The Missions

Foreign Mission Trust MAGAZINE
The Heart Which Has So Loved Men

This divine heart is an abyss filled with all blessings, and into it the poor should submerge all their needs. It is an abyss of joy in which all of us can immerse our sorrows. It is an abyss of lowliness to counteract our foolishness, an abyss of mercy for the wretched, an abyss of love to meet our every need.

—St. Margaret Mary Alacoque
Dear Faithful,

We, the priests and religious of the Society of Saint Pius X (SSPX), are the spiritual sons of a true missionary in the wild: Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre. And, although the SSPX is not first and foremost a missionary order in the traditional sense, it is with the heart of our beloved founder that we seek to labor in the vineyard of the Lord.

During the sermon for his 50th Priestly Jubilee Mass, Archbishop Lefebvre spoke of how he witnessed the spread of the Catholic Faith in Africa, describing what makes up the heart of the missionary’s work and what is the recipe for the fertility of his efforts. Speaking from his own experience, the Mass holds the first and most powerful place amongst the missionary’s “tools.”

“Certainly I knew, by the studies which we had done, what this great mystery of our Faith was, but I had not yet understood its entire value, efficacy and depth. Thus I lived, day by day and year by year in Africa, and particularly in Gabon, where I spent 13 years of my missionary life, first at the seminary and then in the bush among the Africans, with the natives. There I saw—yes, I saw—what the grace of the Holy Mass could do.”

In this new issue of the Foreign Mission Trust magazine, we once more present to you the efforts of the SSPX priests and religious in mission countries. You will read about and see the fertility of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, of the preaching of the Faith, of the administration of the sacraments, of the power of the missionaries bearing witness to the Faith. Their work is most encouraging and their courage admirable!

Although the Society of Saint Pius X was not founded specifically as a missionary order, Divine Providence has led us to take up a humble share in these efforts. Please let us help our missionaries and contribute to their work with both our prayers and our financial support.

In Christo,

Fr. John Fullerton
Publisher
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Dear Readers,

Our last letter ended with COVID-19—and yet I write this letter while COVID is still ravaging the country. The explosion in new cases has been accompanied by the emergence of yet another variant of the Coronavirus, B.1.627 (also known as the Indian Variant), that may be more infectious. It is not an overstatement that this entire "COVID crisis" has brought India's healthcare system to its knees. Some compare life in North India to wartime. Instead of air raid sirens that blared and blazed in the entire Gaza strip very recently, they heard ambulances day and night. It may be an exaggeration, but India has been through a nightmare.

Here at the priory, life was normal and we had a very peaceful Holy Week—but then all hell broke loose. Our nearby cemetery became very busy. The death toll started to rise and the nearby church bell tolled at least 2-3 times each day to announce that someone had passed into eternity. The cemetery usually has 2-3 burials, at most, every month. Now there are this many per day. In India in the month of May, apparently, four priests died each day. Who will replace them? I wonder. Some are young. The nearby diocese has already lost six priests and two are in critical condition. None are above 70 years of age! I am sure it is not the coronavirus that is the major cause of the problem—it is also political. Panic reigns everywhere.

No one at the priory got infected except myself. I tested positive for COVID and within a few days it took a serious turn. I still remember the moment I was thinking of getting last rites as the fever raged unabated. When I was rushed to the Catholic hospital for treatment, there was no room, as all the hospitals are
full. Luckily, a Catholic doctor provided a “quick-fix” in the parking lot and I survived.

Next came another draconian lockdown. All travel was forbidden. What was difficult about this situation was the shortage of “essential items.” Fortunately, we foresaw the lockdown and we stockpiled for ourselves and for our poor neighbors. Once I recovered from the virus, I again donned my “milkman” or “pharmacist” cap to give Sacraments (the true “essential items”) to our sisters. I think I am getting good at it. If “repetition is the mother of all skill,” then by repeating this maneuver month after month I have certainly honed my skills.

While some of our faithful were terribly affected, most of them are safe. The children at the orphanage are doing well. I think they are so well-used to these lockdowns that they know exactly what to do. They pick up their garden tools and start, or I should say restart, their gardening. Classes within the premises and artwork have become the order of the day. And they are getting good at it. As I said, repetition is the mother of all skill. Our kids must be thanked especially in this regard. When doctors saw my health at a critical stage, the children organized two full night vigils. These little sheep know how to pull their shepherd back from the brink. Who says prayer is inefficient? Prayer is infallible especially when it comes from a heart that is “little” both physically and spiritually. Somehow the little ones have a special appeal to the Heart of God that He never refuses. And if the little one is an orphan, somehow the Heart of God melts even faster. I have seen this many times and have personally benefited from it as well.

Unfortunately, the harsh lockdowns have entirely crippled our mission. All our far-away Mass centers have no access to the Sacraments. We hope the situation will improve and allow normal life to resume. Although this letter has been far more gloomy than I had intended, I will finish it on a lighter note.

For a long time, I was thinking of doing a fun activity with the children to lift their spirits. Constant news of COVID lockdowns has had an impact on them. Hence, on the Feast of Holy Trinity, we had our “special barbecue trial” at
The children at the orphanage have become so used to the lockdowns that the restrictions are taken in stride (and with a smile).

Food cooked on an outdoor grill is almost unheard of in India. This is due, in large part, to the limited meat in the local diet. Following a visit to America, Father decided to introduce the orphans to a bit of American culture.

Although a bit unconventional, Father Therasian's makeshift barbecue grill was a huge hit with the orphans.
the orphanage. This was definitely a first time for most of the kids. While I was visiting Post Falls, people would ask me if we ever have barbecue-style cooking in India. My response was always negative. I never tried it, since barbecue-style cooking is not suited for Indian food. The reason for this is that we do not eat much meat in our cuisine. But then, why not? With a home-made grill, we attempted it. It was not perfect, at least as far as the final product was concerned, but the process was very funny and the kids enjoyed it. We enjoyed much laughter in the process. The little ones were thrilled and thoroughly enjoyed the evening. It was a blessed day for all of us. They were happy to learn the “American way of cooking,” though if they ever visit America and see a real barbecue, I think I’ll be in big trouble. Until then I am safe. When I asked them how to improve our barbecue cooking—they said it’s simple: “repetition is the mother of all skill.”

Allow me to end with a note of thanks. Let me thank you wholeheartedly for all you do for us. It means so much. To put it simply, we survive because of your support—both spiritually and monetarily. Please continue to pray for our priests, our dear sisters, and the children. Be assured of our prayers for all of you each day at the Holy Rosary.

With my priestly blessings,
Fr. Therasian

Facts

Priory of the Most Sacred Heart in Palayamkottai, India

The Mission runs 17 Mass Centers with 3 SSPX priests, 3 heroic helper priests (average age 87) and 2 zealous brothers. It also looks after a school of 70 pupils, works very closely with an orphanage run by the Consoling Sisters of the Sacred Heart. The Mission demands great faith and a spirit of sacrifice, but there are many rewards for those who work with charity-filled hearts in this sparse, dry vineyard.

Religion in India

In 2010, 94% of the world’s Hindus lived in India, making it home to the majority of the world’s Hindus. India also has a large Muslim population and is expected to have the largest population of Muslims in the world by 2050. In 2010, only 2.5% of the country was Christian. Religious turmoil has long been a fact of life in India as they have one of the highest levels of social hostilities involving religion in the world.
Indeed

“Even to your old age I am the same, and to your gray hairs I will carry you: I have made you, and I will bear: I will carry and will save.”

— Is. 46:4
Dear friends in Christ,

“Benedicite Domino in omni tempore,” Bless the Lord at all times, whether there is a lockdown or no lockdown. In some countries the lockdown may be a thing of the past, but for us in India, we are still alternating between lockdowns and relative freedom.

It’s kind of the same for us whether there is a lockdown or not since the schools are not open. Some of the older girls have online classes. We are doing home schooling for all the rest for now. The big girls also pitch in and help us to teach the younger ones. They are really becoming very good teachers.

With a minimum of outside influence, the girls are also behaving well and actually enjoying being at home and studying. It is giving them more time to develop other skills also. The little ones are enjoying their artwork and the older ones have more time to become experts in playing musical instruments.

God is blessing the work of the Consoling Sisters! On June 11, the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, 11 Postulants became spouses, and 2 Novices professed their first vows to Our Lord, and on July 9th, the sisters received the keys to their new convent. It is an ex-Capuchin monastery constructed in 1603 and will be called “Novitiate St. Joseph of the Consoling Sisters of the Sacred Heart.”
Continuing lockdowns have led to a shift in the routine at the orphanage. While the older girls have some online classes, their education is supplemented by cooking, music, art, and sewing. They are becoming quite proficient!

Pauline, who came to us in 2009 when she was five years old, now plays in the Church. Manjula, who was a rag picker when she came to us four years ago and has never been to school, tries hard to imitate Pauline akka (akka means elder sister). Gemma, who came to us when she was five years old and is in college now, spent hours during the lockdown sewing a beautiful alb for Fr. Therasian with netted lace she had made. The girls get time to work in the garden a little bit every morning. Under their care the coconut garden is coming up well. They enjoy the chance to play under those trees when it is hot outside.

Our old ladies are also doing well. We have a new old lady, some 80+ years old, I think. She was thrown out of her house by her relatives (she has no children of her own) and the government officials asked us to take her in. She says she was baptized in a Protestant church and now is very eager to have catechism classes so that she can be baptized as a Catholic and receive our Lord soon. Keep her and all of us in your prayers. Yes, bless the Lord at all times that His work may continue.
The Consoling Sisters of the Sacred Heart

Founded in 1961 by Fr. Basilio Rosati, a Passionist priest, the Consoling Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus were entrusted to Fr. Emmanuel du Chalard (SSPX) by Father Basilio in 1996. In 2006, Providence blessed the Sisters with a new apostolate in India—an orphanage and elderly home. With the help of benefactors from all over the world, a truly remarkable building was constructed that houses almost 100 people. Seven Indian sisters work tirelessly and are dedicated to educating orphan girls and taking care of the elderly, who are often found abandoned on the street in miserable condition.

In 2014, the first American postulant arrived at the motherhouse of the Consoling Sisters in Vigne di Narni, Italy. With joy, the community paid homage to Our Lady of Guadalupe for this gift and enthroned her image in the convent. From that moment the flow of young Americans has been non-stop, and the community now numbers 45 members. At the close of 2020 there are sisters from 7 nationalities: 26 professed sisters, 8 novices, and 11 postulants, 20 of which are Americans with many more desiring to try their vocation.

The Sisters’ prayer is that through their apostolate many more souls will be led to consecrate themselves to God in the religious life.

The thriving chapter of The Children of Mary poses for a group photo after a recent ceremony.

From needlework to drawing, the sisters assist the orphans to develop their talents.
A Little News from the St. Bernard Novitiate

The Novitiate continues despite the lock-downs or the lockups. The pinch we feel, however, is that there are some candidates who would love to come but cannot. There have been a few requests, even now, but we are unable to receive them. Locally we could receive, but anyone from other parts of the Philippines, and worse, from other countries, are unable to come. It is also hard for these aspirants to persevere in their calling when they are obliged to stay at home. Well, one thing is certain: if they persevere, they will forge an unbreakable vocation. Please pray for these men. We certainly confide them all to the care of Our Lord and His Holy Mother.

In the meantime, among many other things, we run the Ignatian exercises once a month, alternately for men and ladies. To do this in such a way that the religious life of the Brothers is not disturbed, we have built a “Sta. Pamilya Village.” It consists of seven complete bamboo houses, clustered together, with all the
necessary comforts. This is at the far end of the property so that neither the retreatants nor the Brothers are disturbed. Yes, there are only seven retreatants at a time, but St. Ignatius preached his exercises to just one at a time!

In the not-so-spiritual area, we have expanded our solar power. The cost of electricity here has sharply increased. So, to invest in more solar power eventually pays off. To give you an idea of the situation: 10 years ago we set up a solar system that pumps our water. We save around ₱5,000 pesos per month. That is not an exaggeration. Well, that means ₱5,000 x 12 months x 10 years = ₱600,000 pesos (or $12,000 US). The set-up only cost us ₱70,000 pesos; that’s a ₱530,000 peso savings. Now with solar panels producing 8.5KW, we are able to run the Church and the house. Ah, but what about at night? No sun, no power—so then we are obliged to pay the city. While the financial pinch is increasing for us, it is also increasing for many of our poor benefactors. To help things, we are striving to increase our farm production. Some years ago, one of our good priests suggested a rather strange plant, called Azola. He claimed it could serve well for animal feed. Needless to say, I had heard many stories before and was not moved by that suggestion. Now, I humbly acknowledge my lack of faith. Since then, we are forever increasing the ponds where this little plant reproduces itself in three days; thereafter, pigs, ducks, chickens, and even our fish (tilapia) love it! It greatly reduces feeding costs … and even makes the duck and chicken meat more delicious.

And the church building? Well, it is still not finished. The Church embellishment
Azola, also known as water fern, is a free-floating aquatic plant that forms clumps and is coated with tiny hairs that help keep the plant afloat. While it may look like an ordinary water fern, azola is packed with vitamins that are beneficial to livestock. The Brothers have cultivated it in small ponds made for the purpose and it now serves as economical feed for the pigs, ducks, chickens, and even the fish!
continues slowly according to the finances we can spare. We are now slowly completing the ceiling of the side nave. Like the main nave, it will be round. But every section will have, as it were, a cupola. After that, we need to do the sacristy. It has no ceiling yet and only temporary bamboo cupboards. Below in the crypt, where we have another five altars (each a design of its own), things are progressing slowly, too.

On our farm, the pigs are doing badly, the ducks are producing well, and the chickens too. Fruits of all kinds are producing, as well as rice forever sufficient for our yearly needs. Alas, the farm also suffered some losses, especially from some poor people who serve themselves from our produce, especially at night. In the morning there are always fewer chickens than the day before! I wish they would ask and so preserve themselves of sin.

Dear friends, please be assured of our Masses, prayers, and sacrifices for you and for your intentions. Please persevere in your Holy Catholic Faith .... Whatever may be the future. Remember; “In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph.”

_Hasta mañana._ God bless,

Fr. C. Daniels

As funds allow, the interior of the church is moving forward towards completion. The image above shows the web of steel that forms the arches.

The images below show three of the five uniquely designed crypt altars that are below the main body of the church.
The Fourth Branch of the Family

Oblate Sisters of the Society of Saint Pius X

In 1974, Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre founded the “Oblate Sisters of the Society of Saint Pius X” as the fourth branch of the Society family. The Society of Saint Pius X (SSPX) is a society of common life without vows in the strict canonical sense of the word, and all its members strive to practice the three evangelical counsels of poverty, chasity and obedience.

On September 15, 2018, “Our Lady of Sorrows Novitiate” was erected by the Superior General of the SSPX, Rev. Father Davide Pagliarani, in Davao City, Philippines. The creation of this new novitiate has proved to be beneficial especially to the local and Asian vocations. Prior to this foundation, the applicants for the Oblates were formed at the “Noviciat Sainte-Thérèse” in Switzerland.

Today more than ever, we need to help the SSPX priests so that they may have more time for their ministry and so save more souls. This year has been the first of its kind for the novitiate: six girls’ camps in two months and in different places. We organized these camps because they are a way of inviting young ladies
Requiescant in Pace

Fr. Daniel Yagan

A young priest of the Society of Saint Pius X was unexpectedly called to God, following a short illness, in the priory of Manila, Philippines. Fr. Daniel Yagan died of pneumonia, a condition that the doctors did not deem to be serious, on Monday, June 7, 2021.

A Filipino, he had been formed at the Holy Cross Seminary, located in Goulburn, Australia. He was 40 years old. A late vocation, he was ordained on December 5, 2020 in South Africa by Bishop de Galarreta, as the ordinations were unable to take place in Australia due to the health situation. He had just completed the first six months of his priesthood.

We entrust him to the prayers of the faithful, with Fr. Régis Babinet, who died of COVID-19, at the age of 75, in the 42nd year of his priesthood. He was buried on Wednesday, June 9.

May they rest in peace.

Fr. Régis Babinet

Six Girls’ Camps

The first camp was in General Santos City and took place in the second half of April. Three Oblate Sisters and a postulant ran the camp of 30 girls whose ages ranged from 8 to 15 years. It was the first such camp after the long lockdown.

Soon after, other four Oblates ran a camp for girls on the usual farm owned by benefactors in Calinan. The same system from General Santos Mission was applied. There were 28 girls who attended this successful camp. Deo gratias!

The third Young Ladies’ Camp, held in Davao, was in a certain way different from the previous two because the age of the campers ranged from 14 to 23 years. The topics were geared to their age: on purity, detachment from vanity, the Four Last Things, etc. There were four Oblate Sisters who organized this camp of 30 young ladies. As in all youth camps, the aim of this was also to encourage vocations.

Two Oblate Sisters and a postulant ran another camp in Cagayan de Oro. The Sisters had to travel around eight hours to reach the location. It was a challenging camp for the Oblates with about 30 campers. Due to the lockdown, the Oblates’ return to Davao was full of worries but, Deo gratias, all went well.

Fifth Camp: the travel was a two-day drive in the van for five Oblates and a postulant followed by crossing the sea on a barge. They finally reached the campsite which was at the church in Bato, Leyte, where there were 21 young lady campers waiting. All went well except for one minor accident with a girl who had a fractured ankle during a game. The teams were exceptionally good at cooking and there were some good signs of future vocations.
For the sixth and last camp, three Oblate Sisters had to challenge the travel restrictions to reach Manila because of the lockdown. The worst part was the return flight to Davao which required a negative swab result; but thanks be to God, all went well.

It is a pity that the Oblates can go to Manila only once a year. The 24 campers, most of whom were new to Tradition, were eager to learn more about their Faith. And the beautiful week of the camp was saddened by the death of Fr. Daniel Yagan on June 7th.

**Exterior Apostolate**

Having a Prior such as Fr. Timothy Pfeiffer who has a deep missionary spirit is contagious. His untiring missionary zeal for the salvation of souls pushes the Oblate Sisters to follow in his steps, though at a slower speed: *cor unum et anima una!* Time had passed by, and the four novices have become Oblates, which means an extra help can now be directed to the apostolate. And so, while the current novices are forbidden to go out for the exterior apostolate, the Oblates and the postulants, according to their talents and capacity, fulfill the different works of mercy in different places as requested by the priests on the weekends. In fact, for two years, while the first novices were under formation, the Catechism centers were left abandoned because the Oblate Sisters had to focus their attention on the novitiate. Only this year have the Oblates resumed the exterior apostolate on Saturdays. The Sisters, as in the gospel, go out in twos: a pair goes to a place called Calinan where for years a group of children have kept their faith and they look forward to the coming of the Sister Catechists every Saturday afternoon; another pair goes to a poor area called Panacan to enkindle the faith of the children who for long time had not been to Church and have been under the influence of a Protestant sect; and a third pair goes to the priory where they teach Catechism to the elite of the Parish that will serve as a model of Catechism centers in the future.

The girls’ camps run by the sisters teach many Filipino young ladies skills of both temporal and eternal importance.
All for Souls!

By our little acts of charity practiced in the shade, we convert souls far away, we help missionaries, we win for them abundant alms; and by that means build actual dwellings, spiritual and material, for our Eucharistic Lord.

—Therese of Lisieux
A Long Overdue Church Renovation

What else could better prepare souls to receive Jesus in the Eucharist than a church that seems like a piece of heaven on earth? If physical matter is music solidified, as Pythagoras believed, then if churches can’t be the most stunning buildings on earth, they should at the very least be safe, welcoming, and homey.
Overdue Renovation

This is exactly the challenge faced by the 25-year-old Our Lady of Victories Church (OLVC) in Manila, Philippines. Standing on a 1,200 square meter lot, the structure has one too many dark and decrepit corners—clear proof that for years the priory has poured much of its resources into the largely intangible yet all the more necessary ministry of caring for the sacramental life of the faithful. Built in 1995-1996, the church, without a doubt, was a sight for sore eyes with its pueblo/missionary neo-Baroque style erected on an elevation of adobe bricks. But the toll of decades of faithful bounding up the concrete steps for Mass, processions, novenas, and other church events; the battering of the elements; and the passage of time is starting to show.

The church and its attached structures have become dirty looking (and therefore unattractive), and also unsafe. In other words, OLVC, which was once the largest Society of Saint Pius X (SSPX) church in Asia, is in need of a long-overdue renovation. Despite the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, the Society is prioritizing this much-needed facelift for safety reasons, appealing to the faithful to help raise an estimated PHP 10 million ($200,000) for a redesign and renovation of the property’s façade, meeting area/hall, offices, bookstore, and washrooms.

Among others issues, the renovation will address the dangerous main staircase that leads to the porch door. It’s dangerous, especially when it is raining, since the tiles are old; but the main problem is structural—as there is no landing area that connects the entrance to the basement hallway. Current plans will also re-purpose space like the corner of the church’s lower façade, which is presently the security guard’s post, as well as the whole basement area. Lastly, the canopy at the church entrance will be improved to be more attractive and at the same time, redesigned to protect people and the wooden porch door from the sun.
Best Possible Investment

While the priory has been in discussions with several architects and contractors, the hurdles are more financial than anything else. The proposed renovation is set to be completed by Easter 2022. The Prior spearheading the project remains optimistic that funds will come as needed and looks to both local and international donors to take up this worthy cause. He hopes they will see it as their “best possible investment.” An estimated 700 faithful are set to benefit from this overhaul. Priests come and go, but the church remains for the faithful of Manila.
“It became obvious why Catholics had built such beautiful cathedrals and churches throughout the world. Not as gathering or meeting places for Christians. But as a home for Jesus Himself in the Blessed Sacrament…. The cathedrals and churches architecturally prepare our souls for the beauty of the Eucharist.”

—Allen R. Hunt, Confessions of a Mega Church Pastor: How I Discovered the Hidden Treasures of the Catholic Church
Priests of the Asian District

Photo taken during the last Priests' Meeting that took place in Manila in February 2020.
Asia

Creative Communication

For years now, the priests of the vast district of Asia would meet once a year for a priests' meeting. The last one took place in Manila in February 2020. Some confreres, who were to travel through Hong Kong, had their trip rerouted. But we were far from suspecting that it was the last time we would all meet together.

After much delay, the new priory of Tokyo was opened (January 2021) and the Confreres have been able to propagate the faith in this mostly pagan country.

Confreres stranded in France and in the United States were able to reach their new assignment (Singapore and Sri Lanka). But some are still waiting as the borders in Asia have hardly reopened.

The district retreat which was to take place in October 2020 had to be canceled and each priory organized its own retreat, often listening to the recording of a retreat preached elsewhere in the world.

And although internet is not always working very well in some areas of the district, one of the priests of the district is now assigned every

The priests of the Asian District have made use of technology to maintain communication during these challenging times.
fortnight to give an online spiritual conference. A time of spiritual refreshment and of fraternal gathering.

Lastly, as much as joy filled our hearts with the ordination of two Filipinos to the priesthood, last December, with great sadness we unexpectedly lost one of them, Fr. Daniel Yagan, after a mere 6 months of priesthood in the district. Rest in peace.
Bishop de Galarreta with the newly ordained priests on December 5, 2020 in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Hardworking priests on a well-deserved holiday (above).
Fr. Daniel Couture with seminarian Eric Wat at the seminary in Dillwyn, Virginia in February of 2020.

21 June 2021
Feast of St. Aloysius Gonzaga

Dear Faithful of the Asian District,

We would like to express our gratitude to all of you for the donations you’ve given last Good Shepherd Sunday for the Asian Seminarians. These donations helped us to cover our expenses in our studies in the Seminary.

We would like to thank you also for your continual support and prayers for us who are studying and preparing for the Priesthood.

Please be assured of our prayers for all you. Once again, Thank you very much and May God Bless you all!

“Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send labourers into His vineyard”
(Matthew 9:38)

In Christ Our Lord,

Mr Longinus Kim
Mr Longinus Kim (South Korea)

Mr Rafael Vincent Fauskino (Philippines)

4th Year Seminarians
Holy Cross Seminary
The Church of St. Dominic in Oaxaca (Iglesia de Santo Domingo in Spanish), one of the most beautiful churches of its era due to its majestic façade, interiors, and history. Begun in 1575, the church and monastery were constructed over a period of 200 years, between the 16th and 18th centuries, by the Dominican Order. The monastery was active from 1608 to 1857. In the period of the revolutionary wars, the buildings were turned over to military use, and from 1866 to 1902 they served as a barracks. The church was restored to religious use in 1938 and has recently been fully restored. Its highly decorated interior includes more than 60,000 sheets of 24-karat gold leaf.
The Mission in Tlaxiaco, Oaxaca

One of our most charming missions in the Society of Saint Pius X (SSPX) Mexico District is undoubtedly that of Tlaxiaco, Oaxaca, which we visit every month on a seven-hour trip from our priory located in Orizaba, Veracruz. This mission is located in the southwestern part of the state of Oaxaca in the southern part of the country.

The Dominican Route

The Dominicans arrived in Oaxaca in 1528, invited by Hernan Cortés to evangelize the Indians. For long years they went all over the state sowing the divine seed. It is recorded that, due to their zeal, their diligence in learning the aboriginal languages and, above all, their impeccable conduct, they managed to convert the natives in large numbers.

By 1847, they had 54 flourishing monasteries. With the passage of time and due to the Reform Laws, these were reduced to 13 houses, and finally to only one in 1867, which housed 3 religious in all. [1]

A Sign from Heaven

The city of Tlaxiaco began as a small mission, in the middle of nowhere, established by a miraculous sign from heaven. The saint who brought the Cross to these landscapes was Fray Gonzalo Lucero, O.P., who saw in a dream that the Mixtec Indians who populated the land would gather around a chapel that was to be established. The location of the chapel would be indicated by the descent of three bright white doves pointing to the place in the name of the Holy Trinity. Contrary to human expectations, the place marked by Divine Providence was not pleasant. It was full of swamps in the middle of a deep valley, but Fray Gonzalo Lucero, following the inspirations of grace, did not hesitate to get to work. To begin, he raised a Cross... This is what the Church has always done, to raise up a Cross—to raise an altar, the place of the Holy Sacrifice—so that souls may benefit from the Most Precious Blood of Our Lord and have
abundant fruits of redemption.

“This country asks for men of bronze, for it would be impossible for men of flesh alone to tolerate such excessive labors if the strength of the spirit, aided by grace, did not carry them miraculously” [2]. Bronze indeed was the will of the first Dominican missionaries, Fray Domingo de Santamaria, Fray Gonzalo Lucero, and Fray Benito Hernández, who evangelized and settled in Tlaxiaco in the mid-sixteenth century.

Origin of the Parish

Given the fruitfulness of the mission which the friars had established in Tlaxiaco, it was soon necessary to establish a priest there to take charge of the new converts. Bishop Zarate erected the parish with a beneficiary clergyman at the helm. The historian Burgoa tells us that “this first priest did not manage to acclimatize, nor to adapt himself to the customs, nor to learn
the Mixtec language nor, therefore, to exercise the priestly ministry for the benefit of the Tlaxiaqueños.” [3]

For all these reasons he repeatedly presented his resignation, but the bishop could not accept it because he had no one to put in his place. But sometime later, in 1548, the prelate convinced the Viceroy to force the sons of Saint Dominic to take charge of the parish established in Tlaxiaco. Thus, the first priests sent there were precisely Fray Gonzalo Lucero and Fray Benito Hernández, both expert and zealous missionaries who, because they had been the first to arrive in that region, spoke the Mixtec language fluently. The natives’ joy in seeing the first missionaries they had met returning to them was so great that they immediately offered to decorate the priests’ dwelling and to build, no longer a hermitage, but a true church. [4]

It seems that Tlaxiaco was a rival of Yanhuitlán, and when the Tlaxiaqueños saw that their rivals had built a large convent and church, not wanting to be outdone, they planned to build one of the same proportions. Unfortunately, they could not realize their dreams because they lacked the material resources of their competitors. Instead, they built a vaulted church, adorning it with such stonework, art, and beauty that it reminds us of the churches of Spain: “Although it is not as large as that of Yanhuitlán, it exceeds it in curiosity and the competition of the two mirrors that of Seville and Toledo.” [5]

“The altarpiece was beautifully painted. On the central niche the bulky image of the Assumption of Our Lady, patron saint of the temple, is surrounded by angels, who also serve as a base for the image.” [6]

On August 15th, they held a great pilgrimage in the town on the occasion of the feast of their Patron Saint. In 1869, the festival was moved to the third Sunday of October, on which day the government had decided to hold a fair for this same reason.

“In Tlaxiaco was the largest bell that was known in these kingdoms; they later decided to melt it down and with it made two large bells, three medium bells, and a clock. In 1848, the Tlaxiaqueños made notable improvements to the grounds, paving the square and building a new clock under the direction of the Dominican Fray Luis Caldelas, to whom the people, inspired by parish priest Jerónimo Altamirano, have dedicated a street, as well as one to Fray Gonzalo Lucero, in proof of gratitude.” [7]

Next to the church, a monastery was built and blessed in 1607. In the year 1847, the General Chapter of the Dominicans ordered that the students of Oaxaca be transferred to the monastery of Tlaxiaco, so they might benefit from the tranquility that was not available in the chapel of San Nicolás, the customs of the people evangelized by the Dominican missionaries who conquered the Mixteca for Christ the King are faithfully kept. The processions, prayers, songs, and pious practices are of immemorial tradition, and the magnificent ceremonies of Holy Week in memory of the Passion of Our Lord especially stand out in the liturgical cycle.
in the city. Tlaxiaco was one of the monasteries that the Dominican Order retained until the end of the last century, because in 1892 the last Provincial of that Dominican Province, Fray Benito López, was in charge of the parish.

“There are several venerable religious who lie in the temple of Tlaxiaco, but we will only name Fray Diego del Río, Fray Pedro de Aranda, and Fray Gonzalo Lucero. Fray Diego del Río knew how to mix perfectly with the Mixtec Indians whom he preached to, corrected, and directed through the Christian life. After writing many sermons, spiritual treatises, and a very extensive and valuable dictionary of the Mixtec language, he died in San Juan Mixtepec while serving as Prior of Tlaxiaco. For his part, Fray Pedro de Aranda was one of the most learned ministers to serve in this region; he knew the Mixtec language perfectly, even the most uncommon words used by the Indians. He was highly esteemed by his parishioners and the faithful. But the most famous religious who lies there is undoubtedly Fray Gonzalo Lucero...”[8]

Our History in Tlaxiaco

Monsignor Lefebvre, faithful to his missionary formation, did not hesitate to visit Tlaxiaco during his sojourn in our country. This small town in the Mixteca Baja holds the record of confirmations by our founder, since on January 12, 1981 he administered the Sacrament of Confirmation to no less than 813 souls who had come en masse upon hearing that the Archbishop was in the area. During his stay, some chapels of the town were offered to the Monsignor for his work. Unfortunately, due to the attacks of the local bishops and the small number of priests in the District of Mexico, it was not possible for the Archbishop to tend to so many chapels. At present only the church of the Barrio San Nicolas remains under the tutelage of the Society of Saint Pius X.

Although the treasure of ancient images and paintings possessed by our church is considerable, it is most famous throughout the region for housing the image of Our Lord of the Rescue, a miraculous image brought from the Philippines around 1630 and placed for veneration in the parish of San Nicolas. The miraculous action connected with the image was so great that the residents of the town soon thought of building this image a church of its own. As a result, the first hermitage for the miraculous image was constructed. Over time, a church was built in the Barrio de San Nicolas, and the image was placed there for veneration. Love and devotion to Our Lord of the Rescue is widespread in the town and throughout the region. A novena to Our Lord of the Rescue and special festivities in the month of July are celebrated with reverence.

Maintaining this mission of the SSPX is especially challenging due to the difficulty of travel in this region and the large number of repairs and maintenance required by such an old church.

Yet it is a worthy labor of love by the priests of the Society of Saint Pius X who are sustaining Catholic Tradition throughout this huge country, blessed by Our Lady of Guadalupe.

The Society of Saint Pius X is an international priestly society of almost 700 priests. Its main purpose is the formation and support of priests.

The goal of the Society of Saint Pius X is to preserve the Catholic Faith in its fullness and purity, not changing, adding to or subtracting from the truth that the Church has always taught, and to diffuse its virtues, especially through the Roman Catholic priesthood. Authentic spiritual life, the sacraments, and the traditional liturgy are its primary means to foster virtue and sanctity and to bring the divine life of grace to souls.

Faithful to the words of Our Lord—“Going therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”—the Society of Saint Pius X strives to bring the Gospel and Tradition to souls around the world. As a lifelong missionary, Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre passed on this charism to the Society. This magazine aims to both inform souls about the work of the missions and how they can be helped.