

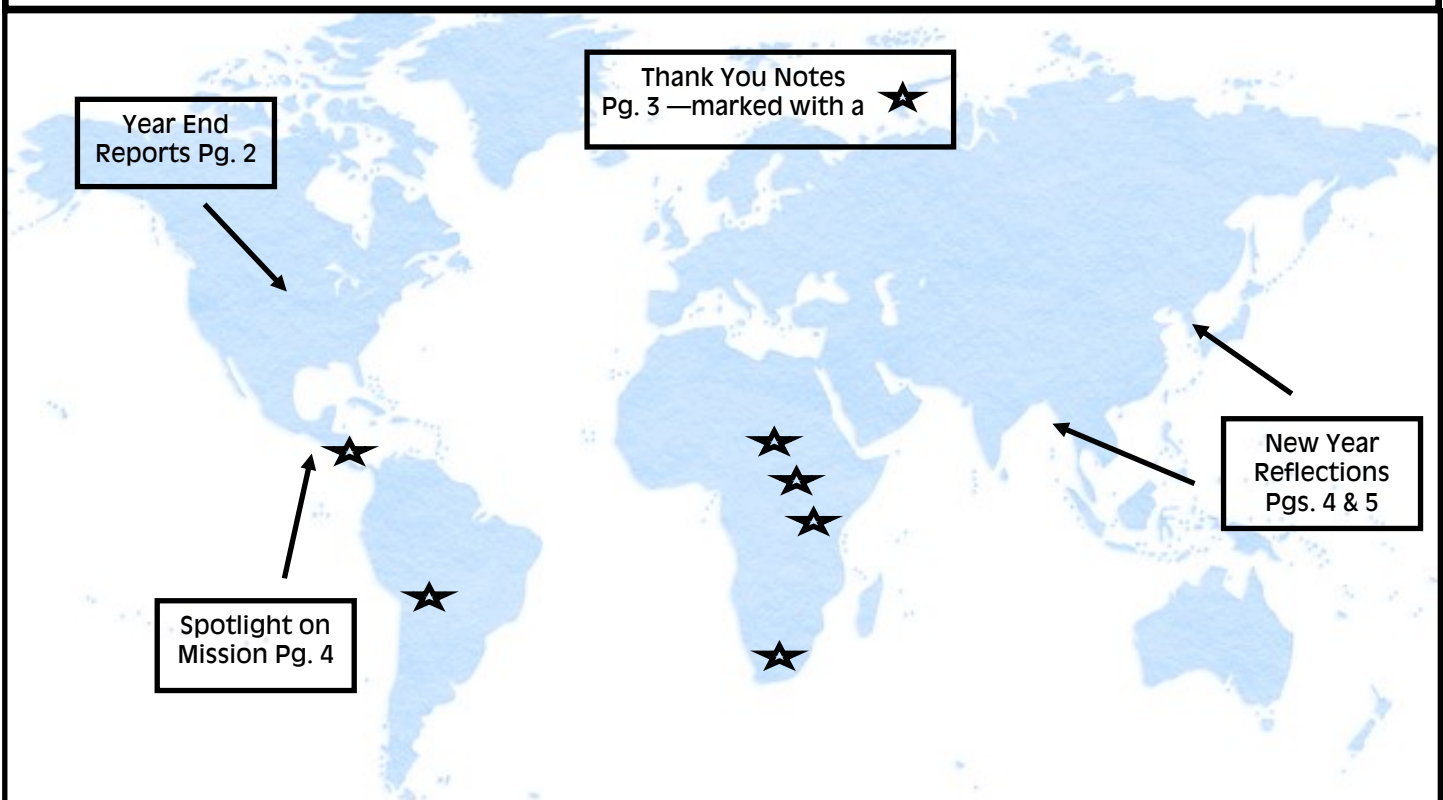
Mission Connections

Volume #64

Winter, 2021



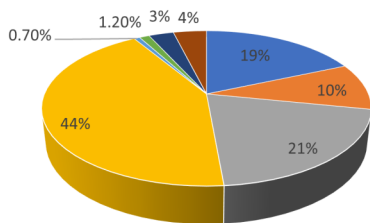
**Holy Beautiful Lord,
Penetrate the darkness of my heart with your light.
Give me true faith, unyielding hope, love without limits, internal not external humility,
together with Your wisdom and understanding that is true.
So that, Oh Lord, I may do things that You command, that I may do Your will, not mine.
Amen.
~ a daily prayer of St. Francis of Assisi.**



From Whom and Where in the World do our stories come from?

Year End Reports for 2020

Expense/Dispersal of Funds



- Catholic Relief Services
- Partnerships
- Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS) & Society for the Propagation of the Faith
- Missionary Cooperative Plan (MCP) & Mission Support
- Mission Groups, Education, & Promotion
- Fair Trade
- Office and Admin
- Masses

World Mission Rosaries 2020:

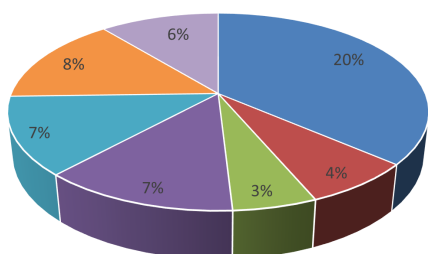
- Over 1,463 Rosaries were distributed throughout the U.S. and in our diocese.
- We only charge shipping reimbursement for World Mission Rosaries as they are graciously donated to us every year.



Mission Outreach in 2020

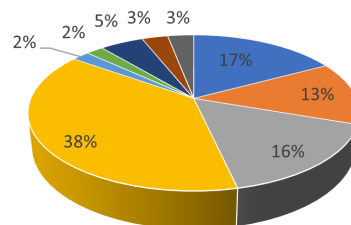
Because of the pandemic we were not able to do as much outreach during the year. However, along with the outreach the we *were* able to do, we were able to do some road trips around the diocese to help our new staff members become more familiar with different parishes and locations. We will continue this in 2021!

Time Spent in Areas of Ministry



- Admin
- Sales
- Mission Support/Promo
- Partnerships
- MCP
- PMS
- Mission Ed.

Income



- Catholic Relief Services
- Partnerships
- Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS) & Society for the Propagation of the Faith
- Missionary Cooperative Plan (MCP) & Mission Support
- Mission Groups, Education, & Promotion
- Fair Trade
- Office and Admin
- Estates
- Masses

MISSION CONNECTIONS is published by the St. Cloud Mission Office, 11—8th Ave. South, St. Cloud MN 56301 (320) 251-1100

It is distributed to the Catholic faithful in the Diocese of St. Cloud and to others concerned with the mission of Jesus Christ and global solidarity and justice. There is no charge for the publication, but tax deductible donations for our educational work are gratefully accepted.

Donations for any of the missionaries or mission connections mentioned here may be made in care of the Mission Office.

**Please direct comments, suggestions and articles to Teresa Trout, at missionofficeeducator@cloudnet.com

**The mailing list is managed by Carolina Walz, at missionofficemanager@cloudnet.com

**For further information about the work of the Mission Office, contact Elizabeth Neville Brown, at enmission@cloudnet.com

Thank You's from Our Missioners!

Every year our Missioners send us Christmas greetings and thank you's for the support through the year. In turn, each Winter Newsletter we make room to share some of those greetings with you, as you are an integral part of that support. This page has some of the ones we've received this past December!

Dear Elizabeth and All,
I hope you are well and had a wonderful Holiday season. To all I take this opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude to each of you, may the work of your hands all be blessed.
I hope to see you soon but currently under going malaria treatment and to get back to normal.
Stay safe. Blessings to all,
- Hellen Lotara

Dear Elizabeth,

Happy New Year to you and everyone at the St. Cloud Mission Office. I just want you to know that the accountant who works with us from CT Quest for Peace notified us that they have received your donation. We want to thank you again for this unexpected gift. It is needed very much with all the things that are going on in Nicaragua. We will make sure to follow up with you once the funds are designated and show you some images of your kindness at work.

Many blessings on the coming year as we learn to integrate the important things we learned this year (and those things that still haven't sunk in yet). We are very appreciative of your generosity and that you thought of the work that is being done together with the people of Nicaragua. Many rich blessings,
- Monica Rudowski



Hi Rafiki,

Peace and joy of Christ the saviour to you. I hope you had a simple but lovely Christmas. Mine was busy, simple and joyful.

Once again I would like to express my sincere thanks for the prayers and support which enabled me to reach out to the people of God in this Christmas season. Through your support, I got petrol for transport, celebrated masses with adults, youths and children in the parish on different days. I used part of the support you sent to buy food and drinks for them. May God bless you and the diocese for the kindness.

- Fr. Lawrence Otieno MHM (pictured on the left with children from one of his parishes)

*Elizabeth, Teresa, and Nina,
Thank you for remembering me at this holiest season. I am fine and still enjoying our volunteer gardening project. It's sort of like being Brotherly and Sisterly with creation. Also quite peaceful.
Thanks, Br. Larry Kenning (Retired)*

Dear Beth and Staff,

I received your gift. The masses will be taken care of by our priests and the rest we will use for the education of the Watatulu children. The program is going very well under Patricia and Roy's direction. They need to change in one generation which for us took us so many. God bless you all in the Mission Office! Pray for me, too.
Sincerely, Fr. Danny Ohmann (Retired)

Dear friends,

I woke up to a delightful surprise of your generous Christmas gift. Thank you so much. Our government announced that the COVID-19 vaccine may be available next year in March for the medical works and old people. So for now it is washing/sanitizing hands, wearing face masks and keeping social distance.

I'm so grateful, ASANTE SANA, HERI YA CHRISTMAS na Mungu awabariki!

- Fr. Gabriel Joseph Ssenkindo (Pictured on the right, before mass)



Spotlight on Mission



There are countless mission activities happening all the time both in the St. Cloud Diocese and around the world. All these mission activities are important to the work of celebrating our global Church. In this issue we highlight Emma Meyer, a parishioner from St. John the Baptist in Meire Grove. She is currently serving in Honduras.

My heart was set on fire for mission when I went on a three-week mission trip with FOCUS to El Salvador during the summer of 2019. I saw a third-world country for the first time with my own eyes and encountered the people there. Through prayer (especially reading the parable of the rich, young man) I felt the Lord calling me to serve His people in Central America and specially through Farm of the Child in rural Honduras.

I've been in Honduras for three months now and my experience has been atypical to say the least. My first two weeks I spent quarantining with the other missionaries in my class and getting to know them as this was our first time meeting each other in person. Within the past two months we have evacuated twice for hurricanes and quarantined for multiple weeks due to positive Covid-19 cases among staff and kids.

Farm of the Child or "the Finca" continues to serve through the pandemic. As a children's home, we are providing kids with a safe, nurturing place to grow up. The Finca also operates a community clinic and K-9 school for about 100 kids. The clinic has remained open throughout this time serving our neighbors in socially distant ways. School moved online and missionaries transitioned from roles of teaching Kindergarten and English to tutoring children.

Right now the kids are enjoying "winter vacation" before the new school year begins in

February. As a missionary I spend my days going to community spiritual events, playing soccer and hanging out with the kids, and perfecting my tortilla making abilities. In the coming months I will be teaching Kindergarten and 4th grade English along but with doing reading and math interventions.

**If you want to know more about Emma's time in Honduras you can find her blog at: <https://www.farmofthechild.org/emma.html>*



Emma (second from the right in the bright blue) with other missionaries in Honduras.

New Year Reflections

Some missioner friends of ours wrote some beautiful reflections on their work and journeying into the New Year.

Fr. Bob McCahill, Currently in Bangladesh

Last year, my first year in Chandpur District, I expected (due to previous experiences) to be held in suspicion by many Muslims who supposed I had come to convert them to my Christian faith. Thus, they merely tolerated my presence among them. Now has begun my second year amidst them. Trust is growing, being built. Many are cooperating with me in my efforts to heal and make better the lives of children. In all the thirteen districts I have lived since coming to Bangladesh 45 years ago, the first two years are characterized by a movement

of people's suspicion of me to trust in me and from toleration of me, to cooperation with me.

Jahangir, a poultry raiser (just one hundred fowls; not quite on the scale of Iowa – Indiana) is glad to let me use his cell phone to make contact with parents of disabled children in his area. He sometimes helps me during my conversations on his phone because, frequently, I cannot understand what Bengali villagers say because they speak excitedly and so rapidly. Jahangir also recommends that I visit kids he knows are in need of hospital treatment, the very benefit I wish to provide.

When rain forced pedestrians on Chandpur town's narrow sidewalk to seek dry refuge under shop awnings I was invited into a store and given a stool to sit on. My benefactor was Shohidul Islam, a devout prayer cap

New Year Reflections Cont'd

wearing young man. As we conversed about religion, I emphasized the part played by prayer in the lives of both Muslims and Christians. Moreover, I pointed out that service to other persons is the fruit of true religion. I explained: "Shohidul, just as you have served me by giving me this stool to sit on, that too can be called a religious act." His act of charity to me illustrated a Bengali maxim: service is the best religion.

We had agreed to meet by 9:00 at Block E of a hospital in Dhaka. They would come from a village six hours distant. After we had waited an extra hour for them, I was nervous. Farhad, a man unknown to me at that time, sensed my anxiety and volunteered to help me look for the absent ones. Without his help we may never have found one another. God blesses those who go out of their way to relieve others' anxiety.

Two helpful teenagers, Ratoool and Noori, helped me hunt for a home near village Dhali. Ratoool is a recent high school graduate and he was attracted to observe my dealing with a child's mother. He likes to practice his English, called me an "ideal man", and told me "I want to follow you". Then he questioned me: "What are you, a Muslim?" My single word reply: "Christian." After a pause, Ratoool admitted sadly; "But I thought you were a Muslim because you spoke the word. 'Allah'." Slowly, Ratoool began to smile at his own narrow reasoning that only a person who calls the Creator "Allah" should be called ideal. How odd is it for us to allow people's religious affiliation to influence our opinion of them.

Perhaps describing simple events and my thoughts about them will lead me to greater appreciation of people and of life. When I acknowledge the goodness of the people God places me among gratitude becomes even more deeply rooted in my heart.

Roberto Tonetto, Currently in East Asia

All the restrictions caused by the pandemic have not allowed me, until now, to visit the villages of the mission. Starting at the end of May, however, our team managed to make a series of trips to meet our brothers and sisters who now suffered the consequences of Covid 19 in an even more significant way compared with the isolation due to Hansen's disease. In general, we have seen how deep the sense of insecurity and precariousness has been in the hearts of our people. The first feeling we had in seeing our village again is a certain destabilization, especially at emotional level: the security that over the years had solidified, because of our regular visits, no longer existed. So as soon as there was a bit of openness, all the requests arrived that had remained unexpected due to the total closure of services.

A man was introduced to us by the hospital staff we are connected to as a rehabilitation center. We were told he needed a prosthesis, but when he arrived the two legs were still in their original place. However, he had very deep insole wounds and so we suggested that he stay to heal his wounds. At the time he was very hesitant, but eventually agreed to try for a week. In the end it took two months, but in early October he went home healed... a few days ago, the daughter joyfully sent me photos of her father's feet in perfect state despite resuming normal life at home... adding a phrase that gave me a huge pleasure "your God does not look people in the face, but only sees their needs, Thank you!" Sometimes it is precisely those who for the first time approach the Faith, recognize God's action with all the gratitude of those who feel at the center of a project of Love that the situations of life had somehow clouded.

I don't know how we are going to live Christmas this year; I believe that never before we wondered how our families will live one of the festivities that most marked our family experience. The earthly story of the Son of God started with his birth in a moment of crisis, just think of the journey that Mary and Joseph had to make, the failure to find place into the homes of the "faithful" of the time. This is in contrast with the revelation welcomed by pastors who

were not even authorized to pray to God... God is incarnated in the midst of this crisis. I am convinced that he is also incarnate today, among us, but we must give him space. To the extent that we give it to him, we will live the joy that the shepherds first felt in welcoming the Good News, that is, that it is God who comes to live among us and we meet him in the crises of our existence precisely if we choose attention to the poor, the oppressed, the marginalized...Of course it is necessary to believe that this is the true content of Christmas, that the Good News is an invitation to live the Life of God, which

is precisely "not to consider one's own equality with God as a jealous treasure, but to become poor until death and death on the cross. For this reason, God exalted him by giving him a name that is above all other names..." Jesus Christ!!!

So what can we wish for this Christmas? For my part, I pray that this moment of enormous crisis may pass soon. At the same time, however, that we find the strength to believe that God's Solidarity with our humanity, with our weakness, is the principle on which to base our battle with the pandemic. God's Solidarity brought the Good News: God is the Emmanuel (the God with Us). And those who have listened to him have become the joyful witnesses of this Novelty, living in solidarity with the sufferings and crises of their brothers and sisters. My wish is precisely this: that Christmas will revive in us the choice of Solidarity as the principle of New Life, because in doing so the year that will soon begin, will be a new Christmas.



This photo of Fr. Bob was sent to us with the caption: "At the town's retail station. Pantleg rolled up, but bike unseen."

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Expanding Our Mission Connections:

We are putting together a new "Mission Connections" Team and are looking for people passionate about Mission to join!

This team will work to promote and support different mission connections we have around the globe, including our diocesan partnerships in Kenya and Venezuela.

If you are interested in joining or would like more information about this exciting new opportunity, please contact Teresa at the Mission Office!

Email: missionofficeeducator@cloudnet.com

Phone: (320) 251-1100

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