

World Mission Sunday

STORY EXCERPT FROM CINDY WOODEN, CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE
COMPILED BY DIANNE TOWALSKI



Benedictine Sisters
Grace Mbawala, left,
and Gallusiana Mgay
(Photo submitted)

Having come to know Jesus through the Scriptures and in the Eucharist, Catholics are called to share with others the hope and joy that come from faith and that endure even when life gets difficult, Pope Francis said.

“What the world needs is the love of God, to encounter Christ and believe in him. For this reason, the Eucharist is not only the source and

summit of the life of the Church, it is also the source and summit of her mission,” Pope Francis wrote, quoting the late Pope Benedict XVI.

The connection between the missionary call of every disciple and the gift

Emma Meyer
(Photo submitted)



of Jesus present in the Eucharist was at the center of Pope Francis’ message for World Mission Sunday, which will be celebrated Oct. 22.

The theme the pope chose for the 2023 celebration is “Hearts on fire, feet on the move,” which he said was inspired by the story of Jesus and the disciples on the road to Emmaus after the resurrection. The Bible says the disciples’ hearts “burned within them” as Jesus explained the Scriptures and how they recognized him when he broke bread with them, and they set off to share the good news with others.

The Central Minnesota Catholic reached out to local missionaries with connections to the Diocese of St. Cloud to ask about their experiences and how they relate to this year’s theme. Their responses follow.

EMMA MEYER

Home parish: St. John the Baptist Parish, Meire Grove

WHAT FIRST SET YOUR HEART ON FIRE FOR MISSION?

Emma: I went on a three-week FOCUS mission trip to El Salvador during college. It was my first experience being in a Spanish-speaking country and experiencing extreme poverty. It was an incredible experience, falling in love with the people and their culture and witnessing their faith amidst having so little materially. It led me to thinking about a long-term international mission.

HOW HAVE YOUR FEET BEEN ON THE MOVE IN YOUR MINISTRY?

Emma: I served as a missionary for two years from September 2020 to December 2022 at a children’s home in rural Honduras, Central America, called Farm of the Child (Finca del Nino). Our mission served 25 kids, ages one to 18, along with serving the surrounding communities

through a clinic and K-9th grade school. I was the kindergarten teacher for two years and spent a lot of time visiting neighboring families, building relationships and playing with kids.

HOW DO YOU THINK OTHERS CAN LIVE OUT THIS CALL TO MISSION RIGHT HERE IN CENTRAL MINNESOTA?

Emma: In order to live out our mission, we first need to have a relationship with Jesus. Frequent visits to Jesus in the Eucharist and talking to Mary through the rosaries are great foundations for building a prayer life. I've found great inspiration and learned a lot about the faith and specifically the rosary through a YouTube channel called Gabi After Hours, if you're looking for guidance. Once you have a daily prayer life and are consistently praying, God will show you in what capacities he is calling you to serve and love those around you.

SHARE A FAVORITE MEMORY OR MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCE OF YOUR TIME IN MISSION.

Emma: The rosary has been a significant part of my life for a few years now. Through praying a family rosary daily for Lent I received the courage and consolation needed to take the preliminary steps preparing for foreign mission. During COVID, I prayed the rosary for guidance on how I could serve while school was closed. This led me to starting "classes," like doing puzzles, games, reading, and coloring, in the nearby church which allowed me to meet and begin

forming relationships with so many kids and parents. This was the highlight of my first year and an incredible gift from God! The rosary was also instrumental in my discernment to stay another year and come home after my second year. And I continue praying a daily rosary so that through Mary, Jesus can guide me to follow his will.

FRANCISCAN SISTER JANICE WIECHMAN

Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls. Home parish: St. Rose of Lima, St. Rosa

WHAT FIRST SET YOUR HEART ON FIRE FOR MISSION?

Sister Janice: I remember when I was maybe 10 or 11 years old we received the Maryknoll magazine. I would read it cover to cover, excited to see how the Maryknoll sisters and priests worked with people to make their lives better. Some opened a school or a clinic, or opened a well for water or worked with orphans. Each time the magazine arrived, I would spend

time reading. It was then that I decided that I wanted to do something like this in my life.

HOW HAVE YOUR FEET BEEN ON THE MOVE IN YOUR MINISTRY?

Sister Janice: From 1981-1987, I lived in San Felix, Venezuela — a mission connected to the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis. There I participated in the activities of the parish of Buen Pastor — pre-baptism classes, Holy Week activities, etc. I also did outreach to a particular neighborhood — La Loma Colorada — bringing them the activities of the parish and listening to what the people wanted. The women wanted a sewing course and a first aid course and we organized them. We did a neighborhood cleanup and had a weekly reflection group.

From 2003 to 2023, I lived in Mexico. From 2003 to 2010,

I was in San Rafael, Nuevo Leon, Mexico. Then I spent several years in Monterrey and returned to San Rafael until April of this year.

In San Rafael, I participated in the activities of the parish, such as formation of leaders and catechists, Bible study, formation of prayer groups in the neighborhoods and visiting the sick and elderly. Since there generally was one priest for 50 villages, I celebrated word and communion services and sometimes was called on to lead the prayer at a funeral.

While visiting the villages higher in the mountains, we became aware of the desire

Below: Franciscan Sister Janice Wiechman, center, celebrates with other sisters and the community during her leave-taking party in San Rafael, Mexico. She returned from ministry in Mexico in April 2023 to serve on the Franciscan leadership team in Little Falls. (Photo courtesy of Sister Janice Wiechman)

