

“We wanted to be like them”

Dear Mission Friends,

A striking story tells about one remote area in western Sudan. Expatriate missionaries, especially priests, Brothers and Sisters, had labored there for many years with few visible results. Then expatriate lay missionaries — married and single — came to that area and soon many Sudanese people become Catholics. A Sudanese elder explained: *“When we saw the priests and Sisters living separately and alone we didn’t want to be like them. But when we saw Catholic families — men, women and children — living happily together, we wanted to be like them.”* In our family-oriented African society, married missionary couples with children have a powerful and unique witness and credibility.

We celebrated the Mission Month of October and World Mission Sunday “low key” this year, due to the pandemic affecting just about every human being.

Pope Francis, in his message, invited us to respond to the Lord’s invitation with “Here am I, send me!” to proclaim the Word which is Life, because it’s the Risen Lord himself, to as many sisters and brothers as possible, the world over, who don’t know him.

To be Church means to be missionaries who proclaim by word and example the Crucified and Risen Lord to others. The Church is missionary by its nature and must reach out to all of humanity...

That is exactly what we see in the following story.

Luis was a young boy growing up in a tiny village in Mexico. He wasn’t sure what being a Catholic Christian meant until a lay missionary came to his town. Luis started attending the children’s program, received his First Communion, and continued to learn more and more about his Faith. The lay missionary also gave Luis his first rosary.

Excited by his newfound Faith, Luis wanted his parents to join him in receiving Holy Communion. But because they had never been married in the Church, they could not. Luis persisted until one day his parents did get married in the Church where family and friends came to celebrate the event.

Then one day, the lay missionary announced to the children that there was going to be a men’s retreat. Luis immediately ran home to tell his father, Miguel.

Miguel was reluctant to go. Luis, though, was persistent. He told his father, "*Papi, I know you won't let Jesus down.*" Miguel answered, "*Of course not.*" And that is how Miguel made the promise to his little boy.

Ten days before the retreat, Luis, Miguel's only son, died. Miguel was devastated, but he remembered the promise he had made to his little boy.

He went to the retreat and began to fall in love with his Catholic Faith. So, inspired by the memory of his son and his own deepening faith, Miguel decided to become a lay Catholic missionary himself in order to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to other families in rural Mexico.



God richly blessed him and his family. Miguel believes that Luis helps him from heaven to be faithful every day.

On one occasion Saint Augustine asked himself: "What does love look like?" And he found the answer when he said: "Love has feet to go to the poor and needy. It has eyes to see misery and want. It has ears to hear the sighs and sorrows of others."

To be Church means to make of humanity one family.

God's choicest blessings on you and your loved ones!

Fr. Mark and the Xaverian Missionaries

Photo: Xaverian Youth in Mexico