

CACERES MISSION AID PROGRAM

Archdiocese of Caceres

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Background. On August 15, 1995, the Archdiocese of Caceres celebrated its 400th year as a diocese. One of the fruits of the celebration has been the commitment of the archdiocese to send priests to different dioceses in the Philippines and in the world. On March 26, 1997, Archbishop Leonardo Legaspi, OP, D.D., and the Caceres Clergy formally created and approved the Caceres Mission Aid Program (CMAP).

Nature. Through the Caceres Mission Aid Program, priests are encouraged, prepared and sent for missionary work. The sending signifies the sharing of the gift of faith. The program is an expression of support of the Church's universal mission. This is also part of the ongoing formation of priests.

Mission Churches. During the time of Archbishop Legaspi, the archdiocese sent priests to Australia, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent

and the Grenadines, Solomon Islands, Taiwan and some dioceses in the Philippines.

Today, with Archbishop Rolando Tirona, OCD, D.D., the archdiocese has started to send missionaries to dioceses in the United States of America, Canada and New Zealand. Right now, thirty diocesan missionary priests under the Caceres Mission Aid Program serve in the name of the Archdiocese of Caceres in the following countries: Taiwan, Diocese of Hsinchu; Australia, Diocese of Townsville; Canada, Archdiocese of Regina; Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Diocese of Kingstown; Jamaica, Diocese of Montego Bay; Saint Lucia, Archdiocese of Castries; New Zealand; Dioceses of Christchurch and Wellington; and, United States of America, Diocese of Green Bay, Diocese of Greensburg, Diocese of Ogdensburg, Diocese of Phoenix, and Diocese of Richmond.





Components of Caceres Mission Aid Program. The program has four different components:

A. Proximate Preparation. The formation for mission starts in the seminary where the future priests are oriented about mission work. A missiology course is one of the subjects in the seminary. In collaboration with priests, seminarians experience local summer mission immersion. The mission animation and formation programs advocated especially by the Archdiocese of Caceres Office for Mission, which was established in 2002, surely make the priests aware of the need to give back what the local Church received in the past through missionary work.

B. Immediate Preparation. Priests who are short-listed, recommended and approved by the Archbishop will participate in this phase of preparation. They are relieved from their present assignment so that they could have the time to prepare the necessary documents and to undergo short course on mission.

The short course has two parts. The first part is given by the office for mission. This includes an orientation on the program, sharing of missionaries and basic concepts on intercultural communication. During the orientation, the Memorandum of Agreement between the Archdiocese and host diocese is presented and discussed with the missionary.

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The second part of the preparation is given by either the Divine Word Institute for Mission Studies or the Lorenzo Mission Institute. Missiologists from these institutions give sessions on Missiology, Missionary Spirituality, Mission trends and issues. Part of the immediate preparation is for the priest-missioners to hone their necessary skills so that they could be more effective in mission work (e.g. driving, cooking, English or Spanish proficiency, etc.). The official send-off by the Archbishop completes the immediate preparation.

C. Mission Work. There is a “work orientation” during which each diocese gives its own orientation program appropriate to the needs of the missionary and situation of the host diocese. Next is the “mission experience.” The actual mission is the best formation phase of the missionary. His experience in the mission territory provides him many



opportunities for personal deepening and growth in ministry. Finally, there is the “reciprocal updating between the missionary and the Archdiocese.” Here the Archdiocese sees to it that the missionary is constantly updated about the local Church.

D. Welcoming the “Returning Missionary” (Re-Entry). The process of coming home from mission is not only a significant part of the mission program, but it is also crucial in providing

integration to the many mission experiences that a missionary has with the present situation of the local Church that sent him for mission work.

The re-entry program includes vacation, recollection, physical check-up and sessions about issues in the Archdiocese as requested by the missionary. The chancellor, oeconomus, and other commissions that might be requested by the mission office give sessions to the returning missionary.

Conclusion. The Archdiocese of Caceres has had some success in the mission formation of its priests through the Caceres Mission Aid Program. This success, however, is not only due to the structures that were put in place to ensure formation. It is mainly due to motivation itself and the willingness of priests to undertake mission work. The program is a way to participate in the mission of Jesus.

Note: Material for this presentation is derived from the Office for the Clergy and the writings of Father Andrew Recepcion.

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