



# Friends & Disciples

Summer 2025

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MISSIONARIES OF JESUS - AMERICAS



## PRAYING TO JESUS

A little girl contemplates the image of Jesus being stripped of his garments before his crucifixion. Like Jesus, migrants are stripped of their dignity when they are denied their rights.

# CONGRATULATIONS

to our newly ordained deacons!



DEACON NGUYEN VAN THUYET, MJ  
DEACON HO QUANG THIEN, MJ  
DEACON PHAM VAN DUAN, MJ  
DEACON PHAN DINH NANG, MJ

(From left to right)

**Ordaining Prelate: Most Rev. Euginius Cañete, MJ, DD**

Exaltation of the Holy Cross Parish, Diocese of Kalookan  
25 April 2025



# FROM THE EDITOR

**T**he world has drastically changed in the last few months. It's very easy to gloss over the good that is happening and focus solely on the bad. Although social media has helped democratize access to news, it cannot be denied that it has, for one reason or another, contributed significantly to disinformation, causing many people to worry more than they should. In the midst of all the troubling news, there are many good people who take action to help those caught in the middle of these changes and take steps to prevent more tragedies from happening. As Christians, we are called to share the light of Christ with the world, especially during challenging times. We can be easily carried away by discouragement, but our call to follow Christ challenges us not to give in to despair and hopelessness.

In this edition of *Friends & Disciples*, **Joseph Guerrero** shares his experience with migrants in Matamoros, Mexico, near the border with the United States. He has been ministering to migrants in Mexico for some years now. Life has not been easy for many of the migrants in the camps hoping to build a better life in the United States, but it has been especially more difficult this year. Guerrero accompanies the migrants in their sorrows and is touched by their indomitable spirit and their unwavering hope in God, even in dire situations.

Children are always the hapless victims of poverty and war. At their young age, they are incapable of making any sense of the pain and suffering they go through. **Elmer Ulanday** is involved in a program dedicated to feeding and helping with the education of poor children and their families in the Philippines. Through the program, they hope to provide just enough to help poor children in the Philippines live a normal childhood. **Crespo Lape** celebrates thirty-five years of priesthood as a religious missionary priest. He is thankful for God's faithfulness and renews his commitment to the mission.

Despite the seeming bleakness of the world due to ongoing tragedies and conflicts, there is more goodness and love in the world that isn't always shared. We've shared with you only a few examples of the good that is happening with the help of your donations. You are the other good news that makes the world even brighter! Thank you for helping the Missionaries of Jesus through your donations and prayers.

Joey Ganio Evangelista, MJ

# JOIN THE MISSIONARIES OF JESUS

We are called to find Christ in the poor,  
to lend our voice to their causes,  
but also to be their friends,  
to listen to them,  
to speak for them and  
to embrace the mysterious wisdom  
which God wishes to share  
with us through them.

*Evangelii gaudium, 198*



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# BUILD BRIDGES, NOT WALLS

*Rev. Joseph Guerrero, MJ*

**H**earthaches benumbed the spirits of migrants staying with us at the migrant house and camp when they learned that their CBP One asylum interview appointment was canceled on January 20 this year (CBP One was a mobile application developed by U.S. Customs and Border Protection that serves as a single point of access for a variety of CBP services). Marlene and her four daughters from Honduras had kept their hopes of crossing the border through this means alive. After more than a year of waiting, CBP One approved their interview for January 21, and they anticipated being allowed to enter the U.S. However, all that hope vanished just a day before their scheduled interview. Now, thousands of migrants like Marlene are now stranded at the borders.



Migrants actively take part in the Stations of the Cross at a migrant center.



I could not console the migrants at the migrant house days after that fateful date. Their faces looked blank. Hope had turned its back on them. Marlene traveled from Honduras with her four daughters. Her youngest was a year old. They left home because of extreme poverty. Her eyes strayed far away, filled with disappointment and frustration. Every time I see her, she innocently asks me if they can be given a chance to cross the borders. With a heavy heart, I respond to her that currently, there is no way.







*Fr. Jaime Docolero listens to the stories of migrants.*

I am amazed at how these migrants, despite the apparent hopelessness of their plight, continue to trust God. Some days ago, a group of migrants from Venezuela left the migrant house to look for work in Monterey, Nuevo Leon, Mexico. They had decided to stay there for a while. They could not return to their country; there is no home for them there. They said, "Father, we will look for work and a safe place. We know that someday, God will bless us to fulfill our dreams. We will return to the migrant house when it is time that God calls us for this blessing."



*Children participating in the Stations of the Cross at a migrant center.*

# JOIN THE MISSIONARIES OF JESUS

Let's open ourselves  
to the light of Jesus,  
and let's never be  
diverted from His light!

*Pope Francis, February 25, 2024*



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A mother and her child light a candle of the Advent wreath.

Iris, her husband, and two children had to return to El Salvador to sustain themselves. They had been in Mexico for two years. She worked at a bakery, a garment factory, and restaurants to support her family. They also received their CBP One appointment for January 21. She told me that when God tells them to do so, they will come back to us and continue their journey and fulfill their dreams.

Many migrants who are not able to return to their country and homes are scattered in cities across Mexico for work. They represent God's "anawim" (Anawim



This little girl kneels before a picture of the tenth station of the Stations of the Cross.



*Migrant children take a break from a game to enjoy a snack.*

is a Hebrew word from the Old Testament that refers to the "poor ones" or "the lowly"). They have no country, home, or financial stability. They are defenseless and dependent on the mercy of society. Yet, they journey without letting go of the hand of God. He has become the One in whom they have placed their trust to rescue them from their apparently endless journey of abandonment, injustice, and solitude.



*Fr. Joey Evangelista helps distribute bread to migrants at a migrant center.*





Bishop Eugenio Lira,  
Bishop of Matamoros-  
Reynosa, celebrates  
Ash Wednesday at a  
migrant camp.

Daniel was deported to Mexico from New York. Police authorities arrested him and accused him of delinquency. Daniel had been involved in organizing other migrants to uphold their rights and dignity. For fifteen years, he endeavored to have a better life in several cities, working on agricultural farms and construction sites. As an undocumented immigrant, he hardly felt valued and appreciated by others. He is now with us at the migrant house, continuing to stand for himself as a worthy person. He is a very humble and deeply spiritual person.

Immigration authorities also deported Miguel from New Mexico where he had lived for more than twenty years. Police apprehended him because he looked like a "Latino" delinquent. Resisting arrest, they beat him up. A judge released him from the charges of which he was accused. Being improperly documented, he was handed over to the immigration authorities who later deported him. For years, lawyers had been assisting him to legalize his immigration status. He has not given up. He has great confidence in God's help and assistance to attain justice.

For three years now, Fr. Gregorio Domilies, MJ, and I have been accompanying the migrants in Matamoros, Tamaulipas, Mexico. There were about two thousand migrants arriving and crossing the borders when we first came here. At present, the number has dramatically been reduced. There are about 60 migrants at the

migrant house of the Diocese of Matamoros-Reynosa, 200 migrants at the Alfredo Pumarejo migrant camp, and 40 migrants at another respite center supervised by the diocese.

We continue serving these migrants. They could not go back to their country and homes for security reasons or simply because there is no home to go back to. They stay with us at the migrant house and camps. We let them feel our comforting presence, letting them know that God has not abandoned them. We see to it that they are well-rested, assist in healing their wounds, and help them rise and continue their journey. The Holy Eucharist that we celebrate together nourishes and strengthens their spirits. We stay and pray with Christ in Holy Hours. Children learn about the life of gentle Jesus through catechesis. We share food with them to remind them that God provides for their needs.

The late Pope Francis had a very big place for migrants in his heart. He always mentioned that they are “children of God, and they are so much loved.” He encouraged us to “build bridges, not walls.” ■

BE OUR PARTNERS IN  
**SERVING THE POOR**



*The Missionaries of Jesus provide free dental and medical services to the poor each year in the places where they work in the Philippines and Guatemala.*

HELP US!







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# MESA NI HESUS: THE TABLE OF LOVE

*Bro. Elmer Ulanday, MJ*

**T**angos is one of several mission stations of the Missionaries of Jesus (MJ) in the Philippines. This poor urban community, split into two *barangays* (the smallest administrative division, similar to a village, district, or neighborhood in the Philippines) in Navotas City, Metro Manila, is a place of deep struggles but also holds optimistic signs of resilience and faith. The mission station is now called the San Andres *Mangingisda* (fisherman) Mission Station, operating under the guidance and pastoral care of His Eminence, Pablo Virgilio Cardinal David, Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Kalookan.

One night, I decided to walk the streets of Tangos. It's a place where commerce thrives at night—an unusual but true reflection of the community's daily grind. As I observed the bustling food stalls, I came across a young boy sobbing by an electric post in a cramped alley, crying out for his father. Approaching him, I won-



*Bro. Elmer Ulanday works in Tangos in the Diocese of Kalookan in the Philippines.*





dered: Was he lost? Abandoned? His name, Astro, is forever etched in my heart. Barefoot and wearing an oversized tank top, this four-year-old had yet to eat dinner. I bought him a burger first to calm him down, then tried to bring him home. Thankfully, a group of young girls recognized him and knew where he lived. Un-





Bro. Elmer participates  
in the Stations of Cross  
that goes around the  
whole community.

fortunately, after knocking on several doors, we found that his parents were not there. That night was just the beginning. As the days passed, I slowly uncovered the harsh realities of his life. Astro is a street-smart, independent child—left alone far too soon. His mother is in prison, and his father has been in and out of jail. They were known drug addicts and pushers. With no stable caregivers, Astro

## HAVE YOU ALREADY INCLUDED THE MISSIONARIES OF JESUS IN YOUR LIVING WILL?



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wanders the streets, surviving as best he can.

Tangos sits on the periphery of Navotas City, a community deeply affected by the violent Drug War (2016-2019) of the Duterte administration. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, extrajudicial killings occurred frequently, yet drug operations never





truly stopped. Children like Astro are among the unseen victims, trapped in cycles of crime and exploitation. These, along with other moral crises, continue to affect children and youth, robbing them of a brighter future. It broke my heart to learn that Astro is a "runner" (a person who transports or delivers drugs at the direction





of a drug dealer or criminal organization) and had been used by his own parents to discreetly deliver illegal drugs, using code words like *basura* (trash), *ubas* (grapes), or *kendi* (candy) for methamphetamine hydrochloride or crystal meth to evade detection. His case is not isolated; many children in this community are forced into similar roles, even in online child exploitation and prostitution.

This poor urban community is home to more than 35,000 people, packed into an area of around 33 hectares. As a coastal city, Navotas is known for its fishing industry. However, in Tangos, many families live in tiny homes averaging two to three square meters, with four to five members sharing the space. Limited land forces families to build vertically when they can afford expansion. Poverty and income inequality push many youths to sacrifice their education, while younger children suffer from malnutrition. Partners for Resilience (an alliance focused on building community resilience through integrated risk management) reports that in Navotas City, 16.66% of kindergarten to Grade 6 students are malnourished, with 16% suffering from severe malnutrition. I won't apologize for sharing these harsh realities. As missionaries, we journey with the people—not just to witness their struggles but to act.



## SPONSOR AN MJ SEMINARIAN

IN HIS STUDIES  
AND IN HIS  
MISSIONARY  
TRAINING PROGRAM.

HELP US!



Bros. Francis Phan Dinh Phung  
and Peter Cao Van Phuong

## ***Mesa ni Hesus* (Table of Jesus): A Table of Hope and Love**

In response, the Missionaries of Jesus in Tangos developed the *Mesa ni Hesus* care program, a project dedicated to feeding, educating, and uplifting families one child and one family at a time. The word *mesa* (table) symbolizes two things: the Table of Hope (*Mesa ng Pag-Asa*), which provides good nutrition, secures education, and offers livelihood opportunities; and the Table of Love (*Mesa ng Pag-Ibig*), which helps children and families experience the unconditional love of Jesus through pastoral care.

The *Mesa ni Hesus* program operates through three key initiatives:

- **MJ Feeding Program:** Provides 20 malnourished children (Grades 1-3) with snacks and lunch meals five days a week.
- **MJ Education Assistance:** Supports poor students pursuing college or certificate degrees.
- **Livelihood Program:** An initiative that will help parents through sewing and



### HELP US BUILD **A CAPITAL FUND**

As a very young congregation, the community of the Missionaries of Jesus is building a CAPITAL FUND (\$1,500,000.00) to help finance MJ seminaries, missionary sustenance, homes for retired and sick missionaries, and programs for evangelization and efforts to uplift the poor through education, health and other services. HELP US BY MAKING A DONATION!

HELP US!







*Bro. Elmer with one of the beneficiaries of the Mesa ni Hesus care program.*

food-related livelihood opportunities.

The San Andres Mangingisda Mission Station is pioneering the Mesa ni Hesus program, and we continue to seek volunteers, prayers, and financial support to sustain this mission.

And remember Astro? He has become a special recipient of the MJ Feeding Program. But more than just providing meals, we want him to know that he is loved and that he is not alone. Every time he greets us, he expresses a yearning for af-



*Bro. Elmer and some volunteers head back to the mission station after bringing food to children in the communities.*

fection, something his own parents could not provide. We ensure that every child in this care program is served with unwavering love and compassion, just as we extend the same to other children in the mission station through other programs like the kids’ ministry and the *Busog Puso* (full heart) feeding program of the Diocese of Kalookan.

As my missionary journey in Tangos comes to an end this May 2025, I will transition to *Bahay Misyon* (mission house) in Antipolo. Yet, my commitment remains, and I will continue assisting with the *Mesa ni Jesus* care program. I am deeply grateful and honored to have worked alongside my missionary partner in Tangos, Fr. Abraham Pinuela, MJ, as well as the dedicated leaders and volunteers of the mission station. My one year and one month here has been a profoundly transformative and fruitful journey, filled with grace and purpose. In this ministry, I discovered that I am not the giver of God’s blessings. Rather, together with the people, we share in God’s *kagandahang-loob* (benevolence)—His grace, His generosity, and His love. ■



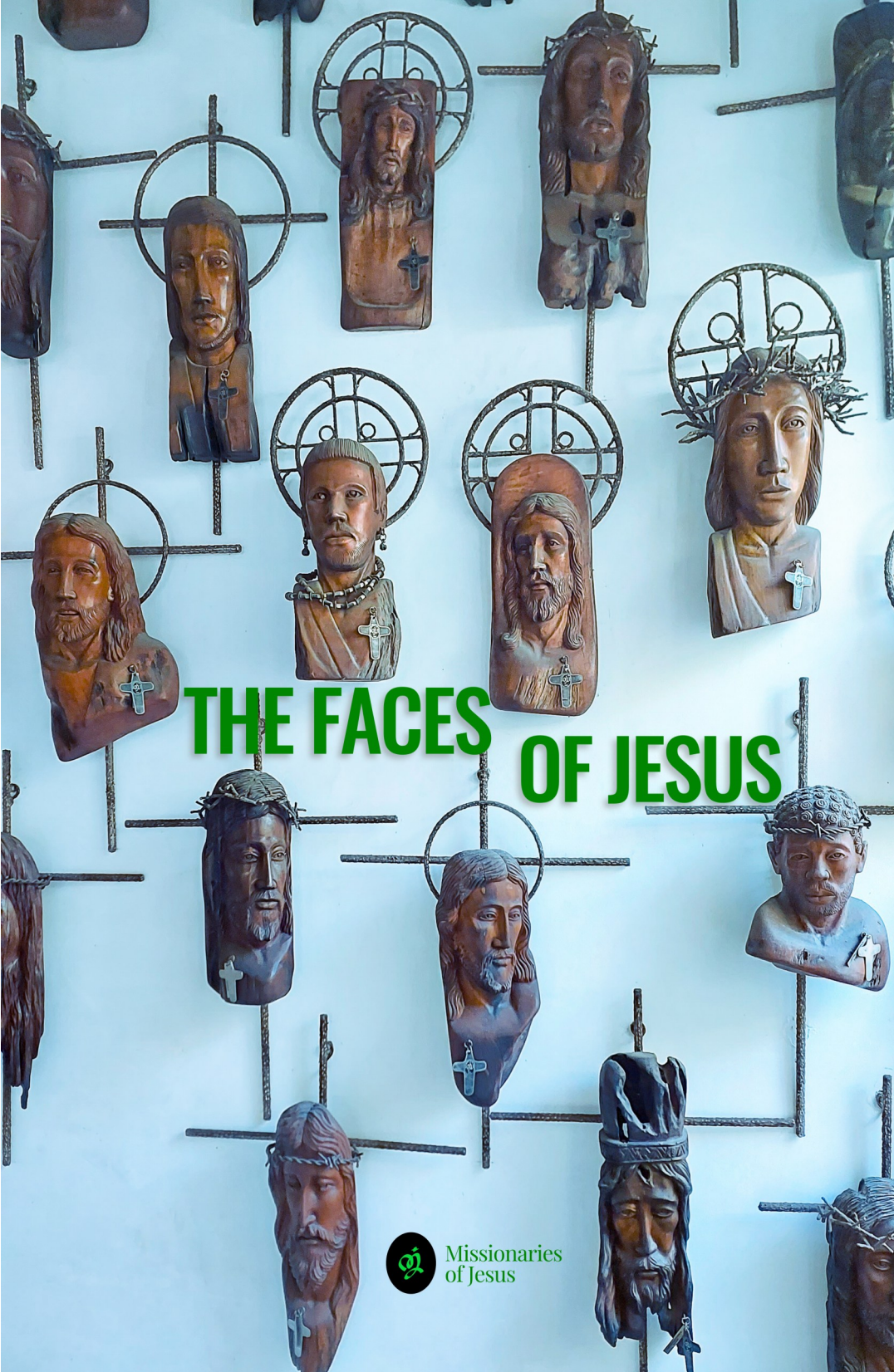
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**SERVING THE POOR**



*Tagakolu children and their teacher in the southern Philippines who the Missionaries of Jesus assist in administering their school that truly respects their culture.*







# THE FACES OF JESUS



Missionaries  
of Jesus



# JOIN THE MISSIONARIES OF JESUS

As friends and disciples of Jesus  
we live and work together in search of God's liberating presence,  
especially among our brothers and sisters in frontier situations.

*MJ Constitutions, no. 2*



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# LIFELONG JOURNEY OF SERVICE

*Rev. Crespo Lape, MJ*

**A**s I celebrate my 35th year as a religious missionary priest, my heart overflows with gratitude and awe for the journey that has unfolded. These decades have been a profound testament to God's unwavering faithfulness, the joy of serving His people, and the privilege of sharing His love in countless ways.

Each step along the way has been shaped by the communities I've encountered, the challenges that have strengthened my faith, and the moments of grace that have affirmed my calling. From the pulpit to the peripheries, I have witnessed the transformative power of compassion and the enduring hope that comes from living the Gospel.

After my ordination, I was assigned to assist in St. Andrew's Parish in Parañaque, as well as in Lagro and the Tala Leprosarium in the Philippines. In 1999, I em-



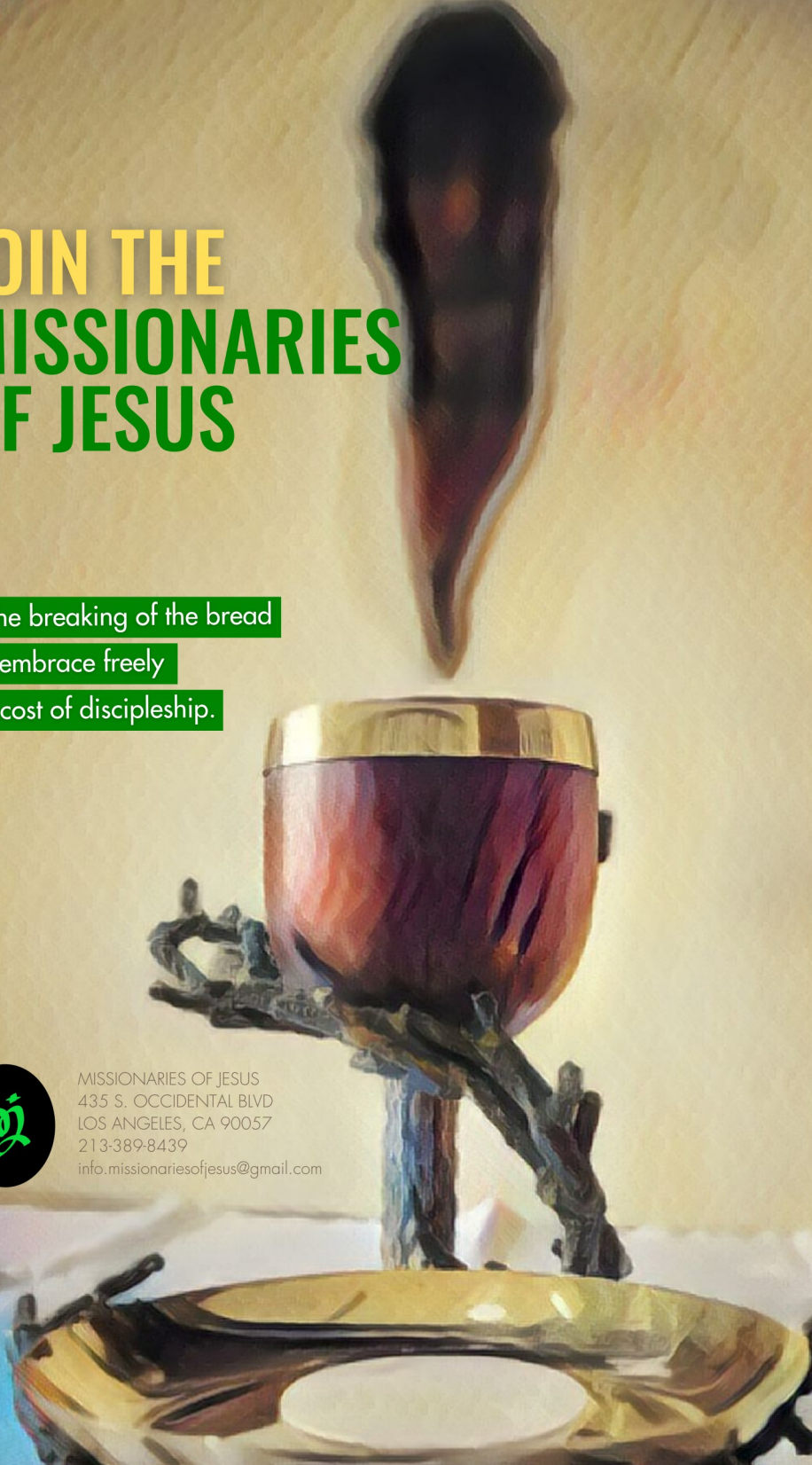
*Fr. Crespo Lape had been a missionary to Indonesia and Papua New Guinea.*

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In the breaking of the bread  
we embrace freely  
the cost of discipleship.



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Fr. Lape is currently the Pastor of the twin parishes of Precious Blood and St. Kevin in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

barked on my first mission assignment in Indonesia, where I worked until early 2000. Following that, I was transferred to Papua New Guinea, where I served for 13 years. Now, I find myself in Los Angeles, shepherding the twin parishes of Precious Blood and St. Kevin alongside two other confreres.

A significant aspect of my faith journey has been engaging with other faith traditions. Together, we have explored common values and concerns, fostering lasting friendships through shared experiences of solidarity. Ecumenical dialogue and

collaboration with non-governmental organizations that advocate for human rights, environmental care, and other pressing issues have enriched my ministry. For instance, in Indonesia, I participated in a faith reflection group composed of Muslims, Buddhists, and Hindus. Through these interactions, I came to appreciate their religious beliefs and realized the many values and pathways of prayer that unite us. These encounters have deepened my understanding and reinforced the importance of building bridges across faiths.

This anniversary is not merely a celebration of years but a profound renewal of my commitment to the mission. Priesthood, I am reminded, is not a destination but a lifelong journey of service, humility, and love. As I look to the future, I pray for the strength to continue walking in the footsteps of Jesus, with open hands and a willing heart.

I thank God for the last 35 years with all the people I've met, the places I've been to, and the multifaceted experiences that have made me who I am today. ■

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IN YOUR  
**DONATIONS.**

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# MISSIONARIES OF JESUS

*Called to proclaim  
the presence and  
coming of the  
reign of God.*

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*Everyone wants  
to leave a good  
legacy in this world.*

**CONSIDER GIVING THE MISSIONARIES OF JESUS A PLANNED GIFT AS YOUR LEGACY TO HELP BRING THE GOOD NEWS TO THE POOR. YOU MAY BE GOD'S ANSWER TO THE PRAYERS OF THE MISSIONARIES OF JESUS AND THE PEOPLE THEY SERVE.**

### **PLANNED OR DEFERRED GIFTS MAY INCLUDE:**

- **A CHARITABLE ANNUITY** gift for the Missionaries of Jesus that will give you tax deduction while receiving a life-time income;
- **BEQUESTS**, in your last will and testament, name specifically the Missionaries of Jesus;
- **LIVING TRUST**, set up a living trust to avoid probate. Give specific gifts from your estate to the Missionaries of Jesus;
- **HEIRS TO YOUR ESTATE**, make Missionaries of Jesus heirs to your estate – cash, securities, jewels, arts, your home, or other real estate;
- **BENEFICIARY TO LIFE INSURANCE**, include the Missionaries of Jesus as one of the beneficiaries in your life insurance policy; and
- **BENEFICIARY TO IRA OR OTHER RETIREMENT ACCOUNTS**, name the Missionaries of Jesus as beneficiary to your IRA or other retirement accounts.



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SOME DO MISSION BY GOING TO MISSION...

**OTHERS DO MISSION  
BY GIVING TO MISSION.**



**MAKE A DONATION EITHER MONTHLY, QUARTERLY, TWICE A YEAR OR ONCE A YEAR.**

**DONATE**

• \$1000

• \$200

• \$500

• \$100

• \$400

• \$150

• \$300

• \$50

## **DONATION METHODS:**

**1. MONTHLY CHECK** payable to **MISSIONARIES OF JESUS**

**2. BILL PAY**, please contact your bank on how to send monthly bank-generated check donation to the **MISSIONARIES OF JESUS**. Your bank will mail the check to us monthly – hassle-free and for free.

**3. CARD**, ( ) Visa ( ) Mastercard ( ) Discover ( ) AMEX.

Please **CONTACT US** to set up a recurring donation.

**4. VIA ZELLE**, [info.missionariesofjesus@gmail.com](mailto:info.missionariesofjesus@gmail.com)



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*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. This is our story in retelling God's Story of mission. May the passion for God's mission continue to burn in our hearts.*