

## Following Christ's Light:

### Celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Founding of the Mission in Ayene, Equatorial Guinea, Africa



*Celebrating the Eucharist on the occasion of our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in Ayene. Left to right, Sisters Herminia Medina, O.P. (our Superior General), Gloria Elsy Vázquez, O.P. (Provincial Superior of Colombia), Soledad García, O.P., Patricia Maldonado, O.P., Lizdey Arbleidy Bustamante, O.P., and Teresita Martin, O.P.*

Dear Mission Friends:

Our beloved congregation, the Dominican Sisters of Christian Doctrine, was founded on August 8, 1948 by Mother Leonor Baqueriza Figueroa, O.P., whose longtime dream

was to establish a mission on the poorest of continents, in the poorest of countries. It took decades of great faith, great hope, and great dedication, but we were finally able to realize that dream in 1994 with the establishment of a mission here

in Equatorial Guinea. Today it is both humbling and gratifying to take a moment out of our everyday life of demands and difficulties and see how far this country and its people have come since our first sisters arrived.





*Left, Sister Lizdey, with a lay assistant, attending to the health of Guinea's families; above, Sister Soledad sitting with families, listening to their concerns; below, Sister Lizdey in spiritual retreat with our youth.*

Each of us sisters who has passed through this small world of Ayene over the years has left a piece of her heart in this mission. We knew from those who went before us that we would experience fear of uncertainty and the unknown, loneliness and sadness, weakness and exhaustion, illness and pain. But our suffering paled when we were reminded of the goal toward which we were striving. We persevered in our faith that we “can do everything in him who strengthens [us]” (Phil 4:13).

As St. Paul said, “Forgetting what lies behind but straining forward to what lies ahead, [let us] continue [our] pursuit toward the goal, the prize of God’s upward calling” (Philippians 3:13-14).

We have indeed made huge strides for the coming generations—it was you, our Mission Friends, who gave so generously that we were able to replace the sagging, leaking roof to our preschool—but many cultural and social changes have been so drastic that the people have had much difficulty adapting.

The arrival of electricity and its partner, technology, more sophisticated commerce, and the phenomenon of urban development have all brought jobs and convenience and more leisure time. But they have also brought materialism and the pursuit of accumulation, clouding long-held moral and ethical values of faith, family, and community. This is a current crisis here, noticeable in the daily lives of children, youth, and even adults. For example, the liberation of women, a cultural and social attitude that was profoundly overdue, was imposed seemingly overnight and left many floundering and confused.

This has given rise to one of our current goals: to undertake construction of a boarding school for girls to allow us to provide appropriate education and historical context for better understanding and management of their newfound “freedom.”







*Left, children praying with devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe; above, Sisters Lizdey, Patricia, and Teresita posing with new high school graduates; below, teachers preparing right after graduation for the start of a new school year.*

We have 25 years' worth of memories from so many experiences and lessons. We have learned through doing and witnessing the true meaning of sacrifice and perseverance—not only of all the sisters who have given of their time here and of all the families we have served, but also of all those people who have made our progress possible.

Beloved friends of the Mission Foundation and of our congregation, we thank God for your helping us realize Mother Leonor's dream and for allowing us to be a part of this country for a quarter of a century.

Many thanks to each of our generous, loving benefactors. In helping to make the dream of many families a reality, you share in this mission with us. To ensure that Mother Leonor's dream continues to strengthen and grow, we invite you to give of yourself as you are able. Besides the boarding school, we are also in great need of a multipurpose room and a library.

We pray together as a community for each one of you and offer up to God all we are and all we do for religious vocations, especially for those of our congregation. And we ask God to continue giving us his grace so that we are ever-strengthened in our dedication to serving him and, in his name, those who need it most.

With gratitude and God's blessings,  
Sr. Patricia Gastélum Maldonado, O.P.







*Sister Teresita with several classes at the back-to-school Mass.*

Like the Mission Office's director, Fr. Martin de Porres Walsh, O.P., our departed former director, Fr. Joseph Asturias, O.P., also had a special devotion to St. Martin de Porres, naming him the patron saint of our missions. On November 1, 2, and 3, in honor of St. Martin's feast day on November 3, a Triduum of Masses will be offered at St. Dominic's Church in San Francisco, invoking his intercession for your intentions, particularly those marked on your slip. We invite you to join us in prayer each day by reciting the Triduum at the right.

November is also the month for us to pray for the souls of those who have gone before us. If you have sent in the slips listing your departed loved ones' names, they are on the altar at St. Dominic's and their souls are being remembered in Masses all month.

### *A Thanksgiving Dinner Prayer*

*Oh, God, when I have food,  
help me to remember the hungry;  
When I have work,  
help me to remember the jobless;  
When I have a warm home,  
help me to remember the homeless;  
When I am without pain,  
help me to remember those who suffer.  
And remembering,  
help me to destroy my complacency  
and bestir my compassion.  
Make me concerned enough to help,  
by word and deed,  
those who cry out  
for what we take for granted.*

~Samuel F. Pugh

### **St. Martin de Porres Triduum**

**Nov. 1:** *St. Martin, you always had sympathy for the poor and those who were suffering. I need your help and now ask for it with great confidence in your goodness and power. Please remember me, as you adore God. Amen.*

**(Your petitions, followed by the Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be and Closing Prayer.)**

**Closing Prayer:** *Dear St. Martin, I turn to you in my sorrow and anxiety to seek your friendly protection. Please intercede for me with our merciful Father in heaven so that I may be truly sorry for all my sins and be freed from the evils that shackle me. Ask that I might have something of your spirit of love and self-sacrifice, and so be at all times reconciled to God's holy will. Oh heavenly Father, in the name of your Son and of His blessed Mother, and by the merits of your faithful servant Martin, help me in my trouble and do not forsake me. Amen.*

**Nov. 2:** *St. Martin, we praise God for the manifestation of His love. The favors you received from God encourage us now to seek your intercession and help. We ask you most humbly to befriend and assist us from your place in heaven; but most of all, we beg you to commend us to our beloved Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

**(Your petitions, Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be and Closing Prayer.)**

**Nov. 3:** *Brother Martin, when you were here on earth, you spent your life loving God and your neighbor. This we know from the testimony of your own Dominican brethren. Now that you live in the presence of God in paradise, intercede for those who stand so much in need of the healing help of God and beg the Divine Physician to give us health of the soul and body. Amen.*

**(Your petitions, Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be and Closing Prayer.)**

We at the Mission Office thank you especially in this month of Thanksgiving for all of your selfless support in all of its forms, from financial sacrifices to encouraging notes to heartfelt prayer. Your loving generosity over the past 56 years has been invaluable in improving the quality of life for those in our mission areas all over the world.

Thanks be to God for you,  
FR. Martin de Porres Walsh, O.P.