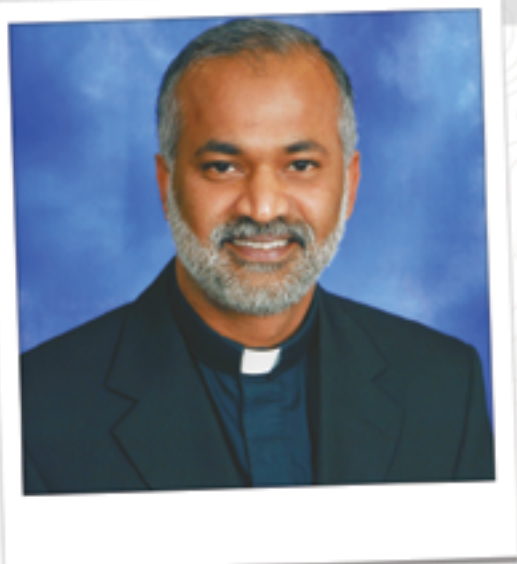


JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2018

MISSION WORLD



A Publication of the **PIME** Missionaries



FR. GEORGE PALLIPARAMBIL, PIME

Regional Superior

EDITORIAL

Happy Missionaries

We want to start off 2018, and our year dedicated to vocations, shining the spotlight on a man who, ironically, was very simple and humble at his very core. A man to whom this year is dedicated to also; a man who, as of this publication, is declared a Servant of God: Brother Felice Tantardini, PIME. It is no doubt that Bro. Felice would be embarrassed to hear us lauding his humility, but we do so in an effort to paint the picture of a man who embodies the essence of what it is to be a missionary: joy found simply in the service of others.


In order to tell the story of this happy missionary, we revisit a country that we highlighted in our November/December publication: Myanmar. A veteran of World War I, Bro. Felice received his mission assignment in 1922 and remained there, taking only one vacation, serving the people of Myanmar (Burma) for 70 years. In this issue you will read of his joy and the happiness he exuded to those around him, the product of a familial love of God and his Mother Mary coupled with the knowledge that he was bringing those around him closer to the two through his hard work. You will read that "Felice" means "happy" in Italian, a name that was surely not given to him by accident. Brother Felice found happiness in the simplest of places, where all of us missionaries find it: helping to witness the Love and Charity of God to those who need it the most.

In this year dedicated to missionary vocations we pray also for the beatification and eventual canonization of this Servant of God who already receives prayers from the people of Myanmar as if he were already a saint. In fact, several favors and miracles are already attributed to

the intercession of Bro. Felice by religious in Myanmar. It is our belief that Bro. Felice, *The Blacksmith of God*, hammers away at God's heart to "wrest favors for the people of Myanmar", just as he had hoped to do when he was called home. It is our hope that we can validate these miracles and further the cause of the beatification of this saintly man who spent decades building churches, hospitals, and orphanages in a country that was unforgiving and unyielding to so many missionaries before and after him.

It is no accident that the beatification cause of Brother Felice corresponds with this year dedicated to the missionary vocation: he embodied the happiness that we missionaries seek when we take up this "beautiful missionary vocation"; it is a vocation so beautiful that, I am convinced, **no other is its equal.** So too, this issue features the men who have chosen to follow directly in the footsteps of Bro. Felice: the Missionary Brothers of PIME. These men choose a path different than the priestly vocation, but no less important. Our religious brother confreres live lives of hard work and dedication all their own; seeking, and as you can probably tell by the pictures finding, simple joy in the service of those who need it most. I hope that this year will be as rewarding for you as these causes will make it for us and that we can continue to help those who need it most in 2018, together.

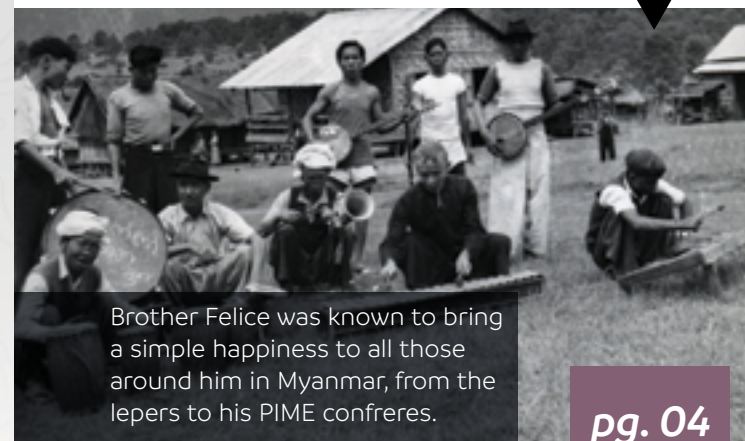
Yours in Christ,


Very Rev. George Palliparambil, PIME
US Regional Superior

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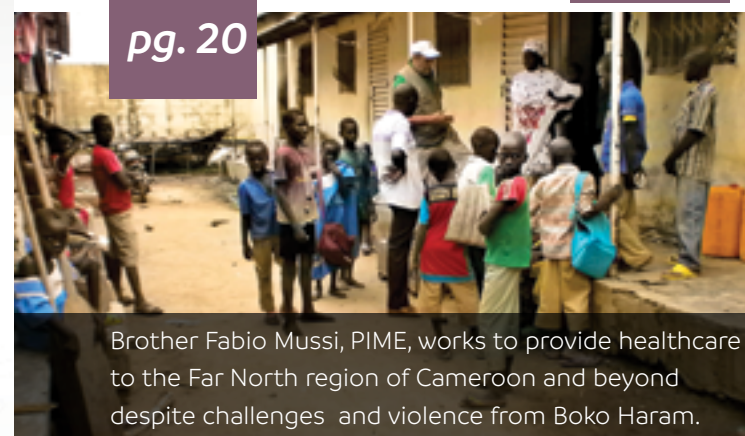
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INSIDE



Brother Felice was known to bring a simple happiness to all those around him in Myanmar, from the lepers to his PIME confreres.

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Brother Fabio Mussi, PIME, works to provide healthcare to the Far North region of Cameroon and beyond despite challenges and violence from Boko Haram.

ON THE COVER:

Servant of God Brother Felice Tantardini, PIME, stands in front of a statue of his "Dear Madonna". Bro. Felice had a deep, familial love of Mary and a simple, yet dedicated, love of the people in his mission; devoting 70 years in service to them in Myanmar.



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San Francesco - Clinton Twp., MI
St. Rosalia - Regina Pacis - Brooklyn, NY

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THE STORY OF A HAPPY MISSIONARY

By Marco Sampietro

Bro. Felice introduces himself to a young member of the Akha Hill tribe in Myanmar.

“Felice” means happy in Italian; a prescient choice for Bro. Felice, a man who was happy in name and in deed. From the Valsassina valley to the forests of Myanmar: The human and spiritual adventure of a layman, a PIME Missionary who was in love with his vocation. Nowadays many hold him in veneration and pray to him as to a saint.

Felice was born on June 28, 1898 at Introbio in Valsassina in the Lecco state of Italy. The sixth of eight children born to Mr. Baptist Tantardini and his wife Maria Magni. Felice’s family was large and deeply religious;

they prayed the rosary together every evening. After finishing the third grade, which he took a second time in order to improve his basic education, Felice worked as blacksmith apprentice in the workshop of his older

“ANYONE AFFLICTED BY WORRIES BUT WILLING TO SPEND 15 MINUTES WITH BROTHER FELICE WILL SEE ALL HIS WORRIES DISAPPEAR. THAT LITTLE SAINT EXUDES HAPPINESS FROM ALL THE PORES OF HIS SKIN. MY LEPERS LOVE HIM MOST DEARLY. HE CAN CONQUER EVEN THE MOST HARDENED OF HEARTS.”

brother Giuseppe. In 1911, at the age of 13, Felice lost his father, tragically, in a flashflood that overran his electrician workshop, built on the bank of the Troggia Waterfall. At 17 the Ansaldo Power Plant of Genoa hired him, just as Italy was entering World War I.

In 1917 he was drafted, but was exonerated from active service, as he was an employee of a war-supporting industry. After Italy’s

defeat at Caporetto (October 24, 1917) he was called back, and after a couple of months of training he was sent to the front. Only two days later he was captured by the Germans along with 60 other comrades and led to Vittorio Veneto, in the Northeast of Italy, where he was assigned to work on the railroads. A long and tedious odyssey began for Felice; an odyssey marked by the pangs of hunger and exposure to the cold elements. He was transferred from one work camp to another: from Udine to Gorizia and Belgrade, Serbia. Finally, with four other comrades, he planned his escape: crawling like a sewer rat through a drainage channel, he gained his freedom and, in an adventurous journey, he reached first Greece and then Italy. In June 1919 he finally

made it back to Introbio. After a respite of only 18 days, he was sent with other Italian foot soldiers to occupy the Greek island of Kalimno for three months time.

After being discharged from the army, Felice resumed work. He found employment first as a blacksmith, then as an electrician with a mining company (The Camisolo Mine Limited). Meanwhile, his missionary vocation was maturing in his heart from reading old issues of The Catholic Missions, which his younger sister Anna had saved just for him. Thus, Felice began to daydream about the missions, even if his employer was thinking of giving him one of his three daughters’ hands in marriage. His mother became his confidant about his wish to be a missionary. She warned him to make sure that

his enthusiasm about the missions was real and not just a passing feeling. If this is truly his vocation, she won't deny him her consent; she would give him her blessing. Felice joined the PIME Missionaries on September 20, 1921. On June 24 of the following year he received his clerical garb; on August 15 his mission Crucifix; on September 2, 1922, he headed for Burma. There he would remain for almost 70 years, with only one vacation back to Italy from April 1956 to January 1957, just enough time for a general overhaul of his health and to try in vain to "put some flesh on that body which was just skin and bones." He was assigned officially to the Taungoo mission, but, in fact, he had to move from one mission to another, covering enormously long distances on foot or horseback, under the burning sun or in torrential downpours, occasionally

stumbling upon brigands and guerrillas, snakes, tigers, and other wild beasts.

By profession, Felice was a blacksmith, but in fact he did a little bit of everything. Willing to accept with dedication and the spirit of sacrifice - as a true Brother and Missionary should - every request for help, coming from his confreres and the local people. At a moment's notice he turned into a carpenter, orchard gardener, farmer, bricklayer, builder of churches, schools and convents, mechanic, nurse, plumber, and, if necessary, catechist. With his inseparable pipe in his mouth, Bro. Felice passed his days alternating the rosary's recitation to very intense, humble and discreet work, which, contrarily, represented his essential contribution to the missionary cause. He worked in various missions, training many local workers, it was for this reason

that the Italian Government awarded him the title of "Master of Labor" in 1973 for "contributing to honoring Italian work abroad."

A peculiar feature that distinguished Brother Tantardini, was a kind of Franciscan joy that accompanied him throughout his life. "This name [that is, Felice] expresses the ideal of my life" Bro. Felice detailed in his writings, "I strive to be happy, always and at all costs, and to make others happy too." Various confreres have experienced the contagious joy of Brother Felice. Father Clemente Vismara wrote: "Brother Happy ... The name is appropriate. Anytime, in any place and circumstance you meet Brother Felice, you will always notice on his lip a serene, peaceful, spontaneous smile as one who is a friend of God, a friend of people and with no enemies." There are very beautiful words dedicated to Bro. Felice also by Father Cesare Colombo: "Anyone afflicted by worries but willing to spend 15 minutes with Brother Felice will see all his worries disappear. That little saint exudes happiness from all the pores of his skin. My lepers love him most dearly. He can conquer even the most hardened of hearts." At age 85, by his bishop's orders, he went into "retirement" and his work became prayer: he prayed all day, almost always in the private chapel of the priests, in morning and evening, in the cathedral saying rosaries or reading some books on spirituality. His daily portion of Hail Mary's rose dramatically: up to 15 - 20 rosaries a day, mostly said on his knees. He died on March 23, 1991 at the age of 93 and was buried in the garden of the Disabled Center "Holy Infant Jesus" at Payaphyu (a suburb of Taunggyi).

Brother Felice was very devoted to Mary: she was his "dear Madonna", who during his captivity saved him from despair and from the temptation of letting himself die from hunger and the cold. It was always Mary who supported his missionary vocation. Lastly, through her intercession he was miraculously healed. In 1924, at Leikthò, Bro. Felice was struck by severe abdominal pains and the only way to reach Toungoo's hospital, would be by being carried on a shoulder stretcher for over 30 miles. However, as he was about to be put on the stretcher, he insisted on being taken first to the altar of Our Lady: "My good Mother, heal me from this strange disease and I promise you to say the whole rosary every day." The request was granted: he got up by himself, the pain gone, his belly deflated, he walked out of the church, threw away his cane and kept shouting: "Our Lady has healed me!" The local pastor, the stretcher carriers and the village folk shouted that it was a miracle. Felice, completely cured, kept the promise of reciting three rosaries a day: 150 Hail Mary's!

His fame of holiness among the Burmese people is vast and profound, many already venerate him and pray to him as to a saint and speak of the favors received through his intercession. A few years after his death, PIME promoted the cause of his beatification and canonization, initiated in 2001 at Taunggyi by Archbishop Bishop Matthias U Shwe and, in Milan, in 2002. The cause is now in the Roman phase. The documentation about his level of holiness as "Servant of God" is dated 2011. 🙏



Bro. Felice (bottom right) lends percussion to a band of Lepers. Bro. Felice was known for his contagious joy and happiness.



Bro. Felice was renowned for his hard work and significant strength despite his small form. He was most notable for his smith work and is often called "The Blacksmith of God".

Prayer Dedicated to The Year of Missionary Vocations October 2017- September 2018

Father of life,
You gave us the example of Bro. Felice.
We ask that you help us to live as he did
With simplicity of heart
And steadfast love of our neighbor.

Father of compassion,
Who blessed the missions of Myanmar
With 70 years of Your blacksmith Bro. Felice,
Grant us the strength to serve others
Through the beauty of your Word
And the conviction of your Love as he did.

Father of kindness,
As you called the fiery passion of Bro. Felice,
So too, we ask that You inspire young people
To follow in his footsteps
Dedicating their lives as missionaries
With the same apostolic zeal that he did.
This we ask, through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

QUOTATIONS OF SERVANT OF GOD BROTHER FELICE TANTARDINI

And even after death, *once in Paradise* - where I hope to go - I mean to continue even from there to be a missionary. I won't be a missionary the way I used to be while on earth, i.e. by hammering hot iron on my anvil, but by **HAMMERING** away at our good God's heart to wrest from it many favors for these wretched people (I am referring mostly to those who have yet to know about Him) whom I see around me presently, but whom I am powerless to help, to save. (from "The Blacksmith of God")

I long **intensely** and I pray **constantly** the good God and *my dear Madonna* to grant me perennial youth of spirit and give me perseverance in my *beautiful missionary vocation*; it is a vocation so beautiful that, I am convinced, **no other is its equal**. (from "The Blacksmith of God")

We are in the Lord's secure arms and **He will never let go of us**, for sure. (April 10, 1940)

Without **familial** devotion to our **beloved Madonna**, it is difficult to persevere in our vocation and to walk without hesitation on the path of our missionary ideal. (December 13, 1965)

May our good God make me still a child in **mind and heart**. (January 16, 1986)

I came to this mission **not to be served but to serve**; and I leave it up our good God and my dear Madonna to use me as they see fit. (April 18, 1973)

Only faith enables us to stand in the hope of eternal life. (March 1, 1957)

Missionary life is centered on the **most** Holy Eucharist. (December 12, 1926)

Our good God and our dear Madonna have deposited these offerings in **Heaven's Bank** because **they are always used for these poor people**. (April 4, 1971)

Our dear Madonna **loves us immensely** and even while still on this earth she never fails to make us taste a bit of her sweet **motherly love**. (December 30, 1958)

Christian charity erases many sins and attains so many favors from our **good** God. (March 27, 1966)

THE WORKS REALIZED BY BROTHER FELICE



PEKONG- Church



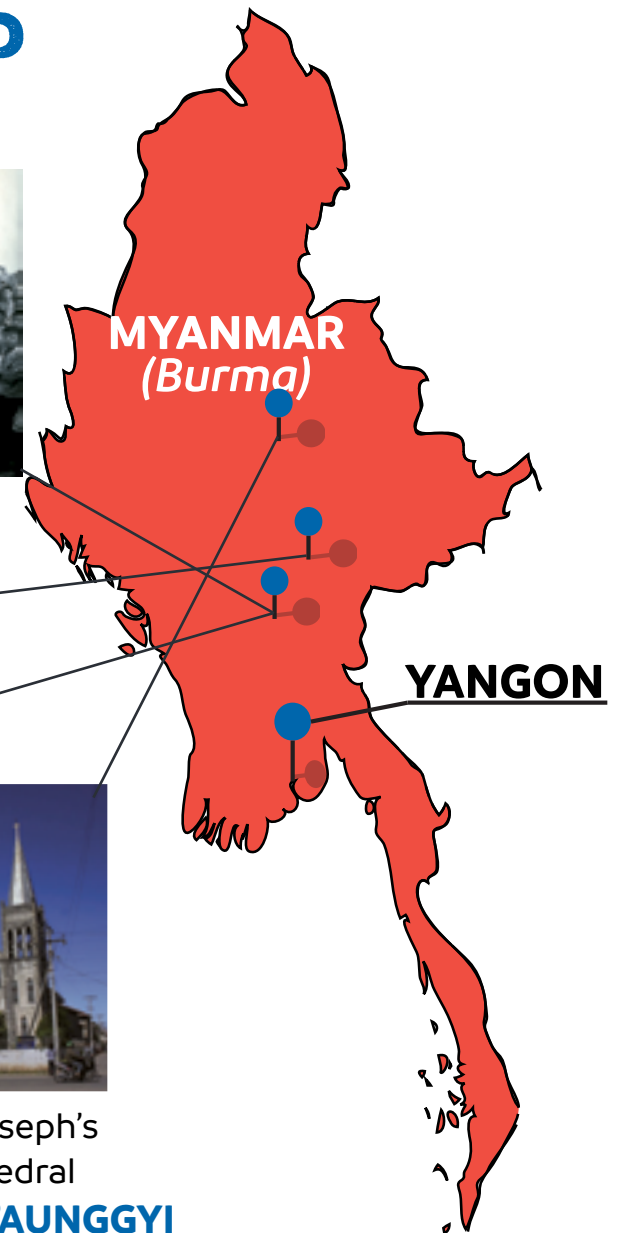
TOUNGOO- Seminary



TOUNGOO- Printer



TAUNGGYI- St. Joseph's Cathedral



PEKONG

- Church (Twenty Years in Production)
- Orphanage and School

TOUNGOO

- Printer (Thirty Years in Production)
- Seminary
- Novitiate of The Sisters of Reparation
- Belltower of the Cathedral
- The great cross on Mount Dilimikhò
- Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes
- Leprosarium (Leprosy Hospital)

LOIKAW

- Church
- Belltower spire

TAUNGGYI

- Clergy House in Taunggyi (60s) in collaboration with Bro. Pietro Giudici
- Seminary
- Disability Center in Paya Phyu
- Seminary
- Orphanage "Oo Maung Than Chaung" (*Iron Man's Orphanage*: the Burmese name of Brother Felice) at Nyaung Shwe (built after his death between 1992 and 1994)

OTHER LOCALITIES

- Belltower spire in Dorokhò
- The great cross on Mount Kothomò
- Novitiate in Musò



SERVANT OF GOD

by Fr. Giovanni Musi (Postulator General of PIME)

Photo of Brother Felice Tantardini upon receiving his Mission Cross.

From the careful reading of his autobiography and his numerous letters which Brother Felice Tantardini has written to relatives and friends; by depositions of witnesses interviewed during the diocesan investigation in Taunggyi and in Milan; we can get an idea of the journey of faith of this Servant of God Brother Tantardini, who was in constant strain towards holiness. A kind of holiness made of small things, made of ordinary joyful fidelity to the ordinariness of daily activities. Here are some aspects that characterize the spirituality of Brother Felice, his inner characteristics: his being rather than his doing.

The first virtue that emerges evidently is faith. The criteria that inspired his words, his writings, his actions, his relationships with others did not stem from calculation, nor from human logic, but from the Gospel. We can say that he saw and judged things, events, people, with the eyes and the heart of Jesus, with whom he had fallen deeply in love. His faith was constantly nurtured by prayer and the sacraments: there he drew light and the strength to deal with all

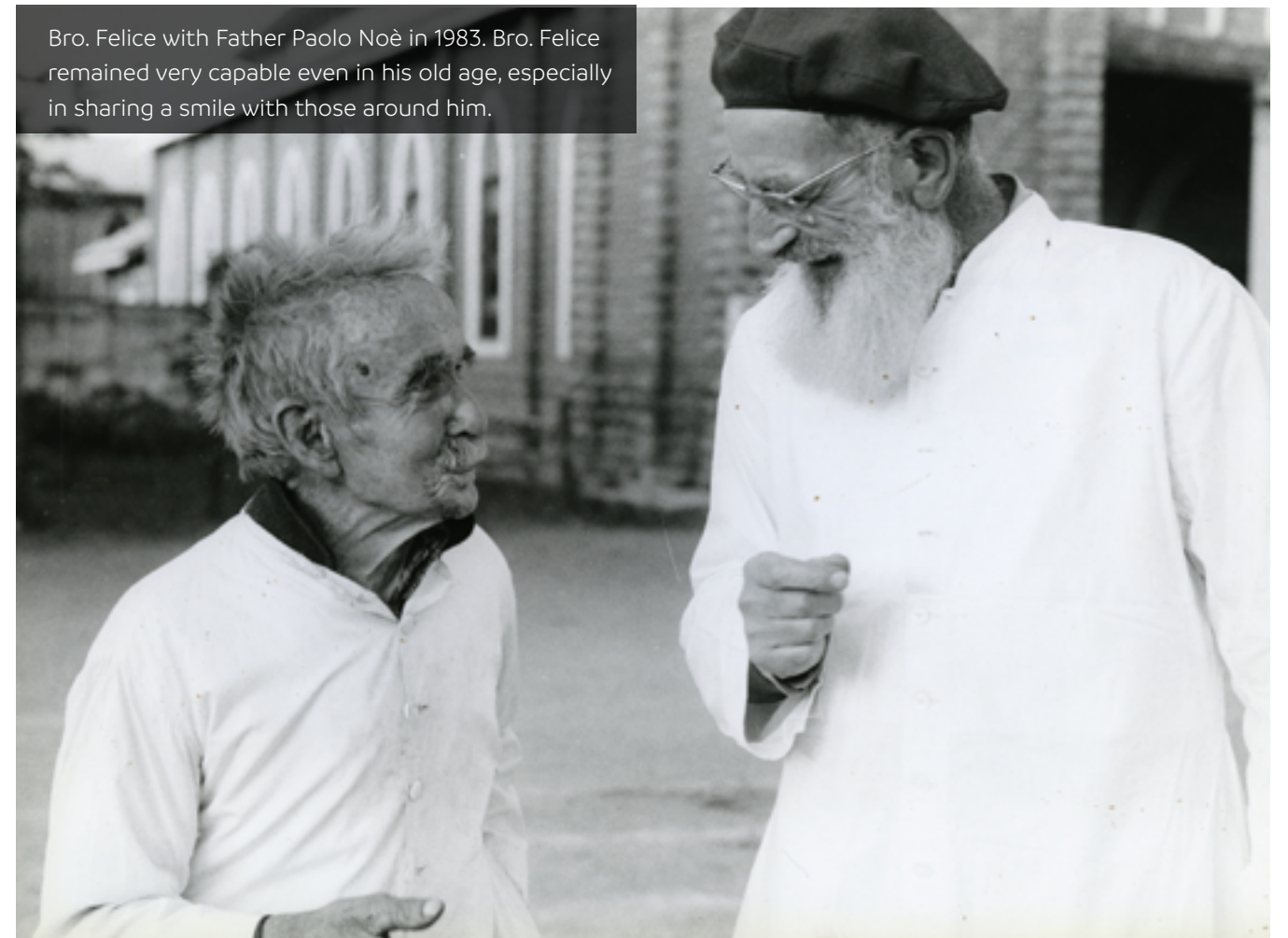
kinds of toil and test without complaining, but with a smile and peace in his heart.

Here are some testimonies that let us consider the depositions collected through the course of the inquiries: "He had an innocent and simple faith. God and Our Lady were everything for him. Every morning he spent at least an hour in meditation before he would ring the bell to call the faithful to Holy Mass. He would do this every morning, without ever getting tired ... He was faithful to Eucharistic adoration which he did especially in the evening, after work". "When he was praying his recollection was intense ... It seemed as he was talking with God and as if he saw Him."

He was a tireless worker. Ever since his childhood he had been trained to love manual work. He declared: "Manual labor is for me an indispensable component of life." With what spirit did he work? Sister Bibiana, a Burmese nun, states: "His whole life was prayer and work and his work was all for God ... He preferred to work silently and inconspicuously."

A Burmese priest, Father Mariano, states: "I

Bro. Felice with Father Paolo Noè in 1983. Bro. Felice remained very capable even in his old age, especially in sharing a smile with those around him.





Bro. Felice poses with a group of Akha Hill Tribe women. Much of Bro. Felice's work was amidst the hills and jungles of Myanmar.

remember him as a man who worked very much, who was enthusiastic about his work and his infectious enthusiasm about the work on hand would become contagious and affect all those who worked with him. He was always very serene and joking around; thus he would make us all cheerful and happy in our work.

"Faith works through love," states Saint Paul. From his love of the "Good Lord" the love of Brother Felice flowed towards all. It was love that materialized in concrete and assiduous service of others with special attention given to the neediest: the lepers, the disabled, and the sick, all without any discrimination based on religion. He did not spare himself: he was always willing to lend a hand and to do good for others. Gathered from collected statements, it is evident that this Servant of God practiced all the works of mercy: the spiritual as well as the corporal works of mercy. He was able to instruct, console, encourage, and correct always with tact.

His self-giving was evident

even in his obedience to his bishop or superior. He would go wherever they would send him, especially if they were sending for him to help the people of the forest.

He was totally detached from material possession and, quietly, he would give to the poor all that he had, saved for what was strictly indispensable.

He was beloved by all, yet he would remain humble: naturally shying away from attention. It could be said that humility was in his DNA. He would avoid places of honor and he did not like to have anyone fuss about him or wait on him. His habit was to serve others, not to be served. He was respectful toward every person, especially toward priests, both confreres and native priests, to whom he showed deference as ministers of God.

Another virtue that this Servant of God practiced with admirable fidelity - on this all witnesses of the man are in agreement - was chastity. There is no doubt that he experienced sexual impulses as any normal

person would. He himself confessed to hearing, like all young men, "the blood boil in the veins," but he was wisely formed to exercise a constant dominion over himself. His relationship with women, especially with the sisters, was characterized by respect and thoughtfulness with a special degree of consideration for their privacy, yet without displaying embarrassment or hang-ups.

His spirit of sacrifice, his ability to face trials and the setbacks of life with patience, is part of the rich human and Christian baggage of this profound missionary Tantardini. "He wasn't born with a silver spoon in his mouth nor raised in comforts" as he used to say. Then there were the "crucible years" of military service, imprisonment during the World War I, which hardened the temperament of the young Felice; subsequently, his missionary life, an era in a land that was marred by misery, hunger, conflict, famine.

We know that even Bro. Tantardini risked losing his life in the bombings during the Japanese invasion, which

lasted two years. But he came out unscathed, for the special protection of the "Good Lord" and his "dear Madonna," as he said, but also due to his ingenuity. During the air raids, he also trembled fearfully like others, as it was natural. Nevertheless, he never allowed himself to come unglued; he always picked himself up and continued to do good for others, helped by his physique, which was minute but endowed with exceptional strength and incredible endurance.

The years, however, pass for everyone. Fatigue, exhausting journeys, some surgical interventions with postoperative complications were undermining his body. Nevertheless, it was rare of him to complain, always worrying not to be a burden on others. In all his tribulations, it was his rock-solid faith and his loyalty to prayer that sustained him. He would not have been able to bear so much toil without strong inner motivation and a special help



Bro. Felice in the Taunggyi market in 1973.

from on High, which he implored with humility and trust.

"In his final years, his daily dose of Hail Mary's had increased impressively," says Father Iginio Mattarucco, he goes on: "He was not afraid of death; indeed he looked forward to it, as the way to meet his mother and the Madonna." He died shortly before the age of 93, on March 23, 1991. Certainly from heaven he is

keeping his promise to continue to be a missionary. No longer by hammering away on the anvil, but by hammering away at the heart of the Good Lord, without hesitation, for the salvation of those poor and humble people that he loved so much, but also of all of us who invoke his intercession. 🙏



Even in "retirement" Bro. Felice prayed fervently to his "Dear Madonna" for favors for the people of the Missions.

PIME'S MISSIONARY BROTHERS

TO WITNESS THE GOSPEL

IN THE ORDINARINESS OF WORKDAYS



Bro. Massimo Cattaneo, PIME, in Bangladesh.



Bro. Lucio Beninati, PIME, in Bangladesh.



Brother Ottorino Zanatta, PIME, in Cameroon.

THE MISSION IS EVERYONE'S "BUSINESS"

The PIME missionaries are baptized people of God who have received a particular charism (expressed in their four pillars or characteristics: "ad gentes", "ad extra", "ad vitam", together) which they offer to the Church. But they live this charism in different ways, specific to each one: all as baptized Christians, but some as ordained priests.

"The mission is for all the people of God ... The participation of the laity in the spreading of the faith is evidenced from the earliest days of Christianity, done both by individual believers and families as well as by entire communities ... The Vatican II confirmed this tradition, pointing out the missionary seal that marks everyone within God's people; it singles out the apostolate of the laity and stresses the specific contribution that they are called to give to the missionary endeavor." *Redemptoris missio n. 71*



Bro. Marco Monti, PIME, travels PIME's missions as a General Councilor of the Directerate General.

MISSION DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

COMFORT AND SAFETY FOR SEMINARIANS

The Holy Spirit Major Seminary in Dhaka, Bangladesh is incredibly important to the future of the Faith in Bangladesh, as it is the only Major Seminary there. As of 2016, 340 priests have received their formation at the Seminary and it currently has 120 seminarians. The structure of the new theology wing has been constructed thanks to prior donations. *The purpose of this project is to fund the purchase of windows, doors, beds, and the installation of electrical equipment to be done by certified professionals. \$19,970 is still needed to ensure that these seminarians have a safe, comfortable living space* to finish the education necessary to complete the long journey to Priesthood.

Help finish the only seminary in Bangladesh

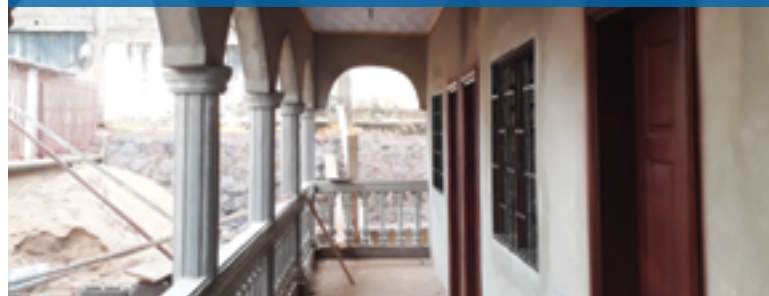


PROJECT CODE | #10027 | \$19,970

COMPLETION OF ST BLAISE PARISH CENTER FOR REFUGEES

St. Blaise Parish is part of a new Catholic community located in the slums of the Capital City of Cameroon, Yaoundé. This new PIME community is part of a renewed evangelization and aid effort in the area. Many of the parishioners here have been displaced due to extreme violence or famine whether directly or indirectly caused by Boko Haram. *Funding of this project will ensure the completion of the St. Blaise Center, which will serve as a shelter for the PIME Missionaries located there as well as any who they may take in. \$10,366 is still needed to complete funding of this vital project.*

Help provide shelter to refugees displaced by terrorism and hunger



PROJECT CODE | #10032 | \$10,366

RENOVATIONS FOR THE SAFETY OF CHILDREN

The Koyo Tribe of the hills of Loikaw, Myanmar live in these inherently isolated mountain ridges separated completely from many aspects of the modern world. *Fr. Francis Phatulu gives the children of the tribe a chance at an education, providing them a place to sleep in the form of hostels centralized to the location of their schools. This is to prevent the children from having to travel a dangerous distance from their even more remote villages. \$15,563 is still needed so that this project can be completed and so that the current substandard conditions can be improved to be safe, clean spaces for these children to call home.*

Help provide a safe place to sleep for Myanmar children



PROJECT CODE | #10014 | \$15,563



MISSIONARY BROTHERS: A CHOICE FOR LIFE

By Fr. Davide Sciocco & Gerolamo Fazzini

Brother Enrico Meregalli, PIME, lays his hands on the head of an Indian woman. Like Bro. Felice, Bro. Meregalli uses his carpentry skills to help the people of his mission.

Today, the missionary brothers of PIME operate in starkly different contexts, but every one of them puts their professional skills to very good use.

Few remember that, among the first seven missionaries of PIME who left on the pioneer mission in Oceania on April 10, 1852, two - Giuseppe Corti and Luigi Tacchini - were Religious Brothers; at that time they were called *catechists*. A few months before the martyrdom of Blessed John Baptist Mazzucconi, Corti

died from tropical fevers on March 17, 1855: the first of a long list of missionaries that would give their life for the Kingdom of God.

Bro. Felice belongs to this large throng of men who expressed their missionary vocation by serving, with humility and dedication, the single missionary cause

*Upon receipt of your contribution, if your project is already funded, we will direct your donation to another needy project.

that unites missionary priests and missionary brothers. Bro. Felice was a figure of great relevance especially if one considers the mission *ad gentes* not as an endeavor reserved to a select few “supermen,” but as a dimension of the Christian vocation that cuts across different groups. Thanks to the progress made by the Church in recent years, and to Vatican II, today the religious brotherhood vocation is more and more sought after than in the past.

The encyclical *Lumen Gentium* presents the Church as the people of God, consequently; also the mission *ad gentes* must be seen from this point of view. The missionaries of PIME, therefore, are simply baptized people who have received a particular charism (expressed by four basic characteristics, namely: *ad gentes, ad extra, ad vitam*, together) that they offer to the Church. However, they live such charisms in different ways, unique to each: they are all baptized, but some operate as ordained priests.

It is from this standpoint, then, the divide between sacred and profane activities is definitely overcome. Equally passé is the reduction of the religious brother to a coadjutor of the priest or, conversely, to a specialized technician who has projects and plans different from those that missionary priests have. Brother Tantardini never considered himself one with a “separate” missionary commitment than that of his priestly confreres, as if his being a brother would have kept him from the duty of evangelization. However, he bore witness to Christ in a form absolutely unique, marked mainly by hard manual labor, generous availability to serve in a thousand menial, odd jobs as well as to help

"BROTHER TANTARDINI NEVER CONSIDERED HIMSELF ONE WITH A "SEPARATE" MISSIONARY COMMITMENT THAN THAT OF HIS PRIESTLY CONFRERES, AS IF HIS BEING A BROTHER WOULD HAVE KEPT HIM FROM THE DUTY OF EVANGELIZATION. HOWEVER, HE BORE WITNESS TO CHRIST IN A FORM ABSOLUTELY UNIQUE, MARKED MAINLY BY HARD MANUAL LABOR, GENEROUS AVAILABILITY TO SERVE IN A THOUSAND MENIAL, ODD JOBS"

with the catechesis. Since 1850, the year when PIME was founded, to this day the lay missionary vocation has been lived differently depending on of the way the Church saw herself in different ages.

Today the Religious Brothers of PIME operate in different contexts, each of them putting to best possible use his own professional skills. As is the case, for example, of Brother Massimo Cattaneo who directs the Vocational School of the mission in northern Bangladesh: imparting to young people a type of formation that has a very broad, global perspective. Such outlook enables them to be competitive in the ever-widening international

job market; they also receive from him a Catholic vision of life. Bro. Roberto Valenti, in his mission of Papua New Guinea, adopts a similar method at his Vocational School in Watuluma. Brother Fabio Mussi in Cameroon directs numerous and varied development projects, solely by utilizing his own organizational skills, sponsored by the local Caritas agency: from well-excavation to ways of finding sustainable nutritional systems, to vocational training, to the development of renewable energy. Always in Cameroon, Bro. Ottorino Zanatta runs a didactic farm that aims at increasing the sustainability rate of the local agriculture through the



Bro. Marco Monti, PIME, at the tomb of Brother Tantardini in Taunggyi, Myanmar.

education of local farmers.

All of these are concrete examples, demonstrating that the Missions today often need skilled tradesmen and specific skilled contributions; once he has assumed these roles of responsibility much of the ordinary pastoral activities go hand-in-hand. The “generic” and/or the “Jack-of-all-trades” missionary has been long gone, now an outdated concept. Specific services are now required of the missionary; this skilled work and professional acumen often fit a religious brother better than an ordained priest (obviously without generalizing).

More than a few priests of PIME perform healthcare, administrative, social, legal, educational services; are active in the field of social communication; sometimes with an initial preparation, in other cases without. Not only that: often a missionary priest feels that, by doing the aforementioned tasks, he is filling in as a substitute for someone else who would be better qualified; this in addition to the fact that such activities limit time for the ministries for which he was ordained. He might feel especially

uncomfortable thinking that the many years of his seminary education were oriented to quite other areas, not trades. A brother could be prepared in a trade school and can engage in these services as a realization of his baptismal and missionary vocation; although, naturally he cannot forget that before being a technician he is a missionary!

Historically there are reasons that make the presence and the action of religious brothers even more current and relevant than in Missions of the past. Many countries, especially those in

Asia, are increasingly closed to foreigners; in particular those who enter them for religious reasons. Often the missionary priests of PIME enter these countries having to act outwardly as if they were not priests; they have to assume lay assignments that involve considerable sacrifices and sufferings. Quite a few of them are unwilling to go to these countries because they feel that there they could not live out their priestly vocation under those restrictive conditions. On the contrary, a religious brother could fully realize his vocation in such a situation, even if he would be somewhat hampered to express his faith freely.

Therefore we ought to leave it up to the creativity of the Holy Spirit and the availability of our missionaries to reinvent themselves. Above all, it is necessary to pray so that young people of various nationalities are more open to the missionary vocation, also as religious brothers, so that they can give all of their life in service of the Gospel in every corner of the earth. 🙏



Bro. Joseph Mongol Aind, PIME, serves the people of Rajshahi, Bangladesh.



HEALTHCARE IN THE FAR NORTH OF CAMEROON

By Bro. Fabio Mussi, PIME

After the publishing of the November/December Mission World, we received a Christmas letter from Brother Fabio Mussi. Bro Mussi has been helping to construct a state-of-the-art healthcare facility in the Far North region of Cameroon, close to the border with Chad; although, the violent activities of Boko Haram had delayed progress and communication, his preparations are nearly finished.

After a long time absent, I wanted to update you on the activities of the Diocesan Hospital of Touloum, located in the Far North region of Cameroon. The reason for my radio silence is not for forgetting of all of you who support us and PIME, but rather

my commitments to the humanitarian emergency situation in this region, caused by the terrorist actions of Boko Haram; terrorists who have been active in our region bordering Nigeria over the past 3 years. Although we want to reassure you: Touloum and the

entire province of Mayo Kani, where the hospital resides, it is fortunately still safe from this situation of insecurity.

So our prevention and healthcare activities continue unabated; they even allowed us to be able to start also several new initiatives, which I will present to you now.

First of all, in this past year, 2017,

we have been able to strengthen the hospital's health and operating skills with the recruitment of two new permanent doctors. In fact, for reasons connected to the contingency of the situation, until now we were obliged to hire only temporary staff. Now, with the arrival of these new doctors, who will take care of both diagnoses and surgery, we have four doctors assisted by

26 nurses as well as radiology and laboratory technicians. Bear in mind that the hospital, although not very large, has a capacity of 85 beds, on average around 80% of these are occupied and also deals with patients suffering from AIDS and Tuberculosis.

The Touloum Hospital provides monthly health care for around 1,200 new patients. In our efforts to

Bro. Fabio Mussi, PIME, is the Coordinator of Cogas Caritas in the Diocese of Yagoua, Cameroon. The violence of Boko Haram has made the difficult situation of healthcare in the region that much worse.



The Diocesan Hospital of Touloum in the Far North region of Cameroon.

provide for the people of this embattled region we have really seen a great result: many people come from very distant regions, even from neighboring Chad, attracted by the expectation of finding competent staff from which to receive treatment. This is a considerable responsibility that leads us to always be attentive to the service of “sick people”, especially the poorest of the poor.

These efforts and responsibilities are also shared by public health authorities, and have led to a commitment to provide the Hospital with specialist equipment that is not present in any other hospital in the Far North region of Cameroon. With help from people like you, we managed to fully equip the Diagnostic Imaging

department, consisting of radiology, ultrasound and, hopefully, also a CT scanner.

This last piece of equipment is one that makes us despair somewhat, because it is not yet functioning due to damage caused by rodents that have ruined the optical fiber of the machine. In order to repair the damage we will need specialists from Italy. The problems of distance and insecurity of the region have motivated several postponements, the last of which has come this past month of December. However, we will not give up; we continue to hope to be able to organize this trip in the first months of 2018.

Being able to make the CT scanner work is certainly our most important commitment, because there is no



Patients wait at the hospital.



The construction of several exam rooms and an Emergency Room is due to be completed by the end of January 2018.

such equipment anywhere nearby in the Region. Among other things, the only equipment “nearby” is located in Garoua: a city almost 200 miles away from Touloum, and is not always available due to high demands even after everything involved with travel and other related costs.

Starting this past August, we commenced the construction of the department that will serve as an Emergency Room. In fact, this service is, in part, already active, but the increase in requests coupled with new regulations from the Ministry of Health, have led us to make this adjustment. The building

is made up of four exam rooms and emergency rooms, equipped with the appropriate medical supplies. By the end of December as of January of 2018 so that this new department will be operating at 100%.

Regarding the equipment, I would like to point out that in July we were given a binocular microscope (coming from the Hospital of Pordenone, Italy), and in November, with the return of P. Piergiorgio Cappelletti, PIME, to Cameroon, so too, came new electrocardiogram for the Hospital. In addition to this, the Ministry of

Health of Cameroon also donated a new incubator for newborns, which will be useful in cases of premature infants. In the previous months we had improved the image diagnostics sector with computers and printers suitable for providing doctors and patients with high-quality documentation. Surely the needs of specialized equipment still remain high, but with what we have received we can certainly ensure better service to the people who suffer.

Dear Friends, Thanks to your support we are gradually continuing to improve this health facility which allows many people to be treated a bit better than the last few months. Sometimes, the difficulties and complexity of situations risk breaking our commitment to making our small contribution to improving the world. However, this period of preparation for Christmas shows us a path of hope and sustains us in our efforts.

Best wishes to all of you for a Christmas full of serenity and hope for a better world.



The acquisition and donation of new equipment has allowed the hospital to fully outfit a Diagnostic Imaging department.



Bro. Fabio Mussi, PIME, utilizes his professional administration skills to coordinate Caritas charitable activities in the isolated Far North region of Cameroon.

A VOCATION TO REDISCOVER

By Bro. Fabio Mussi, PIME

This year, the PIME Institute wants to reflect on the vocation of the Missionary Brothers. A choice that is possible and very relevant in the Church and Missions of today.

“What is a religious missionary brother?” Precisely in this year, when PIME seeks to reflect and revive this type of missionary vocation and commitment, perhaps some people might be reasonably asking this question.

I think they are legitimate and reasonable questions, because we rarely talk about this vocation, and about those who live it out. Indeed, for decades the “missionary” par excellence was a priest who was going to the Missions to preach the Gospel to those who had yet to hear about it.

Back then; a religious missionary brother would have usually been the one who helped in “practical” works (like building churches, running social, and charitable works). Often his work was well appreciated, as in the case of Brother Felice Tantardini, who lived for 93 years, 70 of which were in Burma (now Myanmar), building churches, missions, orphanages, lepers colonies, and doing his job as blacksmith with great skill. He was a person certainly exceptional for his life of service, but is this type of life experience still repeatable nowadays? The answer is YES, bearing in mind two important

elements: on the one hand, the path of reflection made by the Church with the Second Vatican Council, and on the other, the rapid changes that humanity has made since.

Over the last 50 years the Church has deepened new aspects of commitment to its religious brothers: the vocation and the role of brothers has received renewed value. The most obvious change is that the lay Catholic is no longer considered a mere recipient of evangelization, but becomes an active evangelizer. In various Church documents it is pointed out that the mission of the lay Catholic is to integrate himself into the earthly reality, to transform it and to direct it towards God. It is actually stated that there are situations in which the Gospel cannot reach people except through the laity. Then the question “what is a religious missionary brother” can be answered that he is one who tries to fulfill this mandate as his priority, in a setting in which the Gospel is not yet fully known; he preaches the Gospel in a setting different from the one in which he was born and raised.

Practically speaking, these are the same



Bro. Fabio tests out a man's brand new wheelchair that he helped him secure in Cameroon.



Bro. Fabio uses his knowledge when applicable, however he also facilitates professional volunteers from abroad when necessary.

values that Brother Felice lived out, a century ago in Burma. However, nowadays there must be awareness that such service to the Gospel has its own value; a value that is inherent to the Baptism that each believer has received. Generally speaking a missionary priest announces the Gospel mainly through God's Word and the Sacraments, while the missionary brother does so with his work and the witness of

his life. This theoretical distinction is often overcome in the different real-life situations in which one is called to live. In any case, collaboration of a missionary brother with missionary priests is not to be read as subordination, but rather as integration. This is of great value because it expresses the true sense of being a family of missionaries and of genuine collaboration between the two. Unfortunately, in recent years, the

number of missionary brothers has declined rapidly. My wish is that the various celebrations in memory of Brother Felice and the initiatives to deepen the identity of a religious missionary brother may make it possible for young people and adults to develop an interest and a willingness to follow this path of missionary service. 🙏

2018 PLANNED EVENTS



LENTEN SOUP SUPPER

Join us on **Wednesday March 21st, 2018** for our annual Lenten Soup Supper on a new day of the week for 2018. A light dinner of soup will be provided after a talk given by one of our PIME Missionaries. **This is a free event, so bring the whole family!**

TASTES OF ITALY

Hosted by **Cantoro Italian Market and Trattoria on May 10** at 15550 N Haggerty Rd. in Plymouth, Michigan. Tickets will be \$50 per person and will include dinner, dessert, and wine as well as conversation and fellowship with our missionaries and staff. **Come on out for an evening of delectable cuisine and friendship in support of the Missions!**



"MAZZ" PROGRAM

Blessed John Mazzucconi's Pastoral, Spiritual, Missionary, and Leadership (Mazz) Program will be ongoing for 2018 offering opportunities to learn more about ourselves and to grow in spiritual maturity and so, what we can give of ourselves to our parish. **If interested in participating, please contact Fr. Shanthi at (313) 342-4066 ext.118 or by email at Outreach@PIMEusa.org**

ANNUAL PIME PICNIC

We will be hosting our annual **PIME Picnic on August 15** at our **Mission Center** at 17330 Quincy St. in Detroit, Michigan. Music as well as hotdogs, National Coney Island Chilli, chips, ice cream, Absopure Water and other refreshments and will be provided. **This is a free event, so bring the whole family for food, fun and games!**



SERATA

The PIME Missionaries' annual An Evening with PIME dinner has relocated to **Andiamo's at 7096 E 14 Mile Rd. in Warren, Michigan.** With a new location comes a new experience and a new name. Serata will be a celebration of the work that our supporters help us do, as well as the impact that the Italian-American community has had on Catholicism in Detroit. **Join us on October 4th for this elegant evening with the missionaries and Archbishop Allen H. Vigneron.**

WORLD MISSION SUNDAY

World Mission Sunday 2018 will be celebrated on October 21st at a Parish in the Northwest Region of the Archdiocese of Detroit. **Stay tuned for more details in later issues of Mission World Magazine!**





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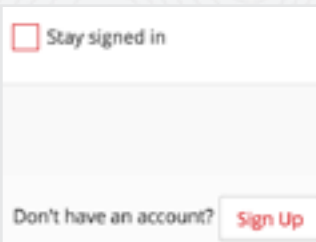
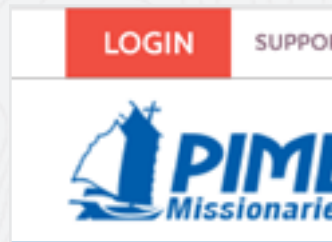
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