

## Mission in the Mandate of Jesus

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With baskets tied around their head, infants wrapped around their young mother's body, the indigenous people (IP) of Mindoro, the Mangyans, are often seen walking in single file in the market or other public places, begging for food. In the early years of our mission in Mindoro, they used to come knocking at the door of our convent; the sisters welcomed and cared for them.

When "Angels' Home," a house for less-privileged children and young girls, was built, the sisters decided to take in some indigenous children and young people. In Angels' Home, their basic needs are provided. They are sent to good schools, which hone their natural gifts. More importantly, they are formed in human and Christian values. A sister is tasked to guide them, to be with them as they do their tasks in the house, fulfill their duties as students and relate with other young people in the community. Aside from this, the sisters also nurture their faith through catechesis, prayer and accompaniment. Recently, we have organized feeding programs.

Our mission among the Mangyans cannot but remind me of this Gospel scene: "Jesus rose from the table, took off his outer garment, and tied a towel around his waist. Then he poured some water into a washbasin and began to wash the disciples' feet and dry them with the towel around his waist" (Jn 13:4-5). This Gospel scene speaks of our mission with and among the Mangyans. Yes, their feet are often caked with mud and cracked by the heat of the soil which they tread barefoot. Our mission, however, is not to literally wash the dirt off their travel-worn feet, but as Jesus did, to bend, wash their feet and look them in the eyes as our brethren. We express in our utmost capacity the desire to welcome them and help them discover their gifts just waiting to bloom in God's merciful and loving hands.

The challenge, on the other hand, is to encourage them to give back to their own communities and make full use of their gifts. Many of those who have lived with us lack perseverance and dreams for a better life. Despite this, we continue to hope that Jesus will do his work through our hearts and our hands, because our mission is not to ascertain the success of our efforts, but to place in God's hands our whole selves, allowing Him to bless us, to break us and to be shared continually for the good of His Kingdom.

Patience and perseverance in this mission are rewarded by the joy we feel in serving God's mission as well as by witnessing how their gifts bloom and give joy to other people around them.

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