



CONGREGATION OF THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

47th GENERAL CHAPTER

Rome, 6-27 October 2018

Report of the Secretary General for Solidarity and the Missions

1. Introduction

In presenting the following report to the 47th General Chapter, I would like to clarify that the Office entrusted to me concerns Solidarity and the Missions, and not JPIC (Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation).

The report is divided into three parts –

- PAST
- PRESENT
- FUTURE

THE PAST

This report covers the period since the last General Chapter of 2012, to the present General Chapter of 2018. At the General Synod of 2015, my predecessor Fr. Jesús María Aristín Seco, gave a brief report on the activities of our missions during the years 2012 to 2015, and provided a substantial amount of information about JPIC.

In his report to the General Synod of 2015, "*On projects of Evangelization, promotion and development*" he noted the following concerning the missions-- we helped our mission territories through programs of evangelization, promotion and development. To this end, our missionaries were encouraged to submit projects to several organizations and international agencies. In our office, we received 79 requests, and we were able to offer assistance to 49 of them. Africa is the continent that has requested the most assistance. I participated in the Congresses of the [former] CARLW and GEMM Vicariates that were held in February 2013. Subsequently, I attended the meeting of the Superiors, Economes and formation personnel of Africa, held in Nairobi in February 2014. Our intention was to aid them to become autonomous communities by proposing various forms of self-subsistence. However, there is still much to be done. The Mission Fund will continue to provide assistance. I also visited the communities of our mission in Bulgaria in November 2013.

In the period 2015-2018 we continued all assistance to our missions in various parts of the world, however, I can only report on the past year, i.e. from May 2017 to June 2018.

THE PRESENT

In this my first year, I tried to be attentive to all of our missions throughout the world by visiting the sites in Asia (Vietnam), South America (PERU) and Africa (KENYA and TANZANIA).

I acquired an overview of the situation, the issues and the challenges in different missions where our missionaries have worked and are doing the work of human and Christian education, especially in our formation houses.

RIVITALIZE THE MISSIONS

1. Asia
2. Latin America
3. Africa

1. ASIA

We have various missions in this area, in particular in Papua New Guinea and Vietnam. I visited Saigon, Vietnam for a week. There are three houses of formation.

Aspirancy- composed of a Vietnamese priest Director and nine young, enthusiastic men who attend school in order to prepare them to fulfill the requirements needed to continue the process towards the Postulancy.

Postulancy- This House consists of a Vietnamese Director and fourteen young candidates studying philosophy, as well as those from the previous year who were accepted as postulants. They live in a three-story rented house. The owner lives on the first floor, while the other two floors are used by the community for a chapel, study hall and dormitory. Currently they are waiting the construction of a new building for the community residence located near the student residence. This requires a large degree of sacrifice and adaptability.

Student Residence- This is an international community, consisting of the Superior, Fr. Jefferies Foale (SPIR), the Econome, Fr. Thomas Anamattahil Varughese (THOM) and the Director of Students, Fr. Paulus Jasmin (REPAC). There are also two young Vietnamese priests and nine professed students studying theology.

Positive aspects

There are many vocations to religious life and many more for the diocesan priesthood (Every year the diocese of Saigon accepts 100 seminarians selected from 500 requests). Many prefer to become diocesan priests with the hope of doing parochial ministry. Whereas religious must rely on some benevolent bishop and have the consent of the local government. Therefore like India, in Vietnam the problem that religious encounter is that they are in competition locally with the numerous diocesan clergy.

We are studying different possibilities for our young priests:

- the possibility of assisting in parishes in out-lying areas (as in a mission territory);
- a willingness to do pastoral ministry in the northern regions of Vietnam where there are many Catholics, but little clergy;
- going abroad as foreign missionaries, at least for a period, so as to expand their knowledge of other cultures, customs and traditions.

The Passionist Congregation in Vietnam is experiencing a period of growth with many vocations. For the education of these young people, we are building a retreat of approximately 40 rooms, including classrooms and areas for study and community life.

In Asia, there are also other mission areas that are noteworthy, such as –

-- **Papua New Guinea**, a mission of the SPIR Province (Australia-PNG). I am familiar with this situation because there are two religious of the REPAC Province (Indonesia) stationed there. I hope to visit this area in the near future.

-- **India** (THOM Vice-Province) They have requested permission to build a new retreat that will serve as the Provincialate of the Vice-Province and a house of formation.

-- **China** (a mission of the MACOR Province of Korea) In Xi'an, the capitol of the Shaanxi Province of China and a sub-provincial city, there is a community in an apartment building consisting of three Chinese priests and several candidates. Therefore, they have a program and need to establish a retreat (religious house).

2. LATIN AMERICA

- The Mission in Yurimaguas (Peru)

The Mission in Peru belongs to the SCOR Province (Spain-Latin America). The mission area of Peru is located in the region of Yurimaguas, an Apostolic Vicariate under the leadership of Fr. Jesús María Aristín. Approximately ten missionaries minister in the area that includes the vast region of the upper Amazon.

I visited this area from 27 February to 03 March 2018, and attended a Vicarial Assembly in Yurimaguas. The local clergy were present as well as the religious who minister in this region together accompanied by representatives of the laity who compose the pastoral council of each parish. They made a comprehensive assessment of the political, social, anthropological and pastoral situation of the Apostolic Vicariate.

I learned about the difficulties, problems and possible solutions for evangelization in this region. Because this is a very large geographic area, that extends into a part of the upper Amazon, it is difficult to carry out suitable apostolic activity, inasmuch as the inhabitants of those areas are called "the children of the forest".

-- **The parish of Barranquita (Peru)**

Fr. Mario Bartolini (MAPRAES) has been in this parish for forty years. When he started working in this area, there was only forest. Subsequently, they cleared ground to build the church, the rectory, a workshop, a pastoral center and other buildings that serve for gatherings and catechetical programs. However, the villages along the rivers do not have electricity and are inaccessible by road; the only means of access are the riverboats. Therefore, Fr. Mario maintains contact and communicates with his parishioners by a radio transmission that can reach distant villages in the forest where people can listen to the daily readings and catechesis on the liturgy.

Positive and Negative Aspects:

The life of a missionary for 40 years in the same place: courage, enthusiasm, spirit of optimism-- but this is not sufficient. Doing a great deal, doing too much-- all this produces adversity, challenges, and after so many years, produces an atmosphere of rejection.

3. THE MISSIONS IN AFRICA – KENYA AND TANZANIA

There are various Passionist missions in Africa with the same problems and the same situations, especially in these two nations where the missionaries of the former CORM Province of Italy ministered. There are many works and initiatives currently in progress by our native religious because there are few Italian missionaries remaining. The greatest amount of attention is focused on education.

Overseas sponsors offer periodic contributions to assist many children. Subsequently, communication is maintained with these benefactors.

KENYA

The CARLW Vice province of Kenya has many parishes in isolated locations and are difficult to access because when it rains the internal roads become impassable even with a Jeep. I had the opportunity to visit the parishes and the formation communities. There are several large houses but few religious. Several religious work and teach in Nairobi where the formation house in Kisima is full with 25 students of theology.

In the city of Molo there is a nice house of formation in the open countryside with several acres of land for a vegetable garden and for agriculture. However, there are only two priests and two aspirants. In fact, the Econome has recently agreed to serve in a new parish on the outskirts that is extremely poor-- there is only the little church and a small house that serves as the parish office.

The novitiate is located in the city of Sotik. This is a remote area with muddy, rustic roads, making accessibility difficult. There is also a parish administered by a Passionist.

In the city of Karungku we have a retreat house, a parish and a vocational/professional center.

We have a parish in the city of Kadem. The Sunday Mass is well attended and is enhanced with music and dance, and frequently lasts more than three hours.

There is also a parish in the city of Oruba that is fairly new. It has space also for future development in an area that is highly populated. The religious are very involved in various apostolic ministries.

TANZANIA

The former CORM Province of northern Italy founded the GEMM Vice Province in 1934. Many missionaries spent their lives evangelizing in this country. Many are buried in the cemetery of Veyula-Dodoma.

The formation houses are as follows –

Veyula – Is the site of the Vice Provincial Center and a house for receiving aspirants. We also administer a larger Professional/Trade Centre to prepare young people in different categories of jobs such as in the field of construction, carpentry, tailoring, electricity, etc. They also developed the cultivation of grape vines and have different vineyards with two harvests every year due to the climate.

Arusha is the site of the Postulancy and Philosophy students' residence. Many, such as Fr. Roberto Dal Corso (MAPRAES), are in parishes in the cities of Zenetti and Itololo, where they administer various agricultural and livestock programs. They are also building a hospital. They have a large amount of land that they cultivate, far from the parish center. The mission sites of Itololo, Itiso and Mlova are difficult situations that require assistance.

It is worth noting that the religious houses of formation and parishes have created a system for providing financial independence. They manage to cover daily living expenses from the sale of vegetable crops from their farms. They struggle to renovate or construct new buildings and to meet expenses for formation houses, schools and academic programs.

The religious are very willing to undertake projects organized by the superior.

The Village of Joy-- Fr. Fulgencio Cortesi (MAPRAES)

The Lord often uses the weak and the infirm to build his Kingdom. Proof of this is the Village of Joy founded by Fr. Fulgencio Cortesi. In the Village of Joy [located in the city of Dar es Salaam] there are seven housing units for orphans (currently there are nearly 100 orphans). For everyone else, almost 500 among children and teenagers, he built elementary schools, middle schools and high schools that are also frequented by extern students.

THE SECRETARY GENERAL FOR SOLIDARITY AND THE MISSIONS

In collaboration with the diocese and the cardinal, a new Institute of Sisters called the Mothers of Orphans was founded to assist orphans. This Institute of Sisters has a large space that serves as their community as well as a novitiate and a residence for aspirants and postulants.

There are also many other facilities for the needs of a village, even a bakery for bread. In September of this year they will inaugurate the second Village of Joy that is called "The Village of Light", in the area of Morokoro. It will consist of additional family homes, orphanages, schools and a carpentry and tailoring center.

THE FUTURE - The development of the Congregation

Not only human and social development, but also Christian and religious with solid formation is needed. All missions in Asia, Latin America and especially in Africa have many material needs, as well as needs for intellectual, social and human formation development in order to achieve financial autonomy. It is not only about offering financial assistance for various projects, but also training local people who can continue to develop their own resources for a better future.

The Passionist Congregation has many vocations in both Africa and Asia; however, it is essential to offer them a thorough formation. For this purpose, formation personnel is needed that are humanly mature and spiritually well rooted as Passionists, capable and willing to minister in mission territories and to advance the development of the Congregation in the world.

Fr. Paolo Aureli, CP

The Secretary General for Solidarity and the Missions