

SCARBORO MISSIONS

“...a woman clothed
with the sun...” Revelations 12:1

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Dear friend of
Scarboro Missions,

Please remember us with your prayers and financial support so that we may witness to the Gospel overseas and in Canada. We will continue to be good stewards of all your gifts as we put ourselves at the service of others. Thank you for your faithfulness and generosity.

**SCARBORO
MISSIONS**

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Cover: Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared in Mexico as the pregnant Mother of God to Saint Juan Diego, a Chicemeca Indian, on December 9, 10, and 12, 1531. She left a miraculous image of her appearance on his cactus fiber cloak, or *tilma*, which still exists today for all to see in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mexico City.

Thank you!

Our thanks to Fr. Ron MacDonell for his tremendous work in researching and preparing this special issue on the rosary.

Fr. Ron, from Antigonish, NS, joined Scarboro Missions in 1980. He has worked among the Tzotzil in Chiapas, Mexico, and in riverside communities in Itacoatiara Prelacy, Amazonas, Brazil. A professional linguist, he has accompanied the Makuxi and Wapichana peoples of Roraima Diocese since 1993, both in language revitalization and pastoral work.

How to pray the rosary

When praying the rosary, we use a set of beads to guide our prayer. We begin by holding the cross of the rosary and praying the Apostles' Creed, thus professing our faith in Jesus who through his Cross offers us eternal life in the Resurrection. From the cross, we pray one Our Father, three Hail Marys and one Glory Be on the beads leading to the five decades. At the beginning of each decade, we announce the particular Mystery to be pondered. We could even make a short reflection, or voice our prayer intention. Each decade is comprised of a large bead on which we pray an Our Father, and ten smaller beads on which we pray the Hail Mary; we end each decade by praying the Glory Be. The Joyful Mysteries are prayed on Monday and Saturday; the Luminous Mysteries are prayed on Thursday; the Sorrowful Mysteries are prayed on Tuesday and Friday, the day our Lord died; and the Glorious Mysteries are prayed on Wednesday and Sunday, the day of our Lord's Resurrection. ∞



By Fr. Ron MacDonell, S.F.M.

Praying the rosary for mission

As a child I experienced a form of prayer common to many Catholic families. Each evening, my parents would call us to kneel and pray the rosary. At the end of the rosary, or "the beads," my mother would pray the Litany to Our Lady. For me, praying the rosary was a wonderful way to end the day. Soothed by the repetition of the *Our Father* and *Hail Mary*, I usually had a feeling of great peace at the end of the prayer. I felt closer to my own family and a part of God's larger family.

The rosary began initially in the Middle Ages as a simplified way of praying the 150 Psalms that religious orders recited during the day in order to remember Jesus. For the common, illiterate folk, a string of 150 beads represented the psalms and for each bead a prayer such as the *Our Father*, or what eventually developed as the *Hail Mary*, was prayed. Over time, sets of mysteries were created to help people ponder each day the main events of Jesus' life. (www.personalizedrosaries.com/history)

The mysteries of the rosary invite us to deepen our understanding of the lives of Jesus and his mother Mary. There is a movement through four emotional spheres: joy, light, sorrow, and glory. First, there are the Joyful Mysteries through which we feel the joy of the angel's annunciation to Mary, of her visitation to her cousin Elizabeth, of the birth of her Son Jesus, of his presentation in the temple, and then of the finding of the child Jesus in the temple.

We then meditate on the Luminous Mysteries introduced by Pope John Paul II in 2002. The Luminous Mysteries concentrate on Jesus' ministry: his baptism in the river Jordan, his first miracle at the wedding of Cana, his preaching of God's Kingdom, his transfiguration on the mountain and finally his gift of the Eucharist to the Church.

Jesus' transforming ministry of light provokes opposition and leads to sorrow, represented in the Sorrowful Mysteries: his agony in the Garden before his arrest, his torture in the scourging at the pillar and at the crowning of thorns, and his carrying of the cross, which ends in his death by crucifixion.

Dark sorrow turns to blissful glory and we begin our meditation on the Glorious Mysteries: God our Creator, the God of life, glorifies his Son Jesus by the resurrection, raising his Son to new life. The Risen Lord spends 40 days with his disciples and then ascends to heaven, sending in turn the Holy Spirit of Pentecost, marking the founding of the Church. God honours Mary, the mother of Jesus, by her assumption into heaven and by crowning the Blessed Virgin as Queen of Peace.

The word "mystery" has its root in the Greek words *mysterion*, meaning "secret rite or doctrine," and *mystes*, "one who has been initiated." (www.etymon.com) A *mysterion* is something not readily understood by logic. The mysteries are meant to be pondered, to be grasped intuitively,

to be returned to time and again. Slowly they lead us to a deeper understanding of who Jesus is and what his life means. Through our prayer we let him transform our lives. By meditating on the mysteries, we learn to appreciate Mary and her role in Jesus' life and in our lives. The mysteries are revealed to us by God's grace.

In this brief presentation of the 20 mysteries of the rosary, we offer three reflections: first, some thoughts and questions about each mystery; then, some ideas on how we as missionaries often understand the mystery; and finally, an *Amazon Word*. Scarboro missionaries have worked in the Brazilian Amazon since 1962 in the Prelacy of Itacoatiara and the Diocese of Roraima. The Amazon rainforest has come into focus in recent years, as humanity grows in awareness of our planet's fragility and of our call to be responsible for our Creator's gift to us, mother Earth. Each mystery of the rosary is accompanied by a photo from a country where Scarboro missionaries labour; these images from other lands represent the universality of our faith. We hope that these short reflections will help you in praying the rosary and in deepening your sense of Jesus and Mary acting in your life. May you be blessed as you pray the rosary. We ask that you remember us in your prayers. ∞

[Biblical quotes from the "Good News Bible", The Bible Societies/Collins, 2005 edition.]

The Annunciation

GOD'S MESSENGERS APPEAR IN OUR LIVES

"The angel said to her, 'Don't be afraid, Mary; God has been gracious to you. You will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High God.'" Luke 1:30-32

Reflection

The word "angel" comes from the Greek *angelos*, meaning messenger. Angels are God's messengers and the angel Gabriel appears to Mary, bringing her frightening but also joyful news: she will bear God's son. The Hebrew name Gabriel means "God is my strength." God shows his strength to Mary through Gabriel's message: God's Son Jesus is to become the peace for the world, indeed for the whole universe, for all time.

God sends us messengers, too, through other people, through events, through our thoughts, intuitions, and dreams. The message can be both frightening and hope-filled, as it was for Mary. God breaks into our lives and promises us new life, new ways of being. Are we attuned to the angels in our lives? How do we respond to God's message? Mary answered: "I am the Lord's servant... May it happen to me as you have said." (Luke 1:38) Do we have the same courage as Mary did?

God also calls us to be messengers to others: angels of strength, of hope, and of love. Do we consider ourselves to be angels, like Gabriel? Are we aware that our words and actions can serve as God's message to others?

Mission Call

Scarboro Missions' founder Monsignor John Mary Fraser felt God calling him to mission, first to China, then to Japan. All Scarboro missionaries hear God's angels calling us to serve people in other cultures. We receive grace and strength from God to answer "Yes" as Mary did. In mission, we discover mutuality with the people we serve: many of them are messengers for us, as we, too, are messengers of hope to them. Upon returning to Canada, we further discover our call to be messengers to our own people.

As we pray this decade of the rosary, let us ask God for the grace to see the angels in our lives. Let us pray for the strength to be angels to others. Let us pray for the grace to say "Yes" to God's call in our lives. Let us pray for our own personal intentions.



Amazon Word

Rosa's newborn son lies resting in a hammock. Her sister Maria tells me that Rosa is taking a man to court because he attempted to kill her. The man recently appeared, offering Rosa money to drop the charge of homicide. But Maria insisted that Rosa take him to court. I ask Maria if the man is the father of the baby. "No," Maria answers. "I believe the baby is a child of God!"

The Visitation

SOLIDARITY: MARY AND ELIZABETH NURTURE NEW LIFE

"Remember your relative Elizabeth. It is said that she cannot have children, but she herself is now six months pregnant, even though she is very old. For there is nothing that God cannot do." Luke 1:36-37
 "When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby moved within her. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and said in a loud voice, 'You are the most blessed of all women, and blessed is the child you will bear!... Happy are you to believe that the Lord's message will come true!'" Luke 1:41-45

Reflection

Mary hurries off to the hill country to visit her older cousin Elizabeth. She feels joy and wonderment. Not only is she to bear a son sent by God, but Elizabeth also is to bear a child. Elizabeth, childless for so many years, has suffered the shame of being barren. Now that shame is to be lifted. Mary reflects on Elizabeth's name, Hebrew for "God is a vow." Truly what God vowed will come true.

When Mary arrives at Elizabeth's home, Elizabeth feels the movement of her child in her womb as she greets her cousin. The two women visit with each other and ponder the work of God in their lives. Elizabeth's son John will grow to be a prophet, one who paves the way for Mary's son, Jesus. The women imagine what their sons will be like. Elizabeth intuitively knows that Mary's son is special, extraordinary, the Son of the Creator. She blesses Mary: "Blessed are you among women!" Elizabeth's words form part of the prayer, *Hail Mary*. Mary responds with praise of God's action in her life, proclaiming God "who pulls down the proud and raises the humble."

We are called to recognize God's action in our lives. In a sense, we all become pregnant with the living word. We are called to nurture this Word in the womb of our hearts, until it is born in actions of love and compassion. Mary's visit to Elizabeth shows her solidarity with her cousin. We, too, are called to offer the gift of presence to others. How do I express solidarity with others? Am I willing to accept others' friendship and their solidarity with me?

Mission Call

Scarboro missionaries spend a lot of time visiting people. Reaching out, going to people's homes, accepting their hospitality, listening to their lives, are important ways of being in mission. Missioners carry Jesus to that person or family and humbly recognize the presence of Jesus in those we visit. God invites us to nurture this presence in one another, as Mary and Elizabeth did.

Scarboro missionaries also live in solidarity with social groups working to incarnate God's presence in the world. These groups are many, varying from parish prayer groups and children's catechetical groups, to rural workers' unions and indigenous organizations. God calls us to accompany and nurture these groups.

During this decade of the rosary, let us pray that we become more nurturing of God's presence in one another. Let us remember all women waiting to give birth to new life. Let us pray for groups nurturing peace and justice in the world.



Amazon Word

Roberto and Sara are very poor. Their many children are scrawny. Their house has stick walls and a straw roof. When I am leaving, Roberto presents me with eggs. I feel humbled. How could I take food from them when their children are obviously hungry? But to refuse the gift would be to insult their hospitality. Their generosity overwhelms me.

The Birth of Jesus

INCARNATION: GOD-WITH-US

“While they were in Bethlehem, the time came for her to have her baby. She gave birth to her first son, wrapped him in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger—there was no room for them to stay in the inn.” Luke 2:6-7

Reflection

Mary and Joseph, tired, weary, exhausted, arrive in Bethlehem. They are scared: the difficulty of the journey has had its effect on Mary and she feels that the time has come to give birth. They can find no place to stay; eventually an innkeeper provides an abode for them among the animals.

Then the miracle happens: their son is born, their firstborn, and they name him Emmanuel, “God with us.” In the days that follow, their astonishment increases with the visit of the shepherds from the region, and foreign kings from afar bearing precious gifts. In their hearts, Mary and Joseph know that what God spoke to them through angels and dreams has come true. This is God’s Son.

During each Advent we relive Mary and Joseph’s awaiting of their son. At Christmas, we celebrate his birth. We are reminded of God’s choosing to be born as a migrant, someone on the move, without a place to stay. We note that the first group to whom Jesus’ birth is announced is the shepherds, poor men tending their flocks in the countryside, social outcasts unable to go to the temple to offer the ritual sacrifice. The three kings represent the universality of God’s birth: his Son was born for all peoples, all nations, all times. We, too, join them at the stable before the Child Jesus. Like the shepherds, we offer them our poverty; like the three kings, we offer the best of our hearts.

Mission Call

As missionaries we have been called to witness Jesus’ birth in other lands and cultures. The three kings represent the cross-cultural aspect of Jesus’ mission: he has come for all peoples. So we, too, go out to other lands. Another important aspect is represented by the shepherds: we are called to make a preferential option for the poor, to place ourselves in solidarity with social outcasts in all situations. Finally, Jesus’ birth in a stable, with his parents on the move, calls us to be itinerants as well, to become like migrants or nomads.

As we pray this decade of the rosary, let us ponder: How is Jesus born into my life through other people and events? Is there room for him in the inn of my heart? Let us remember the poor, the migrants, and the immigrants in our world. Let us pray that the celebration of Christmas may be less consumerist and more in tune with service to others.



Amazon Word

It is Sunday afternoon. A call comes from Helena, a Makuxi woman. “My neighbour Antonia is about to give birth!” she says. “There are no buses running. Padre, could you take her to the hospital?” I drive 40 minutes there, leaving Antonia and her niece at the hospital. What a blessing—new life! Later, at 10 o’clock that night, Antonia calls. “Padre, I haven’t given birth yet and there is no room at the hospital. Could you drive me back home?” When I arrive at the hospital, I see five other pregnant women waiting for rides. What lack of health service. I leave Antonia at home. The next day, she goes to the hospital by bus and eventually gives birth.

The Presentation of the Child Jesus

GIFT OF GOD

“...they took the child to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, as it is written in the law of the Lord: ‘Every firstborn male is to be dedicated to the Lord.’” Luke 2:22-23

Reflection

Mary and Joseph feel pride at being able to comply with the Jewish tradition of offering their firstborn male to the Lord. They name him Jesus, *Yeshuah*, which means “God saves.” In the temple, they encounter the elderly Simeon and Anna. Both are overjoyed at seeing the newborn child. Mary and Joseph feel astonishment and fear at Simeon’s words (*Luke 2:34-35*): “This child is chosen by God for the destruction and salvation of many in Israel. He will be a sign from God which many people will speak against and so reveal their secret thoughts.” Mary in particular feels dread at Simeon’s prediction: “...and sorrow, like a sharp sword, will break your own heart.” What suffering will this involve? Who will her son Jesus become? What division will he cause?

Today many couples take their infant child to be baptised in the Church. This is a way of presenting their child to the Lord. There are other offerings we can make to God. Do I consider my life as a gift to be returned to God? Do we see God’s creation, the Earth and its creatures, as a gift to be valued?

Mary received Simeon’s chilling words of future suffering. What swords have pierced my heart? Can I see my suffering in terms of Jesus’ suffering? How can I help alleviate the suffering of others?

Mission Call

As missionaries we are called to offer ourselves as a gift to God in service to others. We also have the mission of inviting others to see themselves as a gift to God. In our mission work, we are aware of the elderly, people like Simeon and Anna. We accompany Third Age groups. We learn, too, about the swords that pierce people’s hearts when touched by tragedy. As missionaries, we strive to understand the many divisions in society, particularly between those who exploit others and those who seek justice.

In recent years, we have become aware that our planet Earth is threatened by our abuse of its resources. Eco-theologians urge us to respect this Garden of Eden that God has given to us, so that Earth will be able to sustain future life.

As we pray this decade of the rosary, let us ask God for the grace to have a deeper understanding of ourselves as an offering to God. Let us pray for the elderly. Let us pray for the healing of divisions in our society. Let us pray for our planet.



Amazon Word

In Fox Leg village, a Makuxi community, I am amazed at the elderly lay leaders who often preach and lead prayers in Makuxi. They are illiterate. João, a community elder, sits beside me during Mass holding a Bible full of pictures of classical paintings. He identifies the picture associated with the readings. Mariana, another community elder, stands before the people and speaks about God’s Word, a rosary around her neck. The witness of these community elders underlines for me that God’s Word is essentially a living word.

The Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple

THE WISDOM OF GOD

“On the third day they found him in the Temple, sitting with the Jewish teachers, listening to them and asking questions. All who heard him were amazed at his intelligent answers.” Luke 2:46-47

Reflection

Mary and Joseph are frantic. On their return trip to Nazareth, they discover that Jesus is missing. Might he have been kidnapped, taken in a caravan to some other land? Fighting the panic in their hearts, they return to Jerusalem and find their son at the temple. Once more, Mary and Joseph experience astonishment. Jesus is there, conversing with the elders about the Law and the Prophets. These scholars are amazed at his knowledge, this boy of only 12 years of age, who is able to engage them in a reflection on the holy teachings.

In the temple is the Holy of Holies: the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark, representing God’s presence, had been carried through the desert housed in a tent. The young Jesus is drawn to the temple, the centre of learning about God’s Law. He already has a sense of mission and shows his love for God’s Word. His going to the temple is, in a way, a breaking from his parents. He says to them, “Didn’t you know that I had to be in my Father’s house?” (Luke 2:49) But he humbly returns with them, sensitive to his parents’ concern.

What is my relation to learning and study? Do I take time to think about God’s Holy Word? Do I read and reflect on Scripture? Jesus later returned to the temple in anger over the exploitation by the moneychangers and lenders. What is my attitude toward the economic system? How can I help to promote justice and peace?

Mission Call

Scarboro missionaries spend a time of preparation for mission in theological studies. We are also called to permanent formation through courses and workshops. Much of our mission work involves education, particularly popular education and leadership training. We teach God’s Word in parish study groups. We also accompany popular movements where people seek to understand the causes of extreme poverty and suffering in our world, and how we can eradicate them.

As we pray this decade of the rosary, let us ask for a deeper understanding of Scripture and the Church’s teaching. Let us pray for theologians as they seek to interpret God’s Word. Let us remember the many leaders in grassroots communities throughout the world who are engaged in teaching their people about God’s action in our lives.



Amazon Word

Paulo, a priest from Costa Rica, and I spend a week in a Wapichana village studying the language. Two lay leaders, called catechists, help us: Kuaraz, a family man in his 30s with just two years of schooling; and Wyradiaba, a 14-year-old girl who has completed eight years of study. Every day we sit in the shade of a huge mango tree reading the Gospel in Wapichana very slowly. Paulo and I note new words. Kuaraz and Wyradiaba are patient with us and we all laugh at our mistakes. What I remember most is our shared love for God’s Word and our desire to communicate it to the people.

The Baptism of Jesus

COMMITMENT

“After all the people had been baptized, Jesus also was baptized. While he was praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit came down upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my own dear Son. I am pleased with you.’” Luke 3:21-22

Reflection

Jesus walks toward the Jordan River. He sees his cousin John standing in the river, looking thin, with beard unkempt and dressed in animal skins. John is surrounded by people also standing in the water. Jesus feels it is time to begin his ministry. He wants to make a symbolic act, to undergo this ritual as a way of beginning his prophetic role. Jesus thinks of the visitation of their mothers Mary and Elizabeth so many years ago.

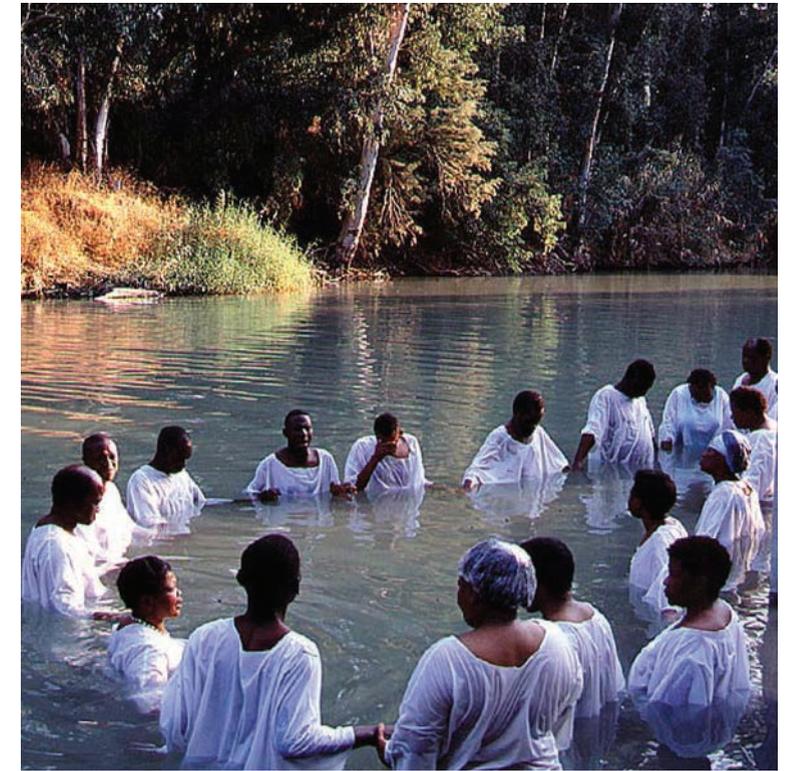
Baptism was total immersion. It was a washing away of the past, of all sins—a total letting go in order to begin life anew. The baptized person returned to God, radically committing themselves to God’s law. Jesus was without sin, but he wanted to undergo what the people experienced. John accepts to baptize Jesus. The skies open and a voice is heard; it is God the Father proclaiming love for his Son, giving his son his blessing. Jesus emerges from the water, ready to begin his mission.

How do we understand our baptism? Was I baptised as a child? Who taught me the meaning of my baptism? Can I remember the moment when I accepted my baptism? Do I feel a sense of mission in my baptism? What is my particular mission?

Mission Call

Many Scarboro missionaries celebrate the sacrament of baptism as part of our mission work. This is particularly true of Scarboro priests who work in a parish setting. Monsignor Fraser, our founder, felt the call to go to China and to baptize people, to save them. Our understanding of this mission has changed. Our approach to calling people depends on the land to which we are sent. In places where most of the people are not Christian, we simply welcome people who feel attracted to our community and way of life. Often, a person asks to be baptized and welcomed into the Church. In lands where many are Christian, we face the challenge of convincing parents who baptize their children that this is a serious commitment, one that involves weekly participation in the community and catechism for their children. In all cases, we believe that baptism means taking on a mission, as Jesus did. It is the starting point for a life of faith and practice.

As we pray the rosary, let us ask for a deeper understanding of our baptism and our own particular mission. Let us pray for those recently baptized, that they may feel joy and courage in their commitment.



Amazon Word

It’s extremely hot, about 35 degrees C. The small church is full and several infants are already restless, crying and struggling in their mothers’ arms. One by one the children are baptized, their parents or godparents holding them. I use a dried gourd to pour water over the child’s head. I speak the words in the Makuxi language, literally, “I wash your face in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” I wash your face in Jesus’ name. What a beautiful image.

The Wedding at Cana

FROM WATER TO WINE

“Everyone else serves the best wine first, and after the guests have had plenty to drink, he serves the ordinary wine. But you have kept the best wine until now!” Jesus performed this first miracle in Cana in Galilee; there he revealed his glory and his disciples believe in him.” John 2:10-11

Reflection

At Cana, there is a wedding, a joyful celebration of the union between a man and a woman. Jesus, his mother Mary, and their friends have been invited. Mary, ever sensitive, notices that the wine has run out. She calls to her son, but he is reluctant to act. However, he attends to his mother’s request. He asks the servants to fill the jars with water. Jesus feels the power of the Creator flowing through him, flowing out of him, transforming the world, transforming the elements. Miraculously, the water is turned to wine.

The water of baptism has been turned into wine; this wine will be eventually turned into blood, the blood of the Eucharist and of the Cross. At Cana, Jesus enacts the first sign of his mission: to turn the ordinary into the extraordinary, to announce a time of grace and joy. It is his mother Mary who urges him toward his mission.

In my own life, how can the water—the day-to-day activities—be transformed into wine, into joy and peace and love? For those who are married, how do you live the sense of joy in your commitment? How do we support couples who have committed themselves to one another in the sacrament of marriage? Water, today, is a precious commodity: how do we use or relate to water?

Mission Call

Missionaries soon learn about the importance of water. In many countries water is untreated and we eventually get sick with amoebic dysentery. We learn of many situations where most people do not have access to clean drinking water or to sanitation. Often we are involved in projects to build wells for communities. We work at turning the undrinkable water into the wine of clean water.

Many Scarboro missionaries work with reflection groups for couples, creating a space so that couples can strengthen their commitment to one another. We also help in organizing pastoral attention for families, promoting communication between parents and children.

During this decade of the rosary, let us ask God to give us a sense of joy in our daily activities. Let us pray for all couples who live the sacrament of marriage. Let us give thanks to Mary and to others who notice the needs of the suffering. Let us pray for groups working for basic water rights for their communities.



Amazon Word

Our visits to the Makuxi villages start with a general meeting in which people raise community concerns. In one particular village, the meeting turns into a prolonged discussion of alcoholism and drinking. The women complain that their husbands drink too much of the traditional fermented manioc, called caxiri, and sugarcane rum. The drinking often turns into fights between the men and violence against the women. Hearing this, the men hang their heads in shame, promising to change their behavior. It seems clear to me, however, that one of the causes for the drinking is poverty and hunger that the people suffer. Until that issue is addressed, community meetings such as this one will be repeated.

The Preaching of the Reign of God

PROCLAIMING THE WORD

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has chosen me to bring good news to the poor. He sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind; to set free the oppressed and announce that the time has come when the Lord will save his people.” Luke 4:18-19

Reflection

The word “proclaim” has its roots in the Latin *pro-clamo*, “to call or to shout forth.” This is the mission that Jesus lived, by teaching and healing people, and by challenging the authorities to serve the people better. Near the beginning of his gospel, Luke tells us that Jesus went to the synagogue and proclaimed the words of the prophet Isaiah whose mission was to set free the captives, to bring good news to the poor, to declare a time of grace. This is an ancient dream, one that goes back beyond the time of Isaiah to that of Moses, when God heard the cries and suffering of his people in slavery. Jesus embraces this ancient mission. He, too, hears the cries of the suffering, the sick, and the poor of his time. He responds with compassionate love, touching and healing hearts, minds, and bodies. In Matthew’s gospel, Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount, and then invites us to mission: “You are the salt for the whole human race...

You are like light for the whole world.” (Matthew 5:13) Jesus is this salt, this light. He lived a constant rhythm between prayer—his mystic relation with the Creator—and action, through his preaching and healing. He calls us to this mission.

Who proclaimed the Good News to me? How do I participate in proclaiming the Good News to others? How can I be salt and light? What is my favourite passage—a parable, a miracle, or a teaching—of Jesus’ mission that has touched my heart? How is the Good News proclaimed in other lands where the name of Jesus has not yet been heard?

Mission Call

In our mission work, we often speak of direct evangelization and indirect evangelization. The direct evangelization approach implies talking directly to people about Jesus and urging them to give their lives for others. The indirect evangelization approach means living the values of Jesus—love, compassion, justice, peace—and hoping that these become transparent through our work and actions.

Let us pray in gratitude for those who first proclaimed God’s Word to me: my parents, teachers, and others. Let us ask God to help us to proclaim God’s Reign through our words and actions. Let us pray for missionaries seeking new ways of proclaiming the Good News. Let us remember to be open to missionaries who come to our land, so that we may learn from each other.



Amazon Word

Once a year we hold a training course for new catechists in a pastoral area comprising 30 Makuxi villages. These are young men and women who feel called to be church leaders in their communities. We begin at the beginning. Three areas are important: the Bible, the Sunday service, and community witness. Some of the questions we address are: Who is Jesus? What are the books of the Bible? How do we look up a reading citation in the Bible (e.g. Luke 4:18)? What are the main elements of the Sunday celebration of God’s Word? What is the catechist’s vocation and witness in the community? These new catechists will become Christian leaders who will proclaim liberty to captives and restore sight to the blind through God’s power and grace.

The Transfiguration

SEEING THE DIVINE

“As they looked on, a change came over Jesus, and his clothes became shining white...the three disciples saw Elijah and Moses talking with Jesus...a cloud appeared and covered them with its shadow, and a voice came from the cloud, ‘This is my own dear Son—listen to him!’” Mark 9:2-7

Reflection

In exactly the middle of his Gospel, Mark recounts this special moment. Jesus reveals the meaning of his mission. He leads John, James, and Peter up a mountain where they witness a spectacular and awe-inspiring transformation: Jesus is transfigured before them, in brilliant light. They see him talking with Moses and Elijah: Jesus represents both the Law of Moses—the Torah—and the voice of the prophets, like Elijah. Jesus will become what Moses and the prophets yearned for: the Messiah, the Anointed One, the one who will bring God’s peace and justice to humanity. The disciples hear God’s voice: “This is my own dear Son—listen to him!”

Peter wishes to remain on the mountain, build some tents, and stay in the pleasant dream-like situation. But Jesus insists on walking down the mountain, returning to the people below, back to reality, to the poor and suffering. Once there, Jesus speaks of his future suffering and death, contrasting sharply with the transfiguration vision. Jesus realizes that to complete the work of the Law and the prophets, he must give up his own life.

Are there moments when I experience a transfiguration, a moment of insight when I understand God’s plan for my life? Do I accept God’s invitation to listen to the voice of the Son? Am I tempted to stay in feel-good situations, or can I return to the nitty-gritty of reality in order to be a presence of love? Throughout the world, many persons give their lives for the cause of justice: how can I be in solidarity with peoples who are suffering?

Mission Call

Scarboro missionaries witness many transfigurations, personal and communal. We call people to listen to Jesus’ voice, to seek moments of clarity in their lives, to discern God’s will. We hear Jesus speaking to us through these individuals and communities, calling us to greater commitment to mission. We encounter situations of confrontation and violence when people stand up for their rights. Jesus was persecuted by the authorities until they eventually executed him. Many missionaries are persecuted and some become martyrs in witness to justice and peace.

As we pray, let us ask God to give us moments of transfiguration in our lives. We ask God for the grace to listen to Jesus, the Son. We remember those peoples struggling for justice and those who give up their lives for Jesus. We pray that the violence of war may be transformed into the security of peace. We pray for a particular friend undergoing a time of change.



Amazon Word

The Amazon’s vast region comprises many small rivers and lakes. Local communities are concerned with overfishing. Commercial trawlers from big cities like Manaus often drag the lakes with large nets, leaving the local people without fish. Through the Church’s Land Pastoral Commission, people have organized themselves to confront the commercial fishers, sometimes with ensuing physical conflict. The communities themselves are divided: in meetings all agree to a fish quota per family, yet one hears the complaint that “some guys are out there fishing secretly at night.” The transfiguration of fish resources means both discipline within the local community and unity in protecting the fish supply from outside exploitation.

The Eucharist

SHARING, BREAKING BREAD TOGETHER

“While they were eating, Jesus took a piece of bread, gave a prayer of thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples. ‘Take and eat it,’ he said; ‘this is my body.’ Then he took a cup, gave thanks to God, and gave it to them. ‘Drink it, all of you,’ he said; ‘this is my blood, which seals God’s covenant, my blood poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.’” Matthew 26:26-28

Reflection

“Eucharist” derives from the Greek *Ευχαριστο*, “I give thanks.” Jesus calls his disciples to share the traditional Passover meal. The Passover meal was a thanksgiving to God for liberation from the slavery of Egypt. Eating the Paschal Lamb together invoked centuries of spiritual strength. Jesus feels intense love for his disciples. He feels sadness too, because soon he must leave them. Soon one of them will betray him. At his last Passover, Jesus leaves a gift to his followers. He creates a new Passover. He himself becomes the sacrificial Passover Lamb, the Lamb of God. The bread becomes his body. The wine becomes his blood. He invites his disciples to “do this in memory of me.” The creation of this new Passover meal is his gift to them.

Each Eucharist celebration is an opportunity for us to participate in Jesus’ Passover. Boundaries fall away. The constraints of time and space are suspended. We enter into an eternal moment: we are present at Jesus’ ultimate thanksgiving. Transubstantiation occurs: we eat his body, we drink his blood. Jesus invites us to “do this in memory of me,” urging us not only to celebrate the Eucharist, but also to live his mission. We are invited to serve our brothers and sisters, to give our lives for them. How do I live this mission? How do I break bread with others? Am I willing to let myself be broken as bread for others?

Mission Call

Scarboro missionaries are blessed to be able to participate in the Eucharist in many other lands. We come to appreciate the rich and diverse cultural expressions of the Eucharist: vibrant songs, drumming, dancing, dramatic enactments of the Gospel, shared homilies... all over the world people give thanks to Jesus in unique ways.

Missionaries work at calling people to break bread together. This can mean the work of charity, such as giving out food to people in soup kitchens. It also means working for justice, changing economic and political structures that exploit people, and demanding just wages so that people can buy their daily bread with dignity.

During this prayer time, let us pray to deepen our sense of thanksgiving for life. Let us count our blessings. Let us participate in the celebration of Mass more intensely. Let us become involved in eradicating poverty from our world.



Amazon Word

*When our feet touch the ground and the dance begins,
When our hands intertwine, new life will bud.*

*Take, oh Father, this perfect love, for the river, the woods and the flower
That we natives carry in our hearts:
praise to the Creator.*

*We will have one table only;
Mother Earth will be our altar
Nature will provide our
sustenance, miraculously.*

*Here, Lord, is the pain of this Christ-brother-sister-people,
May our cries be hymns in defense of our lands.*

*We dream of a new Earth where all have a place;
We search for our right to life, bread, respect and homes.*

Offertory song, “Fraternity and the Native People” 2002

The Agony in the Garden

WRESTLING WITH GOD

“Jesus left the city and went, as he usually did, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples went with him... Then he went off from them about the distance of a stone’s throw and knelt down and prayed. ‘Father,’ he said, ‘if you will, take this cup of suffering away from me. Not my will, however, but your will be done.’”

An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. In great anguish he prayed even more fervently; his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.” Luke 22:39-44

Reflection

Jesus is in turmoil. Until now, he avoided the final confrontation with the authorities in Jerusalem. Now he feels it is time. God is calling him to give his final witness. In the evening, he invites his disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray for discernment and strength. He thinks of that first Garden, the Garden of Eden, where life began. How different this place of Gethsemane is. He prays to God, asking for deliverance. He agonizes; he feels no peace. His disciples sleep; he feels alone in this dark turmoil. His heart pounds; he sweats heavily. He borders on panic. Eventually, Jesus feels an uplifting, a lightening, as though an angel is appearing before him. He realizes that it is in doing God’s will that he will receive peace. He speaks aloud to his Creator, “Not my will, however, but your will be done.”

One of the root meanings of the word “agony,” from the Greek *agon*, is “to wrestle.” How often have we wrestled or agonized over a decision. How often have we spent a sleepless night discerning what to do. We go through the same experience of Jesus in Gethsemane, seeking God’s will in our lives. This is particularly intense for us when we are facing death, either our own or that of a loved one. How we would like to forego the cup of suffering. How hard it is to be courageous like Jesus and surrender our will to that of our Creator.

Mission Call

Scarboro missionaries are called to be present to those in agony. Some suffer a personal agony, such as an illness or a death in the family. Others suffer a social agony: hunger, poor wages as low as a dollar a day, sickness with no recourse to health care, children in schools without desks or books. These are the Gethsemanes that last more than one night; these are the agonies that can last a lifetime.

As we pray the rosary, let us ask for strength when we go through a time of agony. Let us ask for courage for those going through a time of indecision. Let us remember peoples throughout the world who live the agony of poverty and exploitation.



Amazon Word

An emergency meeting for all priests, Sisters, and lay missionaries working in the Makuxi reserve is called on December 20. It is 2004 and earlier in the year, three missionaries were kidnapped by forces working against the native-only reserve. Several Church lawyers are at the meeting. They advise us that Brazil’s president might sign a decree ratifying the reserve that very day. “If you can put off going into the reserve, do so. Your lives may be at risk.” A Sister and I had planned to leave in the afternoon for Christmas masses in the communities. We put off our trip. In the evening at another meeting, the lawyers indicate that the reserve will be ratified at a later date. We left the next morning for the Christmas visits. The reserve is ratified in April 2005. In situations like these, we indeed agonize to discern God’s will.

The Scourging at the Pillar

THE PROPHET OF PEACE IS FLOGGED

“Then Pilate took Jesus and had him whipped.” John 19:1

“The men who were guarding Jesus mocked him and beat him. They blindfolded him and asked him, ‘Who hit you?’ Guess!’ And they said many other insulting things to him.” Luke 22:63-65

Reflection

Jesus has undergone his trial; he has been condemned to be whipped. His arms are tied tautly around a pillar. The whip cuts into his flesh. The pain is unbearable and he begins to faint. He is practically unconscious when it finally stops and he is dragged away.

Torture has been practiced throughout history and it still goes on today. We have only to listen to the news to hear the names of prisons and torture camps around the world. Many people are arrested without having committed any crime, simply because they hold opinions contrary to those in power. How is it possible for someone to inflict physical pain on another human being? What goes on in the mind and heart of an individual who condemns someone to torture or who carries it out?

Psychological torture is as painful as physical torture. Words can cut like a whip. They can leave invisible scars on a person’s heart. Children are especially vulnerable and can be marked for life by hurtful remarks. Our words have the power to kill or to give life, to destroy or to build up. Have I experienced torture of some kind? Am I aware of the potential effect of my words and my actions on others? How can I become more aware of situations of imprisonment and torture in the world?

Mission Call

Missionaries often meet individuals who have been imprisoned and tortured. Sometimes we meet families who have lost someone who was disappeared under certain repressive regimes. More common are the many persons who have suffered family violence: women and children who have been abused. We witness the many types of torture inflicted on others because of differences in gender, sexual orientation, race, class, or educational background.

As we pray this decade of the rosary, let us ask the Holy Spirit to strengthen those undergoing torture at this very moment. Let us pray for groups working at ending torture in the world. Let us pray for the healing of those psychologically abused. Let us ask for the grace to affirm others.



Amazon Word

Sister Veronica visits the women’s prison on the outskirts of Boa Vista every Friday morning. She invites me to accompany her to visit Judith, an African woman who speaks no Portuguese, only English. The woman is quite young. I learn that she, her husband, and several other men, had fled a repressive regime. They were arrested in Brazil for travelling on false passports. Now they sought political asylum, but were stuck in jail on legal technicalities. Judith starts to cry. “If we are sent back to our country,” she says, “they will kill us!” We pray together. A few weeks later, with the help of the local human rights group, she and her husband are released and start the process for refugee status.

The Crowning with Thorns

THE SUFFERING SERVANT IS CROWNED KING

"Then Pilate's soldiers took Jesus into the governor's palace, and the whole company gathered round him. They stripped off his clothes and put a scarlet robe on him. Then they made a crown out of thorny branches and placed it on his head, and put a stick in his right hand; then they knelt before him and mocked him. 'Long live the King of the Jews!'" Matthew 27:27-30

Reflection

A crown is shaped like a circle, which represents unity and equality, with no end or beginning. A crown also represents royalty: ancient tribal kingship. The King or Queen was initiated by an anointing with oil. In Jesus' time, his people awaited a leader, a Messiah, descendant of the great King David. This Anointed One would free the people from all foreign invaders and oppressors, and rule the people with justice and peace.

Many thought Jesus would be this political Messiah. During his torture, enemies mocked him, calling him "King of the Jews." They placed a crown of thorns on his head. Imagine the piercing pain of the thorns. Just as great was the pain of miscomprehension. "My Kingdom is not of this world." Jesus' leadership is that of the suffering servant, foretold by the prophet Isaiah: "He was treated harshly, but endured it humbly; he never said a word. Like a lamb about to be slaughtered, like a sheep about to be sheared, he never said a word." (Isaiah 53:7) St. Mark (10:45) says "...the Son of Man did not come to be served; he came to serve and to give his life to redeem many people."

Today we call our leaders presidents or prime ministers. The image of king has been relegated to history. We attempt to redefine Kingdom as Reign, but here again the root meaning of "reign" is Rex. What types of leaders represent the values that Jesus proposes? How can we develop a circle, a crown, of unity for all humanity?

Mission Call

All of us somehow define our relationship to leadership structures. In other countries, we missionaries often encounter corrupt and repressive regimes. We may live in a place where human rights are not respected, where public money is pocketed by individuals rather than used for providing health, education, and transportation. Many times we become involved in local groups fighting for coherent and transparent policies from their governments.

Training church leaders is an essential task of mission work. This can mean inviting men and women to religious life. It can involve training lay people to become community leaders, called catechists or ministers. It is these leaders, the majority of them women, who faithfully lead the Sunday service. In developing countries, our Church depends on these catechists and ministers to ensure a vibrant faith community.

With this decade of the rosary, let us pray for our political leaders. Let us remember catechists and ministers serving small communities throughout the world. Let us ask God to deepen our own sense of service to others.



Amazon Word

Every year on Holy Thursday, I am moved by the symbolic washing of the apostles' feet during mass in the Makuxi village. The catechists choose 12 people, six women and six men, some children, others adult, others elderly, to represent the apostles. I take a pan of water and a towel and wash their feet. These are feet that walk in simple sandals, feet that work in the manioc fields. They are tough, calloused, scarred, with broken toenails... the feet of the poor. The meaning of this gesture that Jesus left us strikes home to me: our God is a God who serves and we are called to serve our sisters and brothers, especially the poor.

The Carrying of the Cross

BEARING THE CROSS

"Then the soldiers led Jesus away, and as they were going, they met a man from Cyrene named Simon who was coming into the city from the country. They seized him, put the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus." Luke 23:26

Reflection

Jesus must now undergo this final humiliating ordeal. He is forced to carry the cross to the Place of the Skull, Golgotha, where he will be crucified. Weakened by torture, he falls several times. A man, Simon, is made to help him. Women cry for him. Veronica wipes sweat and blood from his face. He is overburdened. Death awaits him.

The cross symbolizes our relationships. The vertical shaft represents our relationship with God: it links the earthly with the heavenly. We remain rooted in the earth, in reality, but we dream on high, imaging new possibilities. We lift our hearts to God in praise and supplication. The horizontal shaft represents our relationship to others. We must stretch out our arms to reach our sisters and brothers. Loving others involves effort and pain.

Jesus lived all his relationships intensely. He knew God intimately, as son to father. Jesus called him Daddy, *Abba*. He spent frequent periods in prayerful conversation with his Father. Jesus also reached out to all he met. He sought friendship with outcasts. He healed the sick and comforted the weary. He called those who oppressed others to change their ways. This was the cross he bore: his love for the Creator, and his love for his sisters and brothers.

What is my cross? Has my cross changed over the years? How do I experience my relationship with God? How do I live my relationship with others? Can I bear the pain of stretching out my arms to them? Do I feel them grasp my hand?

Mission Call

All missionaries encounter an initial cross of culture shock, of becoming accustomed to a new people and a new way of being, thinking, and feeling. The process is painful. But then all missionaries soon realize that the people we serve bear much heavier crosses: poverty, illness, exploitation, persecution.

As we pray about the cross, let us ask God to strengthen those weighed down by their burdens. Let us pray for the Simons who help others bear the weight of their suffering. Let us remember the Veronicas who alleviate the pain of others, especially physical illness. Let us dream of a world where poverty has been eradicated.



Amazon Word

One year I visit our diocesan seminarians in Manaus at semester's end. I attend a class where groups present results from their study of social problems in this jungle city of two million people. Situations such as the unemployed, street gangs, and drug trafficking are talked about. One report shocks me: child prostitution at a shopping mall. Young adolescent girls sell themselves to middle-age men, earning in a day as much as a thousand dollars, five times what they could earn in a month on minimum wage. Some parents even support their daughter's work, as it guarantees income for the family. What a cross for these young girls to bear. What desperation poverty creates. What need there is for healing.

The Crucifixion

DYING TO ONESELF

"It was about twelve o'clock when the sun stopped shining and darkness covered the whole country until three o'clock; and the curtain hanging in the Temple was torn in two. Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Father! In your hands I place my spirit!' He said this and died." Luke 23:44-46

Reflection

Crucifixion, a slow death by asphyxiation, was the most brutal form of execution in the ancient world, reserved for criminals and state enemies. At Golgotha, Jesus is nailed to the cross and raised up. Beside him are two thieves. Soldiers taunt him. At the foot of the cross is his mother, with other women, and his disciple John. They witness his suffering under the hot sun. His strength slowly seeps out of his body. When he breathes his last breath, Jesus cries out, "Father, in your hands I place my spirit!"

In recent years, psychologists have described death as a series of processes: denial, anger, depression, bargaining, and finally acceptance. What does death mean for me? Have I been present at someone's death? Do I think about my own death? Death can be seen as a second birth, being born into the next life, into the communion of saints. Those who accompany a dying person are like midwives, helping the person end their mission in this life, and being present as they make the passage into the next life.

The death of an elderly person can be a celebration of their life; such a natural death has even a peaceful aspect. However, many deaths cause tragic suffering: the deaths of the unborn, of children or young people who die from hunger, diseases or accidents, of those who die in the violence of war. Acceptance of such death requires great faith. It demands gazing at Jesus on the cross and asking him for the strength to say, "In your hands, Father, we commend our spirit."

Mission Call

Missionaries are often present at the death of persons we serve. We learn about different customs, such as the necessity of burying someone within 24 hours in tropical climates, then coming together again a week later to pray for and celebrate the person's life. We learn to recognize that many sisters and brothers are undergoing a slow death through the institutionalized violence of poverty and exploitation. Like Mary, the mother of Jesus, and the apostle John, we stand at the foot of this social cross.

As we pray the rosary, let us ask God to give courage to those who are facing death. Let us pray for those accompanying people who are dying. Let us pray for peace in the world, for an end to all war and death by violence. Let us remember those who die from the violence of poverty and pray for groups that work at promoting social justice in our world.



Amazon Word

In a community on the banks of the Amazon River, I went with a man to take Holy Communion to his dying mother. We walked along the grassy bank and soon reached the simple wooden house built on stilts. Upon entering, I realized that the frail old woman lying in a hammock was suffering from gangrene. Her right leg was swollen and purple. The odor was unbearable. I offered to take the man's mother on the parish boat to the town upriver for medical attention. "We've been there. There's nothing more we can do. They gave us medicine for the pain. All my mother wants now is to die here." So we prayed and she received communion. She grasped my hand. The man thanked me profusely. I left, overwhelmed by this woman's suffering, by this crucifixion.

The Resurrection

NEW LIFE!

"Very early on Sunday morning the women went to the tomb, carrying the spices they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the entrance to the tomb, so they went in; but they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. They stood there puzzled about this, when suddenly two men in bright shining clothes stood by them. Full of fear, the women bowed down to the ground, as the men said to them, 'Why are you looking among the dead for one who is alive? He is not here, he has been raised.'" Luke 24:1-6

Reflection

Jesus trusted his life entirely to God. He knew our Creator would not let him be overcome by death, but that God would raise his son to new life. This was the discovery made by the women who went to the tomb early in the morning. Jesus' body was not there. Angels announced to them, "He is not here, he has been raised!" Jesus appeared many times to his disciples. Usually they had difficulty recognizing him. The Risen Jesus was different; he was the same, but somehow changed. Like the disciples on the way to Emmaus, his followers learned to recognize him in the breaking of the bread.

The Resurrection is the central part of our faith. We believe that God raised Jesus from the dead. Jesus is the new Passover, he is our Easter. Life has conquered death. We believe that one day we who follow Jesus will experience the resurrection. Jesus proclaims to Martha, whose brother Lazarus had died: "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me will live, even though they die...Do you believe this?" (John 11:25) That question is for us too. Do we believe in the resurrection? Have we already experienced the resurrection in our lives, or in the lives of others? Can we say, as Martha did, "Yes, Lord!"?

Mission Call

Missionaries are called to bring the gifts of joy and hope to people, especially those living in situations of suffering and death. With God's grace, we point the way to new life in Jesus. We learn to recognize signs of the resurrection: when a community organizes to build a health clinic, when a village gets a well for safe drinking water, when a political structure is changed to respect human rights, when peacemakers achieve a truce or an end to a conflict. All of these events are signs of life; they are signs of the resurrection.

During this prayer time, let us praise God and thank him for the gift of the resurrection. Let us ask the Risen Jesus to give us new life. Let us pray for those who are in a spiritual tomb that they may be brought to new life. Let us look for signs of the resurrection in our world. Finally, let us pray for all of our loved ones who have been raised in the Lord and form part of the communion of saints.



Amazon Word

Every Friday afternoon our pastoral team visits CASAI, the Hospital for Indigenous Peoples, outside of Boa Vista. We visit with the sick and we celebrate mass. The sick come from reserves in this Northern Brazilian state, as well as from villages in neighboring Guyana and Venezuela. They are Inkarikó, Patamona, Makuxi, Wapichana, Yekuana, and Yanomami. Diseases vary, from tuberculosis, skin infections, and broken bones, to women expecting difficult births. Most patients are Christian; some are lay leaders in the church. About 40 people attend mass, singing songs in Makuxi, Portuguese, and English, listening to God's Word, receiving communion, and praying for health. Many are healed and return home. We celebrate their resurrection.

The Ascension

RETURN TO THE BEGINNING

“After saying this, he was taken up to heaven as they watched him, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They still had their eyes fixed on the sky as he went away, when two men dressed in white suddenly stood beside them and said, ‘Galileans, why are you standing there looking at the sky? This Jesus, who was taken from you into heaven, will come back the same way that you saw him go to heaven.’” Acts 1:9-11

Reflection

Forty days have passed since Jesus rose from the dead. It is time to return to the Father. He has appeared on numerous occasions to his disciples and now he calls these women and men to a hill outside the city. He promises to send them the Holy Spirit. He blesses them and disappears into the light, covered by a cloud. His disciples are reminded of the prophet Elijah who was lifted into the sky on a chariot of fire. They stand there, sad at Jesus’ departure. Then two messengers appear, urging them not to stand around idly looking at the sky. So they return to the city, to reality, to the work of living Jesus’ mission.



The Ascension teaches us that our final home is not in this life. We are but pilgrims here on this Earth. Our home is in the light. One day, we too will ascend to the peace and light of eternity. In the meantime, we do not stand idly by, awaiting a magical return of Jesus. We are called to see the Risen Lord in others and to serve him in those needing our friendship.

Can I recognize God’s grace working in my life? Does my prayer help me to ascend the difficulties I encounter in my life? How am I involved in my local church community?

Mission Call

As missionaries we wish to live a religion that is not one of looking up at the sky, but rather of being practical and getting involved in building local community. We believe that Jesus will return one day. In the meantime we look for him here, today, in the people and situations we encounter. In particular, we find him in the poor, the sick, the exploited, and the rejected. We are called to alleviate their suffering and also to work at building social structures that can help overcome such poverty and pain.

As we pray this decade of the rosary, let us ask God for the grace to become involved in our local community. We pray for those who suffer and we ask God to give them strength to ascend their difficulties. We remember groups throughout the world working to create more just social structures.

Amazon Word

When one has an opportunity to ascend into the clouds and to fly over the Amazon rainforest, the view is spectacular: endless tropical green forest, with myriad rivers, lakes, and streams forming beautiful and varying patterns. Some rivers are clear black; others, like the Amazon itself, are brownish with silt. When one travels along one of the highways that have been cut through the jungle, one sees the urban build-up: houses, ranches, gas stations, small shops. Behind this development, one sees the edge of the forest; some very tall trees have been spared, looking like lonely giants. People have died to defend the rainforest: Chico Mendes in 1988, Sr. Dorothy Stang in 2005, among others. When will we stop looking at the sky? When will we get down to reality and work at protecting our Earth? The time is now.

The Coming of the Holy Spirit

SPEAKING THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE

“When the day of Pentecost came, all the believers were gathered together in one place. Suddenly there was a noise from the sky which sounded like a strong wind blowing, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then they saw what looked like tongues of fire which spread out and touched each person there. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to talk in other languages, as the Spirit enabled them to speak.” Acts 2:1-4

Reflection

Fifty days have passed since the disciples encountered the Risen Lord. They are gathered together, awaiting the promised gift of the Creator’s Breath. This Holy Spirit of God comes to them through a fierce wind and in flames of fire. Suddenly, the disciples can speak to all present, in each person’s language. Everyone understands one another. They are filled with courage to share Jesus’ Good News with all. The Church is born.

The Spirit is the breath of God, the breath of life. This Spirit was present at the beginning of creation when God’s Spirit hovered over the waters and when God breathed life into Adam and Eve. This is the Spirit that Jesus returned to the Creator at the moment of his death: “Father! In your hands I place my spirit.” This is the Pentecost Spirit that teaches us a new language: the language of dialogue, of respect, of tolerance, of love. Division and disunity are overcome; acceptance and unity prevail. The Holy Spirit graces us with the gifts of enthusiasm and courage. The Holy Spirit is God’s life-presence pulsating through our hearts.

How do I experience the Holy Spirit in my life? Can I understand the various languages of the people I meet in my life—the languages of pain, of loneliness, of suffering, of anger, of despair? Have I learned to speak the language of compassionate love through my words and actions?

Mission Call

When we go to mission, we must often learn a new language. We become children again as we develop a new way of communicating. Besides new words, we learn new customs, new ways of doing things. We learn especially about new ways to pray. We learn of another people’s understanding of God. We come to know how they know Jesus. We also work at learning the language of dialogue, of justice and peace.

As we pray, let us ask God to make us more aware of the Holy Spirit working in us. Let us pray that we may learn the language of compassionate love. Let us ask God to bring peace to our world, through dialogue, forgiveness, and trust.



Amazon Word

Three Makuxi friends drop by: Ruth, Joana, and Marta. We sit down to study one of the Makuxi legends, pouring over the Makuxi text written down in 1936 by a Benedictine missionary monk. The story is about how the slow, humble turtle manages to outwit the fierce, fast jaguar. The turtle asks for help from his friends. “It’s like, the poor people are the turtle and the rich are the jaguar,” says Marta. “In the end, when the turtles work together, they overcome the solitary jaguar.” The Makuxi have struggled for more than 30 years to consolidate their land reserve. They also wish to revitalize their language, spoken by 15,000 Makuxi in Brazil and 5,000 in Guyana. Our Diocese helps them to publish books in Makuxi. Within this century, 90 percent of the world’s 6,000 languages will disappear. Part of our mission is to protect our linguistic diversity. We hope Makuxi will be spoken a hundred years from now.

The Assumption

HONORED BY GOD

“My heart praises the Lord; my soul is glad because of God my Saviour, for he has remembered me, his lowly servant! From now on all people will call me happy, because of the great things the Mighty One has done for me. His name is holy; from one generation to another he shows mercy to those who honour him. He has stretched out his mighty arm and scattered the proud with all their plans. He has brought down mighty kings from their thrones, and lifted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away with empty hands.” Luke 1:46-53

Reflection

Pope Pius XII in 1950 declared the Assumption of Mary into heaven as a doctrine of our Church: “...the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory” (*Apostolic Constitution Munificentissimus Deus*). This honour gifted to Mary gives us great hope: she was her son’s first disciple and we too, by emulating Mary, by saying “Yes” to God’s will in our lives and by offering to God our own song of praise, can hope to be united with God completely.

Mary’s song of joy, in response to Elizabeth’s greeting during the Visitation, expresses her simplicity, her trust, her joy. Mary praises God for all that the Creator has done. She prophetically announces God’s preferential option for the poor, the humble, and the hungry. She is the one chosen to be Mother of God, Mother of Jesus (“God saves”), Mother of Emmanuel (“God-with-us”), Mother of the Christ, the Anointed One. God chose a poor, humble young woman to be the mother of his son. She understood the love of God as liberator of the poor and the oppressed. She embraces the mission her son would live.

What part of Mary’s song speaks to me most loudly? Who are the humble and the hungry around me? What does it mean that the proud and rich will be dethroned and left empty? How are the hungry satisfied? If I were to compose my own song to God, what would I say?

Mission Call

We are called to live out Mary’s song. We praise God for all he has done and we strive to recognize God’s hand at work in the cultures of the peoples among whom we work. We embrace God’s mission: we serve those who are hungry for justice, and we affirm the poor and the humble who do not believe in their own strength and value. We remind people of the thread of our history, from Abraham to Mary and Jesus, and to ourselves today. We strive to share what we have learned with our family and friends in our country of origin.

As we pray the rosary, let us ask God to touch the hearts of the powerful and the rich, so that they may respond to those who suffer. Let us pray for the humble and the hungry who work for justice. Let us ask for the grace to discover our own song of praise and mission, and to live it with joy and courage.



Amazon Word

The Makuxi women make beautiful clay pots. There is a ritual that they go through, in which men cannot partake. First, the women go barefoot to look for clay and firewood. Then they work together, forming and shaping the pots. Natural dyes are used to make designs on the pots. Prayers are said, and the pots are put into a kiln for firing. When finished, the women celebrate with song. If any part of the ritual is not followed correctly, the pots will break in the fire. The clay pots are used for cooking food, especially the spicy “pepper-pot” filled with fish and hot peppers, and for storing puçangas, medicinal lotions.

The Crowning of the Blessed Virgin

QUEEN OF PEACE

“Then a great and mysterious sight appeared in the sky. There was a woman, whose dress was the sun and who had the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was soon to give birth... Then she gave birth to her son... who will rule over all nations...” Revelations 12:1-5
 “Peace is what I leave with to you; it is my own peace that I give you. I do not give it as the world does. Do not be worried and upset, do not be afraid.” John 14:27

Reflection

Mary, the Mother of Jesus, is honoured as the Queen of Heaven, as the Queen of Peace. Our Lady is also an image of our Church. Mary brings us to her Son; so, too, we encounter Jesus through our Church. She invites us to accept the peace that her Son offers us: “Peace I leave you, my peace I give you.” Throughout history, Mary has appeared to people in their suffering. She comforts them, calling them to pray and to follow her Son. “Do whatever he asks of you,” she says to us, repeating her words spoken at the wedding at Cana.

Mary has many names. She is Our Lady of Guadalupe who spoke to Juan Diego in 1531 in Mexico in his Nahuatl language, proclaiming a church with a place for native peoples. She is Our Lady of Aparecida, appearing in 1717 to poor fishermen in Brazil in the image of an African woman. She is Our Lady of Lourdes who spoke to Bernadette in France in 1858 at a time of great poverty. She is Our Lady of Fátima, appearing to children in Portugal in 1917 during the Great War of Europe. She is Our Lady of Medjugorje, speaking in 1981 to those peoples living in Yugoslavia, a country of many ethnic divisions. Mary represents God’s consolation to people crying out in pain.

What image of Mary is most dear to my heart? How can I work to promote peace in my family, in my community, and in the world?

Mission Call

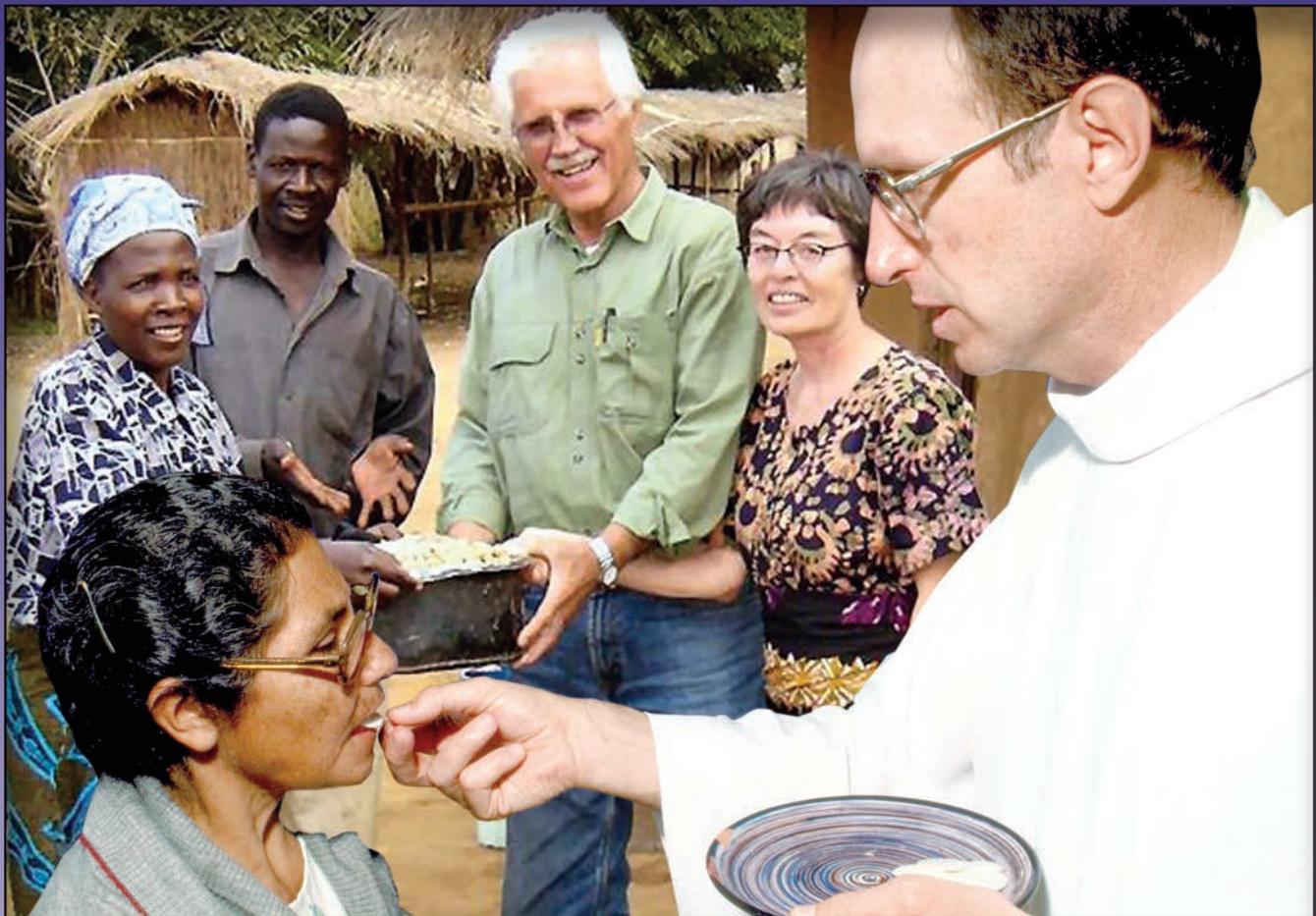
Throughout the world, missionaries encounter great devotion to Our Lady. People seek Mary because she is a woman, she embodies what many women live, feel, think, suffer, and rejoice. There are many churches named after Our Lady. She is honored with processions; her image is crowned with flowers. During Mary’s feast days, when we walk with the people in a procession, praying the rosary, our hearts change, we are touched by the Divine. We feel the peace that Mary, Queen of Peace, offers us through her Son Jesus. Peace be with you!

As we pray this decade of the rosary, let us thank God for the gift of Mary, for her “Yes” to God to become the mother of Jesus. Let us pray for all women and their concerns. Let us pray for our Church, that it may lead people to Jesus, as Mary does. Let us pray for an end to all war and conflicts and for everlasting peace in our world.



Amazon Word

Many of the native communities in Roraima Diocese have chosen Our Lady of Guadalupe as their patron saint, as she is patroness of the indigenous peoples of the Americas. During my first brief two-month stay in a Makuxi village, I slept in the small church with its thatch roof, mud walls, and earthen floor. I would hang my hammock between two rafters at night, sleeping under the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe and listening to the bats swoop in and out. In the morning, the village children would stop at the church window to greet me. I visited families during the day and at night there was prayer and singing. It was a very peaceful time spent in the village, under the watchful eye of Guadalupe.



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