

One Family In Mission

years later...

PENTECOST CONTINUES

Pontifical Mission Societies, April 2008

A report from Ethiopia
Famine and fighting. Drought and deepest poverty. These are the realities of life in Awasa, a town in southern Ethiopia.

But the one constant thread of hope that has also been part of the story for the people of Awasa is the "Good News" of Jesus. All through times of formidable hardship, missionaries offered people the truth that Jesus loves them.

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A History for Celebration

Looking back at our "mission" roots

SAY THE WORD "MISSION" TODAY AND MOST THINK OF AFRICA AND ASIA, OF FARAWAY PLACES WHERE THE POOR HEAR THE "GOOD NEWS" OF JESUS AND EXPERIENCE THE LORD'S GREAT LOVE THROUGH THE WORK AND WITNESS OF MISSIONARIES. BUT A CENTURY AGO, THE "MISSIONS" WERE RIGHT HERE AT HOME, AND MISSIONARIES FROM EUROPE PROCLAIMED THE GOSPEL AND SERVED THE POOR ON OUR SHORES, ALL MOTIVATED BY THE COMMAND OF JESUS TO "GO, MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS."

This year, 2008, the Church in the United States marks the 100th anniversary of our "mission independence." In 1908, it was decided that we no longer needed financial help for our pastoral and evangelizing needs. As we mark this anniversary, we celebrate our rich missionary history and reflect with gratitude on the debt we owe to the missionaries who journeyed here and to the Catholics who supported their efforts through the Pontifical Mission Societies.

Lighting Our Way — from France

In early 19th century in France, a young woman, Pauline Jaricot, had a vision. She saw two oil lamps – one, empty; the other, full. In her dream, the full lamp was filling up the empty one, making it fit once again for use.

Pauline saw the full lamp as the Missions of her day – the United States included. She had been hearing a lot about those young churches from her brother, Phileas, as he prepared for the priesthood. She believed that the great faith of these growing churches would "fill up" the lack of faith she was finding in her own native France, and help renew her Church at home. So Pauline decided to start something to support the Missions of her day, so just that would happen. (Later, history would prove Pauline right. In fact, many missionary Religious Communities came out of France in the latter part of the 19th century, and three of the four Pontifical Mission Societies were founded there during those years.)

Pauline Jaricot's vision lives on, both in the emphasis on daily prayer and regular sacrifice, and in the universal approach to offering help to all the Missions through one General Fund of Solidarity.



Bishop Charles de Forbin-Janson wrote “Poor New York,” to Catholics in France, “there is not yet a minor or major seminary... and this diocese is larger than all of England. There are already 200,000 Catholics, with the City of New York having about 24,000.”

Pauline started gathering together small groups – mostly workers in her family’s silk factory. She asked each member of the group to offer daily prayer and a weekly sacrifice of a sou (the equivalent of a penny at that time) for the Church’s worldwide missionary work. She insisted that her efforts be directed to all the Church’s Missions, that it be universal.

From Pauline’s vision came the founding of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, the first of four Pontifical Mission Societies. Two-thirds of its first collection in 1822 went to support the vast diocese of Louisiana, which then extended from the Florida Keys to Canada, and the Missions of Kentucky. The remaining third went to China.

The young Church in the United States started contributing to missionary outreach through the Propagation of the Faith as early as 1833, with our first humble gift of \$6. Today, as the Propagation of the Faith continues to seek prayer and sacrifice for the world’s Missions

– now more than 1,150 dioceses in Asia, Africa, the Pacific Islands and remote regions of Latin America – Pauline’s vision lives on, both in the emphasis on daily prayer and regular sacrifice, and in the universal approach to offering help to all the Missions through one General Fund of Solidarity.

But Pauline’s job for the Missions didn’t end there. She had more to say about the subject – and she said it to just the right person.

A Missionary Journey — to New York

Bishop Charles de Forbin-Janson was much in demand.

Many French bishops who were serving as missionaries in the United States – the “Missions” of his day – wanted this bishop of Nancy in France to visit the young churches there and then return home to encourage interest and support for their work.

In 1839, Bishop Forbin-Janson did just that, sailing across the ocean and landing in

New York, where he was welcomed with open arms by Bishop John Dubois. "Poor New York," he wrote to Catholics back in France, "there is not yet a minor or major seminary... and this diocese is larger than all of England. There are already 200,000 Catholics, with the City of New York having about 24,000. Here everything is to be done for the sake of religion."

Continuing his travels, Bishop Forbin-Janson also visited New Orleans and Baltimore, as well as Canada – all on horseback. He preached retreats, celebrated Masses for congregations packed into small churches and chapels, and gathered children for religious instruction. Two years later, he returned to France.

Once home he met an old friend – Pauline Jaricot – who had founded the society that was helping to support the missionary efforts in the United States that he had just witnessed. Bishop Forbin-Janson was determined to "arouse great interest for the useful

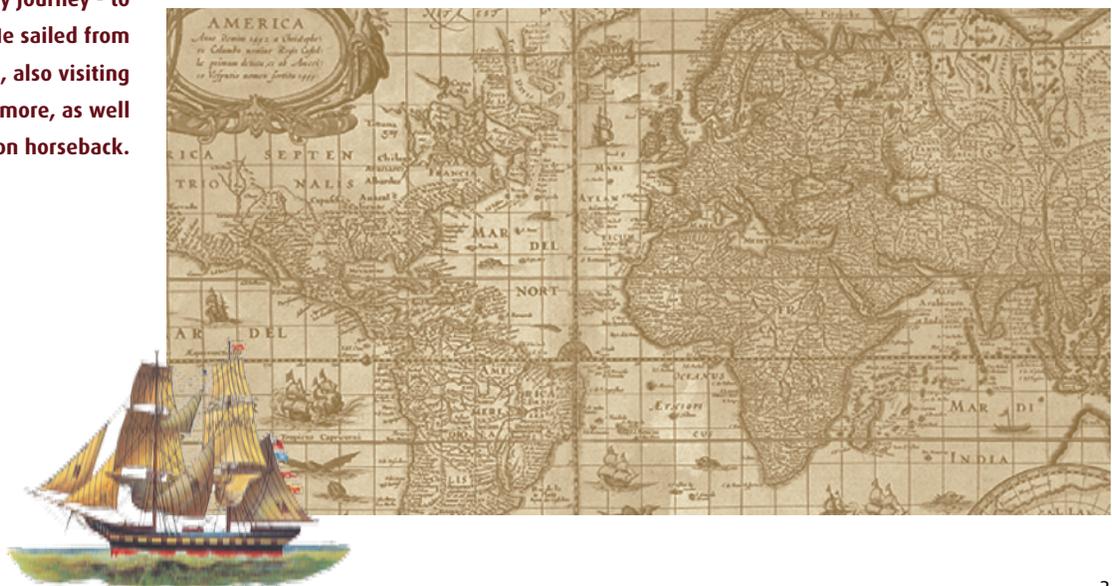
work of the Propagation of the Faith" among French Catholics.

During a conversation between these two friends in 1843, Bishop Forbin-Janson shared his own longtime dream – to help the children of the Missions. Like Pauline, he saw the "riches" of the poor mission churches of his day. And he was convinced that though weak and needing care, children rich in faith and love were capable of playing their own part in the Church's mission – and of even stirring adults to the same generous missionary spirit.

Some time during the course of their talk, the Holy Childhood Association (HCA), a second Pontifical Mission Society, was born. Bishop Forbin-Janson started appealing to the children of France to reach out – in faith and love – to help the children of the Missions of our country and China.

Today, HCA continues to follow the vision of Bishop Forbin-Janson – "children helping

In 1839, Bishop Forbin-Janson made a missionary journey - to the United States. He sailed from France to New York, also visiting New Orleans and Baltimore, as well as Canada - all on horseback.



children.” After learning about the great needs of the world’s poorest children, young people are invited to pray and to offer financial help so that children in the Missions today may know Christ and experience His love and care.

One Call for All the World

Each of us, through our Baptism, is called to be a missionary. It is the same call given to the first Apostles, heard by the missionaries who traveled from France to the United States in the 19th century, and heeded by Pauline Jaricot

and Bishop Forbin-Janson in founding two of the four Pontifical Mission Societies.

It is too the same invitation from the Lord heard by priests, Religious and lay persons from Africa, Asia, the Pacific Islands and Latin America who come to our country today to proclaim the Gospel in word and service. As “one family in mission” we continue Pentecost in our day. Now that’s something to celebrate!

Coming in May 2008: The Missions of Indiana - making a saint.

MISSION TODAY



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The first missionaries to bring the Gospel message to the poor in Ethiopia arrived in the early part of the 20th century. By 1952, when the late Comboni Bishop Armido Gasparini came on the scene, there were just 115 Catholics served by one French Capuchin priest. In the five decades that followed, until his death in 2004, Bishop Gasparini would build the Church in this part of Ethiopia, founding the Handmaids of the Church, a Religious Community that works primarily with women and children, ordaining seven men to the priesthood, including the first two from the Sidamo tribe, and watching the faithful in Awasa grow from that handful to more than 120,000. He also helped build a small rural hospital and several clinics, in addition to schools.

Help from the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, a Pontifical Mission Society, supported – and continues to support – the Church in Ethiopia, and Awasa’s current bishop, Lorenzo Ceresoli, today builds on the legacy of Bishop Gasparini. Catholics in Awasa are

now close to 160,000. There are some 60 priests, 130 Sisters and Brothers, and more than 500 catechists serving in some 20 parishes.

“Christ has made a radical difference in the lives of these people,” Bishop Gasparini once said. Indeed, the presence of the Lord in the work and witness of the Church’s missionaries has done just that – with the help of Catholics through the Pontifical Mission Societies.