

Mission Connections

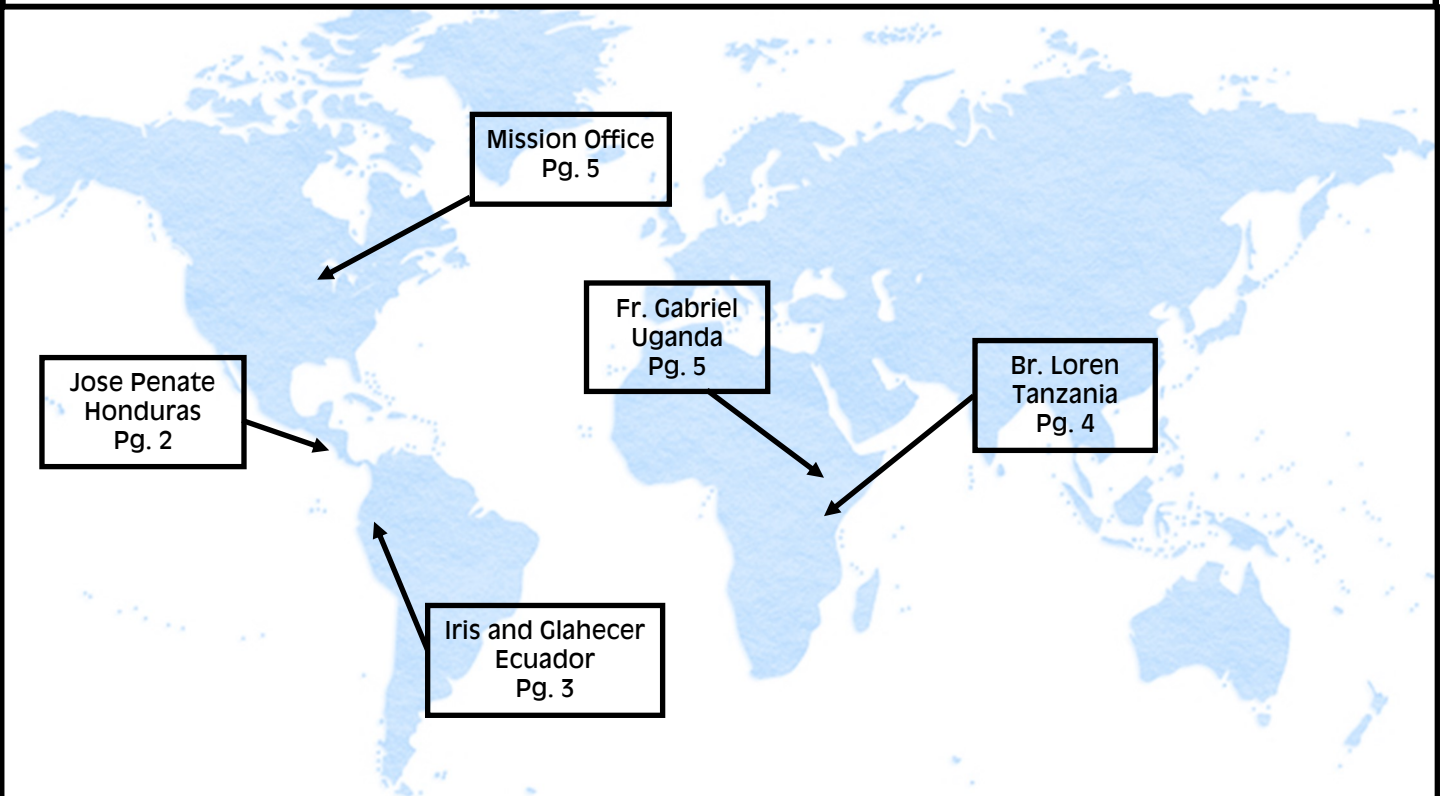
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A Prayer for Mission

O gracious and loving God, you work everywhere reconciling, loving, and healing your people and your creation. In your Son and through the power of your Holy Spirit, you invite each of us to join you in your work. We, young and old, lay and ordained, ask you to form us more and more in your image and likeness, through our prayer and worship of you and through the study of your scripture, that our eyes will be fully opened to your mission in the world. Then, God, into our communities, our nation, and the world, send us to serve with Christ, taking risks to give life and hope to all people and all of your creation. We ask this in Jesus' name.
Amen.



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

Trust In God, and a Leap of Faith

By Jose Penate—Honduras

They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?” They set out immediately and returned to Jerusalem... Luke 24: 32-33.

My wife, Célida, and I became foster parents to several young Honduran men while ministering in the juvenile jail in San Francisco, CA. On a certain occasion, we were concerned about the mothers of these boys. God inspired us to travel to Honduras to meet the families of these young people. During that visit, we were shocked by the extreme poverty in which these families lived. There was a family that impacted us profoundly. They, with a grateful heart, shared with us two things; just a glass of water because of their poverty, and their fervent faith that radiated joy and hope.



Years passed and I felt that God continued to invite us to live and do ministry in Honduras. Every time we experienced that invitation, the desire to find the risen Jesus in the poor neighborhoods of

Honduras burned like a fire in our hearts. Moved by this inspiration, we intensified our prayer and asked our missionary order, InnerCHANGE, for a formal exploration in Honduras. This led us to many places in different cities of Honduras.

My wife Célida and I, in personal prayer and at different times, felt that the Holy Spirit guided us to discover that the area of Nueva Capital in the city of Tegucigalpa, was the place where God was calling us to live and serve. We returned to the US filled with the joy of God, certain that HE was calling us and that we would have many challenges to face. So, our process to make the decision to move to Honduras began. A paradoxical process that was not easy.

On the one hand, the news we received from Honduras about violence at all levels, crime, extortion, kidnapping, and political unrest was terrifying. When we thought of Honduras, in our bodies we could feel the fear. Yet, when we prayed for Honduras we experienced peace and the joy of being part of the kingdom of God. God’s promise that we would not be alone comforted and encouraged us.

This process lasted 2 years and like the disciples of Emmaus, we asked ourselves, “**Were not our hearts burning within us while we explored Honduras and he spoke to us in our personal prayers?**” We set out and moved to Honduras, together with Belén our 7-year-old daughter. From the first day to the last, we were able to live tangibly the Kingdom of God, “On earth as it is in heaven.” What a wonderful experience!



Jose on the right

After 8 years of service in Honduras, Célida, Belén, and I can categorically assure you that God kept his promise. We were never alone. The risen Christ walked with us. HE continues to walk with those still serving in that region. There is a clinic and youth outreach center that continue to work under the direction of the local Church. The local InnerCHANGE missionary team continues to attend the dining room for children, group of young volunteers, and respond to the innumerable situations of material, emotional, and spiritual need.



Indeed, it is a privilege to participate, before directly and now indirectly, in this beautiful work of mercy. We recently moved to CA, where we are living a time of transition we call “Sabbatical.” A time to contemplate the wonders that God has done through our humble service. It is precious time where we will focus on prayer and preparation for the next 6-year journey. If God willing!

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

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Meeting Continual and New Needs in Ecuador

By Iris Prieto and Glahecer Baque—Ecuador

Our mission in Ecuador has been based in two areas. We have been continuing our work with the Parish Neighborhood Renewal Ministry here in Ecuador. We have been able to serve three communities around our mission center, helping 200 different families. We have also been able to do 8 different missions taking the Gospel into these sectors. This gave us the opportunity to form five small communities there where we continue attending their community meetings every week.

We have also moved to different areas of the city of Coca and Dayuma to help form missionary teams there in order to multiply the service to visiting families. We have gathered neighbors together, preaching the good news and helping to form small communities. We then leave teams to attend to them in their weekly meetings.



Another front that we have been attending to is the prevention of violence against women, children, and adolescents.

After the COVID 19 pandemic, it was discovered that an even worse pandemic had been unleashed in homes: physical, psychological and sexual violence against women, children, and adolescents particularly of the indigenous ethnic groups (Shuar, Kiwcha, and Huao) and migrants, especially Venezuelans and Haitians.



For this reason, we have been serving by giving violence prevention workshops aimed at these groups of vulnerable people. So far we have given 115 workshops in different neighborhoods, specifically in the indigenous and rural communities of the vicariate. In this service we have articulated efforts as part of a network of violence prevention, formed by government agencies, non-government organizations (NGOs) and international organizations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS).

World Mission Rosary Day is October 6th, 2023

The World Mission Rosary was envisioned by Archbishop Fulton John Sheen, then the national director of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, in 1951. He made the request on a radio show that his listeners "embrace the world in prayer." To do so he introduced this rosary.

Its uniqueness is in the five colors represented in each of the decades. Color symbolism in the rosary is a gentle reminder on which to focus our prayers.

This Rosary honors the work of mission, our call to be missionaries, and world unity and peace through its special emphasis on each of the Earth's regions, where prayers are needed and our brothers and sisters in Christ live, play, and pray just like each of us! Each region is represented by a different color; it is not only a beautiful rosary, but rich in symbolism.



Do you have your World Mission Rosaries?

If you would like rosaries for your school, class, or church, or more information about World Mission Rosaries, please email Samantha Wiechman at missionofficeeducator@cloudnet.com or find the request forms on our website: www.stcloudmissionoffice.com.

Educational Advances in Mwanza, Tanzania

By Br. Loren Beaudry—Tanzania

Last year, two Tanzanian men, Renatus Felician Mahendeka and Methusela Musunga Stephen, and myself, went to different primary schools to talk about learning disabilities. We talked to schools about ADHD [Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder], dyslexia and Autism. The schools were very happy in what we had taught them. The teachers told us that they were given instructions on how to teach the higher achieving students, but little information was given on how to work with children with learning disabilities. In the last year, we were able to visit all the primary schools in Mwanza, the second largest city in Tanzania.

Along with this, Tanzania as a country is working on some educational reforms. Schools around the world have often used caning practices in disciplining children for misbehaving or for simply making mistakes. Over the years, caning children has been pretty much abolished in the USA. Tanzania on the other hand has not made it that far. They are however on the verge of reducing their caning strategies in disciplining children, both in the schools and at home. As such, this year, the three of us [Renatus, Stephano, and myself], plus a lady, Veronica Shem Andrew, decided to teach schools about “Child Protection.”



Renatus giving a seminar on Child Protection

Last year I sent Renatus and Stephano for a month long course on “Child Protection” and why have seminars on “Child Protection” in schools? “Child Protection” is an effort to prevent child abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence to children by adults or by their peers. The aim of these seminars is to get people to reflect and perhaps change their abusive way of handling children.

The Primary schools accepted the training program on “Child Protection” with open hands. Sometimes a seminar would include two or three additional schools who would also join us. Although most of the schools had some education on “Child Protection” the schools



Br. Loren Beaudry on left, receiving a certificate of appreciation for teaching schools about learning disabilities in Mwanza, Tanzania.

were open to learning more on the topic. They saw a need to reflect on the issue of “Child Protection” to a greater degree.

When we gave a seminar on “Child Protection” in schools, we first addressed the students. We would ask the students, “What is Child Protection?” “What are the rights of children?” “What to do, or not to do, if you are a victim of child abuse?”

After the seminar with the students, we would have a separate seminar for the teachers. Questions were asked, “Have you encountered children who have been sexually abused in school or at home?” “How did you counsel the child?” “What can we do to help a child who has experienced being sexually assaulted?” “And for us as teachers, is caning a child really the best way to discipline them?”

A few weeks ago, we began to give “Child Protection” seminars to parents. We found out that giving seminars to parents was an important re-enforcing strategy as well. The parents felt the need to spend more time talking to their children. They wanted to support their children, who may be secretly suffering from child abuse, either from adults or their peers. They even suggested that we have a seminar on “Child Protection” that includes the parents and children together.

We want to hear from you!

If you are in contact with a Missioner from our diocese that you believe we might not be aware of, or, if you yourself have had a mission experience and are interested in sharing about it, please reach out and let us know!

Community Based Rehabilitation

By Fr. Gabriel Joseph Ssenkindo—Uganda

My name is Fr. Gabriel Joseph Ssenkindo. I am a Missionary Benedictine monk of Christ the King Priory, in Tororo, Uganda. We try to live a Benedictine and Missionary vocation. Our life is characterized by Prayer and Work. With our Missionary vocation being more expressed through work. We have an Eye hospital, a vocational school, we serve in parishes, and as chaplains to schools and Benedictine convents.

At the Eye hospital, we have a Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) department. Sometimes, people come whose sight cannot be restored, hence blind. They are given necessary training and aids to be able to move by themselves. Part of the training takes place at their homes and villages. It was also discovered that in the villages their children with disabilities were neglected. The CBR department undertook to give a helping hand here. The family of Scovia and Patrick Wandera is one of the families that receives help from CBR.

Scovia and Patrick are a young family with five children. They live in a remote village about 8 miles from my Monastery. One of their children, Mary, was born a normal child. But at the age of 3, she developed some kind of stiffness in the neck. As time passed, Mary could no longer sit or walk. By the time she was brought to the Benedictine Eye Hospital (CBR), it was too late for any meaningful intervention.

Usually in Africa, any predicament on a child is blamed on the woman (mother). The child is seen as a curse, burden, and a source of shame. In most cases the child is kept in the house which is usually dark.

I planned to visit the family with one of the CBR staff. On July 25, the feast of St. James the Apostle, we set off after Mass on a motorcycle. After about 20 minutes on village paths, we arrived at the home. To meet us, was Scovia with a little boy of about 3 years. Patrick was out doing a motorcycle taxi job and 3 of their children were in a grade school in the neighboring village. Mary was in one of the 3 grass thatched houses. We could hear some kind of sound coming from the house. The CBR staff who is known to the family introduced me a Father. Hearing 'Father', the mood around changed. Scovia rushed into the house and brought Mary out. Mary, 13 years old, was radiating with joy to learn that Father had come to visit their home. I had brought a kilo of sugar, a loaf of bread, a bar of soap and some candy with us. Little did I know that this was Mary's first piece of candy in 13 years. This visit would have a foundational change in Scovia and Patrick Wandera's lives.

Sometimes what is essential is invisible to the physical eyes, ears, hands, etc. It is only with the heart that one can see what is essential. After sharing with Scovia, the one she saw as a curse, burden, source of shame with her heart she began to see a child, a blessing from God to be loved like any other child. With the heart, nothing, even disability, could stop Mary from radiating with joy and happiness because FATHER had come to their home. When our hearts are set on fire by God's word and we recognize the Risen Lord in the Eucharist we cannot. help but set out to reach out to the downcast, poor, or those in despair and share our blessings. It is through this that we are truly Missionaries.



New Mission Education Coordinator

Hello everyone!

My name is Samantha Wiechman. I was recently hired here at the St. Cloud Mission office to work as their Mission Education Coordinator. I grew up in the St. Cloud diocese, in the Freeport, MN area. I have spent the better part of the last five years in Bismarck, ND and just recently moved back into the area. Originally I moved to Bismarck for college, graduating with an undergraduate degree in Psychology in April 2020. I then returned to work for my Alma Mater, University of Mary, in their admissions department. While I was there, God surprised me by asking me to pursue an MA in Catholic studies that I will finish in April of 2024. It has been a wonderful experience, but I am excited to finish up this school year.

I have always enjoyed being able to learn and grow with the experiences and stories of the people I meet. This is part of why I also really enjoy learning about people with different backgrounds and part of why I love mission because I believe that everyone has something to give and share.

In my free time I really enjoy spending time with my family and friends doing really anything, and I am always down for going on an adventure. I also really enjoy playing board games, painting, learning to cook new foods, reading, and eating fried rice.

I am excited to get to know everyone! Feel free to reach out with questions or to introduce yourselves.
-Samantha



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Online Auction During October

Once again, we are having an online auction during the month of October! In celebration of Mission Month, from Monday, October 2nd at 12pm until Tuesday, October 31st at 12pm, our online auction will be open for bidding! This auction will feature items such as quilts made by our local mission groups, fair trade items, and more!

The link for the auction can be found on our website, social media pages, and below:

<https://scmo.betterworld.org/auctions/mission-month-auction>

If you have any questions about the auction feel free to call or email Samantha:

missionofficeeducator@cloudnet.com

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