciples. Full of fear and disappointment they leave Jerusalem, hide out, and go back to their old lives. Only their encounter with the living Christ, his saying "Mary", the breaking of the bread in Emmaus, his greeting of "Peace", the abundant catch of fish on their fishing trip, the touch of his wounds offered to Thomas, open a new reality for them: He is alive and is among us! When he finally withdraws from them, he leaves with them his blessing and the certainty that the Holy Spirit will come upon them and stay with them. The Holy Spirit will introduce them to the deep relationship of Jesus to the Father and lead them into a deeper understanding of his message. The Spirit will give them power to confess their faith in Jesus.



*"Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."*

*Matthew 16:24*

## FROM JERUSALEM TO ROME

Saul persecuted the members of the young church, believing they were forming a Jewish sect and not obeying the Jewish law. Therefore he sought to destroy them. He was commissioned to persecute them in Damascus. But a wondrous experience with the living Christ on the way changed his life most radically. (Acts 22, 5-16) Saul became a believer and saw himself called to be an apostle and a missionary for the Lord through his personal encounter with Jesus (Gal 1, 17). Paul worked in the community at Antioch which sent him, Barnabas and Markus on their first mission trip. They went to Cyprus and Asia Minor. Upon Paul's urging, the young church broke open the spiritual and physical boundaries, left Israel where the young church had its roots, and pushed forward into heathen territory. The second mission journey took him to Galatia, to Europe, to Philippi, Thessaloniki, Athens and Corinth. On the third mission journey he travelled to Asia Minor. In Ephesus he suffered imprisonment and then travelled through Macedonia and on to Corinth (Acts 18, 23-21, 14). Without the persecution of the Christians in Jerusalem, the young church would have stayed there and not spread quickly into the world.



By: Sr. Erlinda Kemper, SSpS

Adapted and translated by: Sr. Agathe Bramkamp, SSpS  
From (Geist und Auftrag 4/19 pp. 4-7)

About a year ago I received the news that my brother-in-law had died. Being far away in Taiwan I grew very anxious about my sister, 84 years old and now alone. What words do you find, over the phone, to give some consolation? Of course, she was in tears, but what she said next gave me much to think about.





“Look,” she said, “we had each other for 60 years. Can I complain now that God takes him away from me?” Just one month prior to his death they had celebrated their diamond wedding anniversary. Sixty years of faithfulness in good times and bad. That is something that doesn’t die.

At the time of this phone conversation I did not know yet that in a half years’ time I too, would have to deal with a Good-Bye. I would have to leave people I had come to love, my mission work in Taiwan and China, in order to return to the Motherhouse of my religious missionary congregation in Steyl, in the Netherlands. “When God takes him away from me...” my sister had said. I could put it this way: “When God indicates to me that I should leave...” I conversed with God about it and made the free decision to return to Europe. Jesus’ word to Peter “When you were young, you girded yourself and walked where you would; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go.” (John 21, 18)

## LETTING GO

When I was a young sister, I had heard and I often read about “letting go”. How often did I myself talk about it with “words of wisdom” and always in the sense that “letting go” can lead us into inner freedom: freedom from negative dependencies and attachments to things and people, from habits and fixations on one’s own ideas and opinions. Such inner freedom is certainly of precious value. It is good to aim at it, to attain it and to fight for it. But my sister’s words “We had each other for 60 years” throws light on an altogether different aspect for me.

Everything that is held in your heart in gratitude does not die; everything we experienced and honored with appreciation does not belong to the things that die. It only will be lost when we are determined to hold on to it as if it were our possession. When we grieve over “what is no more”, over life being so transitory, over the emptiness, the sorrow... and in all that forget to look with gratitude at the remaining, deeply satisfactory gifts, we will lose them.

## GOOD BYES AND ARRIVALS

For my final paper graduating from high school, now about sixty years ago, I chose to write about a book by Wolfgang Borchert “We Are a Generation of Good-Byes, But We Know That All Arrivals Belong to Us.” I don’t remember what I wrote in that paper but I remembered the title of the book and it took on some form of reality for me. There were so many Good-Byes and so many Arrivals! When at the age of 15 I left my village as a candidate for the Mission Congregation of the Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit my joy to get to that point out-shone all pain of saying good-bye. That pain made itself known only in the tears of my parents. There is a photo of which my mother said it was unforgivable to her: I exit the front door, face beaming, to step into the waiting car. That was not any exit and good- bye of many yet to come, but it was leaving the parent behind knowing (as was our rule at that time) never to return home again.

## THE GAIN IN LETTING GO

While thinking about the ‘letting go in order to gain’ proposition Jesus’ words come to mind: “Whoever tries to gain his own life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for my sake will gain it.” (Mt 10:39) Is this not the secret built into all growing and maturing? Do not all important decisions in life have these features: to say good- bye so that a new beginning becomes possible? Yet everything that we let go deserves a farewell kiss and a warm embrace and maybe tears and sorrow.

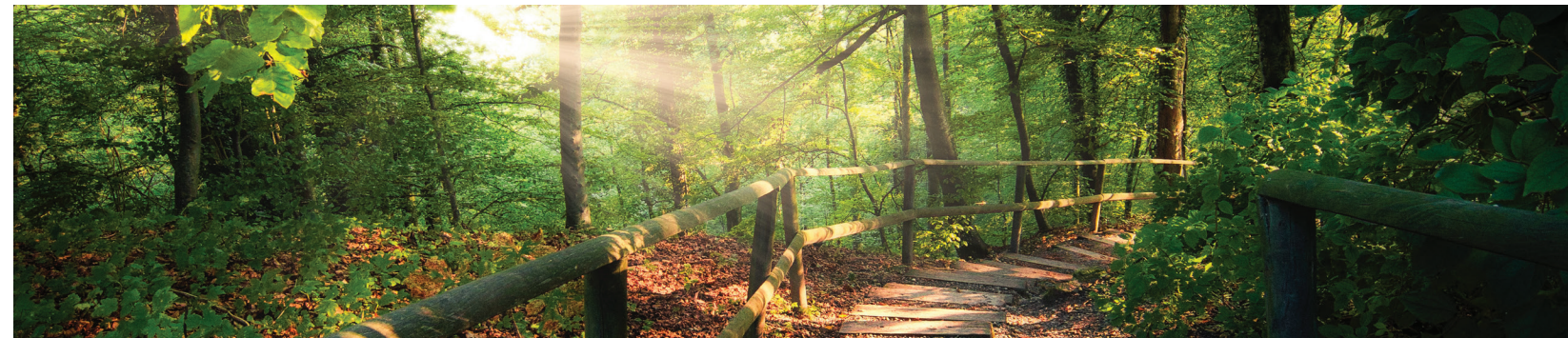
The little girl that visits a doll shop with her mother is allowed to choose one doll, but she turns up with several dolls firmly held in her arms. “One doll or none,” the mother says firmly. So the girl has to put all the dolls except one back on the shelf. But she can only manage that with tears and after she has kissed and hugged each doll with great affection.

## STORED UP RICHES

Years ago in Peking, I had to undergo an operation on my eyes. During the healing process, I was not allowed to lift my head or to look into the light for a whole month. I remember one day I was walking rather downcast and with my head bowed, when I only could see some fresh grass sprouts at the side of my path. Suddenly this happened to me: Like in a movie, a million beautiful things I had already seen in life passed before my eyes. The many beautiful and kind people, trees and flowers and grass, mountains, rivers and lakes, sunrises and sunsets, the ocean, animals, fishes and birds! Never before had I been so filled with deep gratitude for all the riches of beauty I had seen, the immensity of the ocean, the ground in the woods of the Albaner mountains covered with flowers, the miracle of a blade of grass seen under the microscope, and so much more.

## A GENERATION OF FARE-WELLS

A couple of years ago I experienced again being one of ‘a generation of fare-wells’ when I suffered a stroke. It signaled the fare-well from my independence which had always seemed so important to me, fare-well from free movement and flexibility, from participation in so many activities where a walker is cumbersome. Then there were the fare-wells from many opportunities to be of help to others, to be with, to do with, and to be present to another. And yet I experience every day anew that ‘all arrivals belong to me.’ It means that I have the capacity to accept all offers of help, to be aware of and appreciative of so much loving care that is lavished on me, and that I even can be proud of my walker with which I can navigate the garden successfully. I feel solidarity with those who have a similar experience; and I am learning to see all things in my eventful life from a different perspective.



**Dear Mission Friends and Supporters, we wish to assure you and your loved ones of our daily prayers of support during this time of the coronavirus pandemic. May our loving God be with all who are suffering and protect medical personnel, health-care providers, and first responders as they carry out their daily responsibilities. We invite those of you who can to join us in mission through your generous financial support for the Mission Ministries of the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters.**

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