



Missionary Servants of the Poor of the Third World

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Cusco, 11th of February, 2017
Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes
“I am the Immaculate Conception”

Dear Friends,

Praise be to our Lord Jesus Christ!

For us the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes is very important. She is the patroness of all the poor and Sick, whether in the physical, moral or spiritual sense, of the desperate, of those who go on a pilgrimage to Lourdes as their "last resource". They often come to Lourdes with despair, and when they return home they will surely return with the same suffering, but thanks to the Virgin transformed into hope. The Virgin of Lourdes makes us understand the value of any suffering.

Every child we receive, in our schools, boarding schools or orphanages, knows very well what it means to suffer. Many times, they are the ones that give us the lesson of living it with joy and with great Faith. In Lourdes, the Virgin says: "Go drink of the spring water and wash yourselves in it". In the concrete sense, she referred to the source of the fountain, but also to the fountain that satisfies our inner thirst and washes our souls and heals our wounds: Jesus Christ. Mary always leads us to Jesus.

Luckily, from Italy (taking advantage of the containers that come at times with other donations) we always receive some cans full of water from the source of the Sanctuary of Lourdes. That same water of Lourdes we carry with ourselves when we go on missions. All the missionaries, whether they are Priests, Brothers or Sisters, carry that water when they go on a mission and give it to the poor and sick who need it. For example, in our mission in Cuba, one of our priests gave a little of the water from Lourdes to a poor woman who was not even a believer. She was seriously ill and was going to be operated on shortly thereafter. On the day of the surgery the Cuban doctors said, "Ma'am, you have nothing." She was completely healed.

Last December, our Sisters went on a mission very far from Cusco, into two villages: Tintinco and Chillwuni, which are situated at an altitude of 4000 meters. They had been there before as well, in June last year. For a week they slept beneath tents, cooking on adobes, in very difficult conditions, with a lot of cold. They walked from house to house. In a normal village walking from house to house is easy; you walk a few meters and there is another door. That's not the way it is where they went. Walking from house to house means visiting a house, and then walking one to two hours more to get to the next one. It is a huge effort, and it is not even sure whether you will find someone on your arrival, but that is how our Sisters do it, with great faith.

At these places potato is the only crop and alpacas are the only animals to be raised. It is a desert in the heights. But there, people are able to leave their animals in the pampas and to walk several hours to be able to attend a Holy Mass. The thirst for God is strong.

That first time they went there in June, Sister Sonia told us, they had visited a house, if you can call it like that, because it had no roof. In one corner, there was a bed for five people, and in the other corner, a poor kitchen. Rain was falling. The situation of this family was desperate. Inside, they found a poor mother who was crying with her five children. The father had died the year before, falling down from a cliff drunken. The desperation of that family was total. In addition, one of the children had serious problems with justice. Then, the sisters prayed with the mother asking The Virgin for help. It was really the only thing they could do. When they left, they poured holy water into the "house."

In December, the Sisters returned for Christmas. Everything had changed over there. The mother told them that when

they were praying to the Virgin, she felt something very special. After the Sisters left, she continued praying and asking for help. She clearly noticed a special help and a unique peace she had never had before. It was a wonder and thanks to this simple prayer to the Virgin they began to come out of this terrible situation; even her son who had problems with the justice was able to fix his situation. She received the gifts that the Sisters had brought them and together they spent an unforgettable Christmas in that lost place.

On the 25th of December, Christmas Day, our Contemplative Brothers of the House of Prayer "Our Lady of Silence", in Querowasy, had to live very difficult moments. In fact, at the beginning of the afternoon a flood came into the house.

The mud entered all the rooms and the chapel. It was an incredible disaster. This is the place where our Brothers pray, work and sacrifice themselves for us, thus becoming the "cornerstone" of the Movement. During the whole week, the Priests and Brothers of the "City of the Boys" were helping them clean everything.

Our Brother Ulrich (one of the contemplative brothers, of Swiss-German origin) in his heart asked Jesus: "Why do you treat us like that? Do we not have enough work ..? "; But he also answered to himself: "I know the answer of Jesus:" I always I treat my friends like this "(Just like the answer Jesus gave to St. Teresa of Avila in a similar situation, to which she responded: "... that is why you have so few!")".

It is not always easy. Sometimes, the Lord allows great trials for us to prove the love we have for him.

For us Priests, how nice it is to go on a mission to places so far away. Like other Christs, we administer the sacraments (Baptism, Confession, Anointing of the sick ...), we celebrate the Holy Mass distributing the Body of Christ and announce the Good News to the poor.

We hear the Voice of Christ that says "I am thirsty" for you, thirsty for vocations, for sisters, for priests and lay people who give their lives in a radical way to take care of the children who need it so much. He is thirsty for souls that can be yours, Jesus is thirsty for you !!!

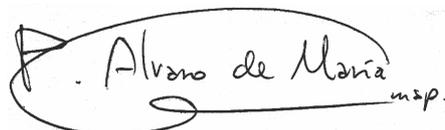
The Virgin of Lourdes, through all these sufferings, but also by the graces they bring, leads us to Lent that will begin the 1st of March this year. Let us renew our commitment to unite our particular crosses to the Cross of Jesus, and thus to collaborate with Him in the Redemption of the world. It will, on the other hand, also be the best way to prepare our hearts for the celebration of the Centennial of the apparitions of Fatima (the 13th of May this year). We ask the Virgin Mary to guide us on this path of Lent, and to extend her hands towards us in the most difficult moments of our life, so we can reach the Glory of the Resurrection.

Do not be afraid. When everything seems lost, call Mary. She is the Mother. Even if you do not understand what is going on, call her, and she will surely respond.

We thank you for your friendship, your visits (which are so important for us), and for your support, not only material but also spiritual. We need your prayers to be able to be the hands of Jesus among the poorest people, in whom Jesus himself is present. At the same time, we would like to invite you to visit our houses in Cusco.

I, Father Álvaro de María, in the name of our children and our missionaries, wish you a Holy Lent and a Happy Easter, and we assure you of our prayers.

God bless you!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "F. Álvaro de María msp.". The signature is enclosed in a simple, hand-drawn oval shape.

*Father Álvaro de María, msp
Superior of the MSPTM.*

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