

Friends & Disciples

Missionaries of Jesus-Americas
www.missionariesofjesus.com

Christmas 2015
info@missionariesofjesus.com



Merry Christmas and
a Happy New Year!

¡Feliz Navidad,
Prospero Año y Felicidad!



Missionaries of Jesus

Doing God's work
where others dare not go.

A photograph of three missionaries hiking up a grassy hill. The person in the foreground is wearing a green shirt, blue pants, and a large purple backpack. The person behind them is wearing a red hat and a brown shirt. The person further back is wearing a green shirt and a backpack. They are all carrying water bottles. The background is a clear blue sky and some green foliage on the left.

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We plan to build a **Capital Fund for Missionaries of Jesus** (\$1,500,000.00). **JOIN US** in our search for generous people who are willing to pledge at least \$1,500.00 every year for the next five years. The interest of this Capital Fund will help finance, for the coming ten years and beyond, the **MJ Seminaries, Missionary Sustenance, Homes for the retired and sick missionaries and MJ projects for evangelization and efforts to uplift the poor** through education, health and other services.

Being Generous Expecting Nothing in Return

I have been living and working among the Tagakolu in the mountains of Malita, Davao del Sur for more than four years now and I have never been happier! The most important lesson that the Tagakolu have taught me is to remain generous despite adversity. They may not have the luxuries of urban living but they have a closer connection to creation and an indomitable faith that everything around us belongs to God and that the earth is given to us as gift and should be cared for and shared. Despite being neglected by the government and taken advantage of by politicians, they continue to be generous expecting nothing in return. After so many years among the Tagakaulo I believe that I have a lot more to learn from them about God than them from me.

Such is the life of a missionary; this is what we try to live in the Missionaries of Jesus (MJ). We opt to work among those who are in the peripheries of society, among the urban poor, migrants and workers. We work among Muslims in inter-faith dialogue and live among the Indigenous Peoples. The Missionaries of Jesus is an international religious missionary congregation founded in the Philippines in 2002 and present in the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, United States of America and Guatemala.



As missionaries, we strive to be in solidarity with people and learn from them and not just do things for them. We listen to them even if at first we cannot fully understand until finally, after a long and arduous process of listening and being with them, we have a grasp of things from their perspective.

This is what I strive to do wherever I am sent: I had worked as a missionary in the Congo and Mozambique in Africa and in Lubang Island, Occidental Mindoro in the Philippines. I have been doing my best to do the same among the Tagakaulo these past four years at the Malita Tagakaulo Mission in the Diocese of Digos. I am an Ilocano born and bred in the mountains of Baguio in Luzon. The many years of mission work have helped me deepen my appreciation for my Cordilleran roots. This has helped me as well appreciate the cultures of the people that have accepted me as their own.

As Missionaries of Jesus, we proclaim the kingdom of God the way Jesus did: we seek the least, the last and the lost. We do our best to empty ourselves and live among the people we serve as one of them. We listen to their stories and we share the story of Jesus. Together with them it is our hope that we can retell Jesus' story the way they see and experience God through Him.

If you would like to join the Missionaries of Jesus as a priest, brother or lay missionary (or if you want to support the Missionaries of Jesus), visit our website: www.missionariesofjesus.com, or our Facebook. Contact Fr. Melanio (435 S Occidental Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90057).

- Fr. Joey Gànio Evangelista, MJ (1st Row, 3rd from left)
Malita Tagakaulo Mission



The parent-officers with the staff of the Malita Tagakaulo Mission and two MJs, Joey Gànio Evangelista and Primo Fagel, Jr.



Malita Tagakolu, Philippines

Suited up and ready to go!

Primo M. Fagel, Jr., MJ just before he leaves for his stay with a Tagakolu family in the mountains of Malita, Davao del Sur, PH.

Think of Mission in your Christmas donations



Malita Tagakolu, Philippines

Love, overflowing with small gestures of mutual care, is also civic and political, and it makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world. Love for society and commitment to the common good are outstanding expressions of a charity which affects not only relationships between individuals but also "macro-relationships, social, economic and political ones".

Pope Francis (Laudato si' 231)

La Misión Bajo la Sombra de la Migra

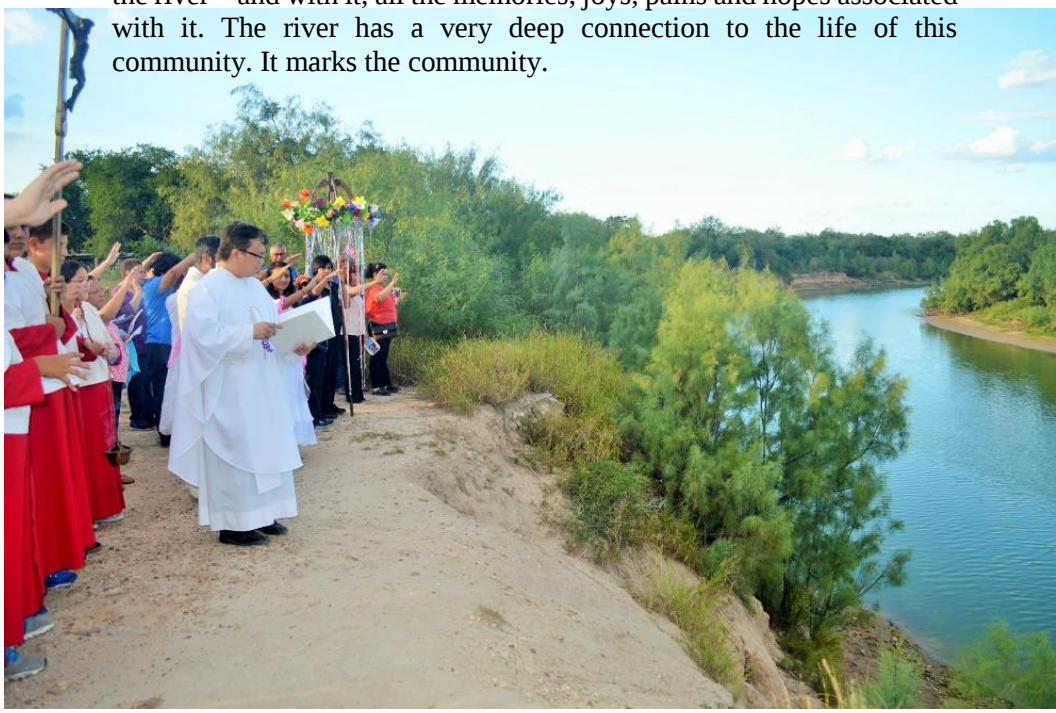
(Mission in the Shadow of the Border Patrol)

Rev. Michael Montoya, MJ

Picture this: About 150 people by the banks of the Rio Grande River, all Hispanics, carrying the image of Saint Michael the Archangel, some dressed in traditional Mexican attire, priests in their full vestments, altar servers with the crucifix, incense and candles. It was a beautiful Tuesday evening. In their midst, however, are two border patrol cars, a portable border tower set up just a few days earlier, helicopter hovering, and a blimp just a few distance away. The people are literally “*bajo la sombra de la migra*” (in the shadow of the border patrol).

It was a beautiful scene to behold, just like the movies. But this is no movie scene. It depicts the reality of the people in the communities of Saint Anne Parish, and in particular, right here at the border of Texas and Mexico in the community of San Miguel Archangel in Los Ebanos. It is a picture of seeming contradictions: a peaceful gathering of simple people in prayers surrounded by symbols normally associated with war; where the joyful hymns sung in honor of the feast of their patron Saint Michael, belie the fear, intimidation, and at once resignation of the people living along the borders. An outwardly serene bucolic sight that hides the violent realities that our people experience day in and day out.

It has become a growing tradition in the community of San Miguel Archangel to celebrate the patronal feast that starts with the blessing of the river – and with it, all the memories, joys, pains and hopes associated with it. The river has a very deep connection to the life of this community. It marks the community.





Not only is the community bordering on 3 sides by the river, but many families on both side of the river do share a common heritage, a common history, and in fact, family members live on both sides of the river. To an outsiders' point of view, the river and all its violent and negative connotation, defines the community. But for us, the river is a symbol of hope, of connection, of life. The river is a witness to a vibrant faith life of a people that calls this border town their home.

It needs to be noted that since the annexation of Texas in the mid-1800, this area of Texas and the towns on the other side of the river, has seen vibrant community activities. It is simply wrong to think that everyone on this side of the border have crossed the river to migrate. For some, their families have settled in these lands for generations. Some even have copies of land titles from Spain. "We did not cross the border but the border crossed us," they would remind me.

Last year, as we celebrated the Feast of Saint Michael, there was a helicopter that hovered over us. It was such a strange sight that people began to question whether we should come back to the river as we celebrate this year. After some discussions, we decided to inform the Border Patrols of the event that we would be doing. Then came September 29, the Feast of Saint Michael. As we processed to the river, we were surprised to see a portable tower of the Border Patrol that was set up, two border patrol cars, a helicopter hovering, and a blimp. People feared whether we could still do it in the same place or if we needed to go somewhere else. They were frightened by the presence of so much patrols.

But we decided that we will continue to do the ritual as planned. In the midst of the presence of such security agents, we decided to pray.

The fear of the people is quite reasonable based on the many stories that they tell me about how they are randomly stopped and checked by the different agencies in the area. One of the leaders said that it is like living in a war zone. For indeed we see patrol cars, helicopters, blimps every day. We have the presence of the Border Patrol, the County Sheriff, the State Trooper, the National Guard, the blimps, plus the local police. I have been informed that more patrols will be deployed in our area the next months. Yet despite the presence of so much patrols, violence, drugs, and human trafficking seem to continue undeterred.

People live in fear. Some people feel intimidated by so much presence of patrols, others are simply resigned to accept this reality as part of life at the border.

The church has not been immune to the experiences of violence and intimidation. Despite the presence of such vigilant patrols that are supposed to safeguard, our churches have been broken into several times. Then the stories of children in our religious education program who cry because they are missing members of their family who have been deported. We also had an experience of parishioners who after a practice of the Passion play have been stopped and detained. At one point, I was in the parking lot of the detention camp from 10 p.m. – 2:30 a.m. waiting for a word on parishioners that have been detained. No one is allowed in, not even the pastor. Not all detained are undocumented – some are citizens and others with permit to work in the US. And we also have the cases of

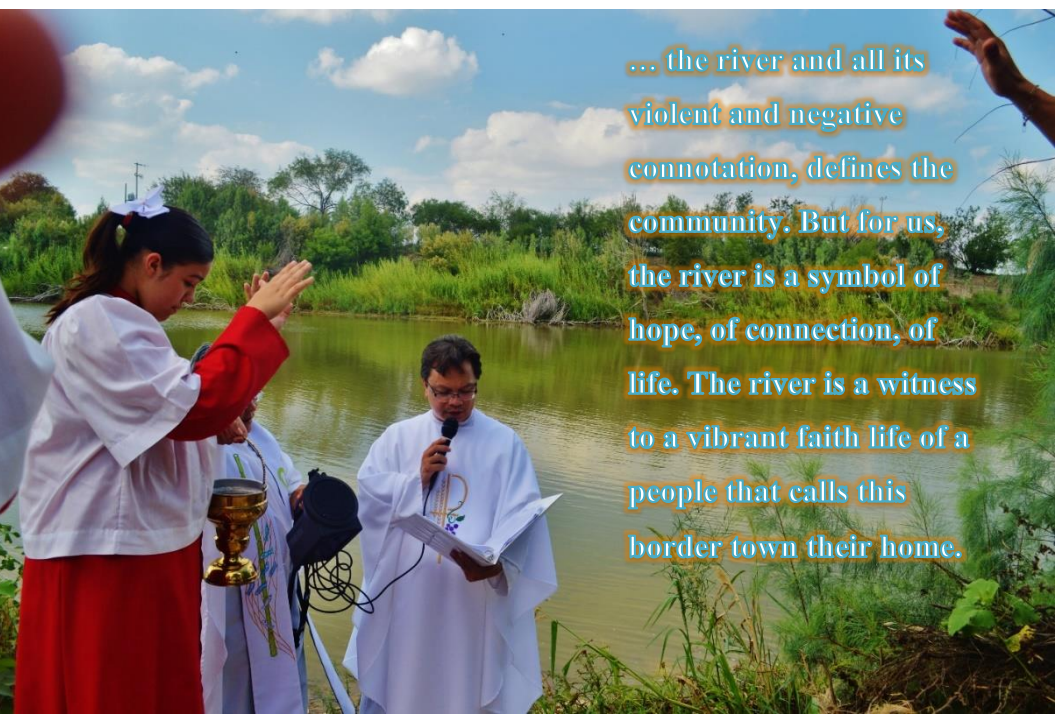


dreamers, young adults brought to the US as babies. In a neighboring church, also along the border, a person was picked up in the middle of the mass. In another church, the priest protests that during the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament another was picked up. The fear and intimidation is real.

It is in the midst of such realities that we are called to respond as a Church. It did not go unnoticed that the Holy Father, Pope Francis, prior to his US visit chose to call our area to express his care and assure his prayers for the migrant population. The moral obligation that our faith demands goes beyond what human laws limit. We are asked to proclaim a merciful and loving God whose embrace knows no frontiers. We need to be careful not to restrain the mercy of God. As Catholics, the standards set before us are higher than what the society expect from us.

As a Church, we are called to be signs of hope and mercy, where fear and resignation reigns. We need to proclaim clearly and loudly the truth of the Gospel we proclaim. Yes, it may mean waiting for hours in detention centers, or giving hope and courage to a fearful child who recently got separated from her father due to deportation. It may mean going out of the church building and celebrate in the remote corners of the neighborhoods where for fear people would not even dare go to the church. It may mean celebrating our faith *“bajo la sombra de la migra.”*

Rev. Michael Montoya, MJ is the founding pastor of Saint Anne Parish (established in 2013) which comprises 4 churches along the border - Saint Anne in Pueblo de Palmas, Peñitas; Our Lady of Guadalupe in Sullivan City; Saint Juan Diego in Citrus City; and Saint Michael the Archangel in Los Ebanos.



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La Misión Bajo la Sombra de la Migra

Rev. Michael Montoya, MJ

Imagínense esto: Unas 150 personas congregadas por las orillas del Río Grande, todos hispanos, que llevan imágenes de San Miguel Arcángel. Algunos están vestidos de traje tradicional de México, los sacerdotes con su vestimento litúrgico, los monaguillos con el crucifijo, incienso y velas. Fue una hermosa noche el día martes, la fiesta de San Miguel Arcángel. En medio de ellos, sin embargo, son dos coches patrulla fronteriza, una torre fronteriza portátil ubicada tan sólo unos días antes, un helicóptero de la guardia nacional se cierne y un dirigible (blimp) sólo unos pocos metros de distancia. Nosotros estábamos literalmente bajo la sombra de la migra.

Fue una escena hermosa a primera vista, igual a las películas. Pero esto no es una escena de una película. Más bien, representa la realidad de las personas en las comunidades de la Parroquia Santa Ana y, en particular, la comunidad de San Miguel Arcángel, una comunidad que colinda tres veces con el río que separa Texas y México. Es una imagen de aparentes contradicciones: una reunión pacífica de las personas humildes en oraciones rodeados de símbolos que normalmente se asocian con la guerra; donde los himnos alegres cantados en honor de la festividad de su patrón San Miguel, desmienten el miedo, la intimidación, y de inmediato la resignación de las personas que viven a lo largo de las fronteras. Una vista bucólica exteriormente sereno que esconde la realidad de violencia que nuestros pueblos experimentan día tras día.

"Nosotros no cruzamos la frontera, pero la frontera nos cruzó a nosotros"



Se ha convertido en una tradición, cada vez mayor, en la comunidad de San Miguel Arcángel para celebrar la fiesta patronal que se inicia con la bendición del río - y con ello, todos los recuerdos, alegrías, dolores y esperanzas asociados a él. El río tiene un significado muy profundo en la vida de esta comunidad. El río marca la comunidad. No sólo que la comunidad fronteriza tres veces por el río, pero muchas familias en ambos lados del río comparten una herencia común, una historia común, y de hecho, miembros de las familias viven en ambos lados del río. Desde el punto de vista de un extranjero, el río y toda su connotación violenta y negativa es lo que define la comunidad. Pero para nosotros que vivimos en las fronteras, el río es un símbolo de esperanza, de relaciones, de la vida. El río da testimonio de la vida de una fe vibrante del pueblo que llama y considera la frontera su hogar.

Es necesario señalar que, desde la anexión de Texas a mediados de 1800, esta zona de Texas y las ciudades del otro lado del río, han sido testigos de las actividades comunitarias vibrantes. Sería un grave error pensar que todos los que viven aquí en este lado de la frontera han cruzado el río para migrar. Para algunos, sus familias se han asentado en estas tierras durante generaciones. Algunos incluso tienen copias de los títulos de propiedad de España. "Nosotros no cruzamos la frontera, pero la frontera nos cruzó a nosotros", ellos me lo recuerden.

El año pasado, cuando tuvimos la fiesta de San Miguel, había un helicóptero que se cernía sobre nosotros. Era una extraña visión de manera que la gente comenzó a cuestionar si deberíamos volver al río cuando celebramos este año. Después de algunas discusiones, decidimos informar



a las Patrullas Fronterizas del evento que haríamos. Luego llegó el 29 de septiembre, la fiesta de San Miguel. Acercándonos en procesión al río, nos sorprendió ver una torre portátil de la Patrulla Fronteriza que estaba ubicado, junto con dos coches patrulla fronteriza, un vuelo estacionario del helicóptero y un dirigible. La gente temía si aún podríamos hacerlo en el mismo lugar o si tendríamos que ir a otro lugar. Estaban asustados por la presencia de tantas patrullas. Pero decidimos a seguir haciendo el ritual como estaba previsto. En medio de la presencia de dichos agentes de seguridad, decidimos orar.

El temor de la gente es real. Ellos me hablan de la forma en que fueron detenidos y revisados por las diferentes agencias en el área al azar. Uno de los líderes dijo que es como vivir en una zona de guerra. Pues en verdad vemos coches patrulla, helicópteros, dirigibles todos los días. Contamos con la presencia de la Patrulla Fronteriza, el alguacil del condado, la policía del estado, la Guardia Nacional, los dirigibles, y la policía local. Últimamente, he recibido un informe de que más patrullas serán desplegadas en nuestra área en los próximos meses. Sin embargo, a pesar de la presencia de tantas patrullas, la violencia, las drogas y el tráfico humano siguen pasando a bajo las narices de tantas oficiales de seguridad.

La gente vive con miedo. Algunas personas se sienten intimidadas por tanta presencia de patrullas, otros simplemente se resignan a aceptar esta realidad como parte de la vida en la frontera. La iglesia no ha sido inmune a las experiencias de violencia e intimidación. A pesar de la presencia de tales patrullas vigilantes que se supone deben proteger, hemos



experimentados atentos de robo y profanación en nuestras iglesias en varias ocasiones. Luego, nos cuentan llorando los niños en nuestro programa de educación religiosa porque miembros de sus familias han sido deportados. También tuvimos una experiencia de feligreses que después de una práctica de la representación de la Pasión de Cristo han sido detenidos solo por sospecha. Yo, personalmente, experimenté estar en el estacionamiento del campo de detención de 10 p.m.-02:30 am esperando una palabra sobre los feligreses que han sido detenidos. Nadie está permitido entrar, ni siquiera el pastor de la iglesia. No todos los detenidos son indocumentados - algunos son ciudadanos y otras personas con permiso para trabajar en los EE.UU... Y también tenemos los casos de los soñadores, los adultos jóvenes traído a los EE.UU. como bebés. No solo en nuestra parroquia que han experimentado tales experiencias. En una iglesia vecina, una persona fue recogida mientras se celebraba la misa. En otra iglesia, el sacerdote protesta que durante la adoración del Santísimo otra fue recogida. El miedo y la intimidación son reales.

En medio de esas realidades que estamos llamados a responder como Iglesia. No pasa desapercibido que el Papa Francisco, antes de su visita a Estados Unidos optó por llamar a nuestra área para expresar su solidaridad y asegurarnos de sus oraciones por la población migrante. La obligación moral que nos desafía nuestra fe va más allá de lo que limite las leyes humanas. La medida de bondad y misericordia es mucho más exigente para un cristiano. Se nos exige que proclamemos un Dios misericordioso

Fiesta Santa Ana: Bishop Flores blesses the 4 processional crosses that will be used in all the four churches that comprise the new parish to establish unity and connection.





y amoroso cuyo abrazo no conoce fronteras. Tenemos que tener cuidado de no restringir la misericordia de Dios. Como católicos, las normas establecidas para nosotros son más altas que lo que espera la sociedad de nosotros.

Como Iglesia, nosotros somos llamados a ser signos de esperanza y misericordia especialmente donde el miedo y la resignación reinan. Tenemos que proclamar con claridad y en voz alta la verdad del Evangelio que proclamamos. Sí, esto puede significar esperar durante horas en los centros de detención, o dar esperanza y valor a un niño temeroso que recientemente fue separado de su padre debido a la deportación. Puede significar salir del edificio de la iglesia y celebrar en los remotos rincones de los barrios donde la gente por miedo ni siquiera se atreve a ir a la iglesia. Puede significar celebrar nuestra fe bajo la sombra de la migra.

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Give a Christmas Gift to Mission

Give a Christmas gift to the **Missionaries of Jesus** to help them in their mission in bringing the Good News to the poor!

Remember the Missionaries of Jesus in your planned or deferred gifts that may include the following:

- ✚ **A charitable gift annuity** with Missionaries of Jesus.
- ✚ **Bequests:** You need to name specifically **in your will** the Missionaries of Jesus.
- ✚ In writing your will, choose to set up a **living trust to avoid probate**. Give specific gifts from your estate to the Missionaries of Jesus.
- ✚ **Make the Missionaries of Jesus heirs to your estate** that consists of all the assets you own at the time of your death: cash, securities, jewels, art, your home or other real estate.
- ✚ Name the Missionaries of as one of the **beneficiaries** in your **life insurance policy**.
- ✚ Name the Missionaries of Jesus as a beneficiary of your **IRA** or **other retirement accounts**.

"Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Cor 9:6-7).



For more information, Please contact
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Merry Christmas!



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Mission Statement

We, the MJ of the District of the Americas,
Friends and Disciples of Jesus,
heard and responded to God's call to mission.
We are called to assist in the emergence
of a new face of the Church
and we journey together
integrating into the life of the people,
in reclaiming their stories,
in the struggle of self-determination,
in the celebration of life and culture.

Please remember the
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during the Combined
Federal Campaign.



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