



Vocation Ministry Newsletter

Summer 2021 Issue

"We Maryknoll Sisters, envision One Earth Community where the Co-Creative Energy of Divine Love flows freely, nurturing wholeness of being in an expanding and evolving Universe."

Thanks to our contributors:

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Mother Mary Joseph often spoke of the Maryknoll spirit "as being a reflection of the Love of God - nothing more nor less than that - a reflection of the Love of God."



MMJ: 1932

Life in the Mission Field

by: Sr. Armeline Sidoine
Mission in Hong Kong



It has been two years since I arrived in Hong Kong in 2019. I find it a very pleasant but yet competitive place because of the ministry opportunities that are available. Despite its modern and prosperous characteristics, there are also challenges regarding care of the poor and grassroots people. Where there are people, there are always needs!

Mother Mary Joseph, our Foundress, said the Community is what we make it. Thus said, it is the responsibility of each one to make our Community a hospitable, happy, and livable place. Integrating oneself into the Community is a daily exercise.....I try to be authentic by showing both my gifts and my vulnerabilities. In this way, there is clarity of exchange, which leads to the common good; in this clarity both the Community and I find a balance.

As for now, language is still a challenge for me. Because of what has been going on here in Hong Kong (protests and the pandemic), I did not have many chances or opportunities to practice my Cantonese language.

As a Maryknoll Sister, I am always on the lookout for where my gifts can be of use and of service. In this way, I create my own personal mission story. For instance, in Hong Kong, there was a felt need to assist particularly the poor and foreign prisoners. With the support of my Community, I am able to take part in these activities as part-time ministries.

For me, PRAYER is the first pillar of a balanced missionary life. Needless to say, Community living and sharing strengthens my vocation. Even though community life can be challenging because of our complexities, it is still through the Community that I find companionship and strength.

Sharing the Same Hopes and Dreams

by: Susan Waldstein
Integrative Care Director



I decided it was time to leave my other place of employment and saw an ad in the penny saver. I applied and interviewed, I was told I would be contacted in about 2 weeks. During that 2-week period, all I could think about was how I was welcomed, even just for an interview at Maryknoll. I so much wanted to be here. I even emailed Sandra Brandt the HR personnel, to say, even if I am not hired, I hope I could volunteer. Luckily, I was offered the position, and accepted immediately. I truly feel I was somehow led here and am so grateful.

My work is fulfilling, even the “boring tasks”, because in the end, they will impact a Sister, or a staff Member. I often say find a job you love and you never work a day in your life.

To be able to impact a Sister or staff even in a small way is life giving. Simply being able to hold someone’s hand and see the smile gives me a sense of joy, and makes me know that even doing a small thing for someone gives joy.

Working here in Maryknoll I learned it does not matter who you are, where you came from or what your core beliefs are. We are all the same. We have the same hopes and dreams for ourselves and for the world.

Happiness and laughter that I hear and see in all parts of my working place uplift my spirit. Working together through the hard times, and celebrating our small victories gives me joy. This past year and a half has shown what we can do, if we work together and really care for each other.

Lean Not on Your Own Understanding

by: Paige Perret

I have lived in Colorado Springs, Colorado for nearly eleven years—the longest time I have spent in one place. Growing up as an Air Force brat I am more used to moving houses every few years but, the change in pace has helped me grow some roots and build a future. I am the youngest of three and live with my parents in a rural area called Black Forest. My older brother is in the U.S. Marine Corps and is stationed with his wife in North Carolina. My identical twin sister works for the District Attorney's office here in the Springs and I tutor several subjects for the local community college. I am about three semesters away from a bachelor's in French Language and hope to work in mission after I have graduated from college.



Ever since high school I have had friends, relatives, and teachers model mission work. Whether it was working in the local community or going overseas with missionary groups. I have always admired missionaries but never felt I was “ready” for that sort of commitment. So, I dabbled in a few degrees—Nursing and Microbiology—after finishing an associates in French. I always thought I would get to mission work when I had the time. During quarantine I began to rework my faith and be honest about my beliefs. I always said “God is first in my life” but I hadn’t been living it. Instead, I was trying to prove my worth in academics which only pulled me away from God. After much prayer and thought, I decided to refocus my goals to really live for God. I had considered religious life before but was never serious until January of 2021. The Spirit moved me forward and I strongly felt—and still feel—that I am firmly called to religious life.

I was referred to Maryknoll by a close friend who is a Benedictine Sister. She knew my interest in mission and told me to contact Maryknoll for opportunities as a layperson. After reading the story of Maryknoll and hearing stories about the sisters I thought I could see myself doing the same work. But, not as a layperson. If I wanted to be successful, I knew my vocation was as a sister of Maryknoll. In speaking with Sister Gloria, I have learned so much of the history of Maryknoll and the present mission work that is being accomplished all over the world. I am especially attracted to the charism because, to me, it fulfills what Jesus called his disciples to when He said: Love your neighbor as yourself.” (Mark 12:31)

In these past few months, I feel that I have experienced the peace and joy of the Lord that so many Psalms mention. As I continue to discern, I hope to grow more faithful, joyful, and peaceful in the Lord. I expect the Holy Spirit's guidance and a massive overhaul of my heart as His grace pulls me towards my vocation and His will. He continues to move in my heart and in those around me. I was a little surprised at my family's acceptance of my choice. My siblings didn't even bat an eye and my parents—

while understandably reluctant—supported my choice. Their many questions are a sign of their interest and they are encouraging me to pursue this vocation.

As I continue on this path, I try to rely on scripture and encourage anyone discerning any vocation to dig into the Word as a guide. The well-known verse: “lean not on your own understanding” has helped me during this joyful but challenging time of discernment (Prov. 3:5). I know where my heart is leading and what God is calling me to and look forward to my future discerning with Maryknoll. I find simple peace in knowing that I don’t know but, God does, and he is patiently waiting for me.

My Faith’s Turning Point
by: Brenda Zvaraya

I am Brenda Zvaraya and the youngest of five siblings. I have two sisters and two brothers. I was born in the Western part of Zimbabwe in a small village near Chinhoyi town. I am originally from the Chinhoyi Diocese. Currently, I am working in South Africa as a Primary Teacher in one of the private schools. Things haven't been easy since the time of covid-19 pandemic. We thank God that our students are now back to school and having face-to-face classes. We take a lot of precautions for safety reasons.



My mother's death was a turning point for me in my faith experience. When she passed away in a car crash accident, I encountered God's loving care through the loving care of my father, family and friends who supported us. I also realized God wants a special relationship with me. He wants to love me and me to love him. My thoughts about religious life began to linger. I feel I want to be Christ's instrument of light in the misery of human kind. There is so much thirsting and suffering for the love of Christ.

The Maryknoll Sisters' charism and vocation to mission attracted me to discern a missionary Congregation. Your call to cross-cultural mission and having a missionary spirit—living with people of different cultures—indeed encourages me to discern my vocation to Maryknoll.

As I discern religious life, I hope to be reliant on and grounded in God. I hope to be a person of great passion with a compassionate heart, and to be a Maryknoll sister in the near future.

My family does support me a lot in my heart's desire. They do encourage and pray for me that my desire will come true one day. For young searchers like myself, don't be afraid to listen to the inner voice calling you. Take courage, pray, and see where God is leading you.

Inspired by Mother Mary Joseph

by: Leslie Mancuso

Development Director

I started my mission journey at Maryknoll as Direct Mail Manager, after six months the position for Development Director opened when Sr. Anastasia was elected to the Leadership team. My passion for the Sisters mission was clear since my first day I started working here; I decided to apply for the opening and was selected as the new Development Director! It's hard to believe that was 7 years ago already, I just celebrated this special anniversary on May 19th. It has truly been a blessing to be here; I love what I do and know the great responsibility I have with my team to bring awareness to the world about how the Maryknoll Sisters are making God's love visible worldwide. The practical aspect of funding and cultivating connections with our donors is most important, and I take this very seriously. It is an honor to support our Sisters in mission and our Sisters here, who have given their life to mission and now are home. Our retired Sisters have given themselves to meet the needs of those they served and now we are able to make sure their needs are met here; it is a beautiful type of Karma!



Simply working for the Sisters naturally inspires me to live out the Maryknoll Charism – Making God's Love Visible. Each day is a reminder that whatever our job is we collectively are making a difference in the world for the oppressed and less fortunate. We are all pieces of this beautiful puzzle contributing to the greater good in the world. I see it as though we are "raising the fuel for the car" so our Sisters can keep going. And let me tell you...the Maryknoll Sisters are like the energizer bunny, they keep going and going and going; here, age is just a number!

I always convey to our benefactors that the core spirit of the Maryknoll Sisters has stayed the same in the past, present and will continue to do so in the future. That is because the entire foundation of the Sisters was built on God's love, so how could it not? They are so humble, unselfish and generous to donate their entire lives to mission in some of the most remote places in the world with very little comforts. It truly takes a special person to share their life and talents with those in need. I am continually amazed at their spirit of love and acceptance of all people. You truly become a better person working here. One of my favorite quotes is "God has yet a great work for us to do; but the realization of this vision depends on you and me" -Mother Mary Joseph 1947, a true reflection of who our Sisters are.

The spirit of Mother Mary Joseph is very much alive in our workplace. Her kindness and genuine concern for everyone mirrors how we interact with each other in Development. Our team is mixed, with both lay staff and Sisters. I truly see on a daily basis a great respect and genuine care for one another. We all have individual jobs in the department, but come together in a family sort of way.

During my orientation, I watched *Trail Blazers in Habit* movie and was beyond inspired! Afterwards, I crossed paths in the hallway with some of these Sisters in the film; I was star struck! I was like oh my goodness there is Sister Betty Ann Maheu and Sister Jeanne Houlihan! Now that I know them, the best part of each day is realizing I am doing all I can to continue the legacy of Mother Mary Joseph. Outside of my office is a sign that says, "In a world where you can be anything, be kind." I feel it reflects the spirit of Mother Mary Joseph and reminds me to not just talk it, but live it too.

Remembering My First Love

by: Helene O'Sullivan, MM

Mission in Cambodia

We all remember the experience of our first love. My first experience took place after I joined the Maryknoll Sisters and was assigned to Hong Kong. In the 1960s when I arrived in Hong Kong which was my first mission assignment the sisters took me and the other new sisters to see one of the squatter areas where they worked. In the 60s, Hong Kong had such an influx of poor refugees from Mainland China. They were poor and lived in overcrowded and difficult situations. It was a dark and rainy night and the rats were darting around in the shadows of the squatter area. But the children were out too! They were jumping around in the puddles having a wonderful time. Suddenly, I was filled with such emotion of love for the children who were living in such poverty but who were laughing and tagging and splashing each other in from the puddles from the pouring rain. I literally fell "head over heels in love with the children". I knew this is where I was meant to be and serve in mission. Even though I didn't yet speak the language I felt so at home. I was so grateful for my call to mission among the refugees in Hong Kong. I know other Maryknoll Sisters and missionaries who went to other continents and felt the same strong emotion of love, aliveness and sense that they had found their tribe, their home where they would grow deep roots.



One of Mother Mary Joseph's exceptional gifts was her appreciation of diversity. She recognized that no two sisters were alike and this was good. Each sister came with God-given gifts to use in the service of God's mission. This was in an era when sisters all wore the same habit so we all looked alike and changed our names when we took our vows leaving our own personal names and family identity behind. To those outside religious life, sisters were seen as interchangeable parts of the Church workforce. Instead, Mother Mary Joseph understood that the sisters were individuals from different backgrounds, cultures and races and was ready to accept and welcome this diversity from the very founding moment of the Maryknoll Sisters because she recognized that God had called this sister to Maryknoll to work in mission. Today many people see diversity as a threat and want to go back to the way things were and keep the status quo. But the way things were done did not serve everyone especially the poor and people of color. Growing in appreciation of diversity is a value and implementing it is a skill. We need to continue to grow in recognizing diversity as a manifestation of God's abundant love and care for us and all of creation.

Our ancestors believed that things happened *to us*; hurricanes; volcanic eruptions; and plagues happened to us, and while they coped as best they could, they felt helpless and prayed and make offering to appease the gods and beg to be spared from these disasters.

The gods were thought to be all powerful and if the right offering was made, they would intervene on behalf of the suffering people and end the disaster. As humankind learned more about science we began to understand that there were natural and scientific explanations for these disasters. In the 21st century, almost all of the natural disasters are symptoms of climate change that have been created by human beings. We must take responsibility for the disasters we have

created. Today, we are rediscovering the significance and impact of evolution and how it is impacting our way of looking at the world and our understanding of God and God's relationship with us and the world. Our God is not an "off-planet god" who leaves the world to fend for itself but a God who calls to us from the future inviting us to become more conscious of our oneness with all of creation, and assume more and more responsibility for our planet and all who share the web of life with us. We are not meant to tend the status quo but to co-create with God a world that works for all and where all thrive. God is *for us*; life is *for us*.

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