

AUXILIARIES OF THE MISSIONS



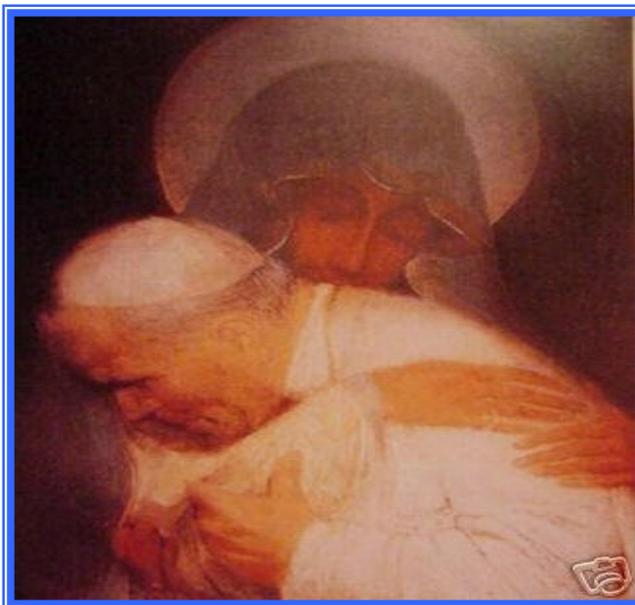
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MARY AT THE CENTER OF THE PILGRIM CHURCH

By His Holiness Pope John Paul II*

Built by Christ upon the Apostles, the Church became fully aware of these mighty works of God on the day of Pentecost, when those gathered together in the Upper Room "were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4). From that moment there also begins that journey of faith, the Church's pilgrimage through the history of individuals and peoples. We know that at the beginning of this journey Mary is present. We see her in the midst of the Apostles in the Upper Room, "prayerfully imploring the gift of the Spirit." (LG, 59)

In a sense her journey of faith is longer. The Holy Spirit had already come down upon her, and she became his faithful spouse at the Annunciation, welcoming the Word of the true God, offering "the full submission of intellect and will...and freely assenting to the truth revealed by him," indeed abandoning herself totally to God through "the obedience of faith," (DV, 5) whereby she replied to the angel: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." The journey of faith made by Mary, whom we see praying in the Upper Room, is thus longer than that of the others gathered there: Mary "goes before them," "leads the way" for them. (LG, 63) The moment of Pentecost in Jerusalem



had been prepared for by the moment of the Annunciation in Nazareth, as well as by the Cross. In the Upper Room Mary's journey meets the Church's journey of faith. In what way?

Among those who devoted themselves to prayer in the Upper Room, preparing to go "into the whole world" after receiving the Spirit, some had been called by Jesus gradually from the beginning of his mission in Israel. Eleven of them had been made Apostles, and to them Jesus had passed on the mission which he himself had received from the Father. "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you" (Jn. 20:21), he had said to the Apostles after the Resurrection. And forty days later, before returning to the Father, he had added: "when the Holy Spirit has come upon you...you shall be my witnesses...to the end of the earth" (cf. Acts 1:8). This mission of the Apostles began the moment they left the Upper Room in Jerusalem. The Church is born and then grows through the testimony that Peter and the Apostles bear to the Crucified and Risen Christ (cf. Acts 2:31-34; 3:15-18; 4:10-12;

5:30-32)

*Excerpts from *Redemptoris Mater*, no. 26, the Pope's Encyclical on the Blessed Virgin Mary in the life of the Pilgrim Church, Rome, 25 March 1987

My Dear Friends,

August 1, 2007

Peace in Christ Jesus!

When Mary went in haste to visit her cousin Elizabeth, John joyfully leaped in his mother's womb. It is because Mary, the living tabernacle of the proto-Missioner and the bearer of the Word, participated in Jesus' mission of *bringing glad tidings to the poor*. She is called "blessed" because she believed that God's Word will be fulfilled *in and through her*. Her faith has become her fate. With her *Fiat*, we can now have *Amen* as our fundamental option to be *pro Deo solo*. Now, we have the power to choose God, to opt to be saved, and to shape our destiny. Indeed, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary is not just a mere commemoration of her earthly departure, but also a joyful celebration and anticipation of our heavenly destiny. For what Mary is, we hope to be. Where Mary is, we hope to go!

Fr. Augustin Miciano, SDB
Missions Animation Office



CAMBODIA

First steps towards

Don Bosco's arrival in Cambodia

Don Bosco officially arrived in Cambodia in 1991 from Thailand, a country where the Salesian presence started in 1927. The Salesians already worked in Bangkok focusing on technical and vocational education at that time. Soon enough, in August 1989 the Salesians established 6 centres for technical education at the 2, 8, Sok Sann and B sites along the Thai-Cambodian border.

A Definitive Presence among the Youth

On the 24th of May 1991, the Solemnity of Mary Help of Christians, Father Walter Brigolin and Brother Roberto Panetto came to Phnom Penh and started works with the poor youth and orphans who were scattered and easy to find in a postwar period with Cambodia. Their battle cry was **"Education as a tool to fight poverty."**

Within two years time, there were around 3,000 young participants who had gained technical skills, but the war was nearly over in Cambodia and the people were about to be repatriated. Past pupils and the personnel kept asking the Salesians **"Are you going to come with us?"**

The Don Bosco Technical School of Phnom Penh, is recognized as the "Cambodian Valdocco", which opened in 1993. On May 24, 1994. Father John Visser came to the city and became its first rector. The needs of technical education in the country where the war destroyed schools and many opportunities, urged the Salesian missionaries to think of a second work. The chosen place was the Cambodian international port, Sihanoukville or



Angkor of Cambodia

Kompong Som. The Don Bosco Technical School of Sihanoukville opened in January 1999.

With the technical education came other proposals to answer the needs of a society in poverty. The following interventions were established: the Don Bosco Children Fund to support education of children in very poor conditions and the Don Bosco Food Program to contribute with food to 47 schools in Banteay Meanchey Province.

By the year 2000, Don Bosco Phnom Penh did the first experience of the Youth Center or better known as the Oratory. Soon, in November 2004, another setting opened in Poipet as a shelter home for children victims of trafficking.

At present, several thousand young people are the immediate beneficiaries of work in Phnom Penh, Sihanoukville and Poipet.

The work continues and is very much appreciated in spite of the language barrier. It is a most welcome news that everyone is happy that Don Bosco is now in Cambodia. As Fr. Bernard Tohill prays "God bless Cambodia and the Church and Congregation."

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missiology in action

Fr. Gerardo Ravasco, SDB

Cambodia is best remembered in the consciousness of man for personages like Polpot, the Khmer Rogues and the famous stories about the killing fields. The nation has gone through a lot of crisis in matters of trials and sufferings but the development and social work continues. Don Bosco's presence is much felt in this aspect and at the same time appreciated by the government.

My journey in the work for the missions started as a process. I opted to begin my missionary calling by testing the water of ministering first in the rural missions of Naga here in the Philippines. When the opportunity came that Papua New Guinea needed people to substitute for the missionaries to be given their respite, I took the opportunity to alternate and thus work for the people in PNG as well. It was there that I worked in the bush and also got to experience walking long miles in order to say Holy Mass for the people. Likewise, it was inevitable for me to contract malaria. When my friends and classmates were ready to get back to PNG again, my waiting time was over. I finally proceeded to Cambodia.

Why Cambodia? I laugh in recalling the reason why I volunteered to opt for this country. I remember that what made me choose this land was reading the letter of the Rector Major asking for volunteers. Fr. Odorico who was then the Missions Councilor asked me specifically why not other mission lands. I reiterated simply that it was the most urgent at that time and the Rector Major made the invitation.



Some of the personal considerations I feel that is needed in Cambodia is primarily the necessity for mental stamina. The difficulty in learning the language is so complex that I still have to read my homilies since I cannot say it straight. Similarly, I consider that the best way to be productive in the mission work is also the adaptability to adjust in a tropical climate. The saving grace in working in this land is the fact that my complexion as a South East Asian does not create barriers for me to interact with the youth and the people of the Church. This is unlike the perception that is commonly seen among missionaries in PNG where the term of "white man" is heard instantaneously for expatriates.

The focus of Salesian work models itself in an NGO type of school setting. It caters to the development of students who are Buddhists, Muslims, and Christians alike. The key word here is development. The main thrust of the relevance of Don Bosco in Cambodia is community adaptation that does not give exclusive attention to particular groups and personages. All pastoral care goes hand in hand with developmental work. This receives reciprocal government support and appreciation especially since everything is done and given for free.

Working and serving in the missions is a fulfilling experience for me in my ministry of priesthood. I believe that the bottom line of working in the missions and for every missionary as well, is loving the life one wants to do and basically I love the work I do. This is the essence of missiology. We help the people of the place and help them in the best way we can. Our Cambodian Bosconians are definitely not exempt from this. If they are going to be Catholics, they have to be Catholics in the Cambodian way.