



mission

magazine

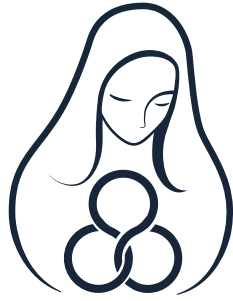
WINTER 2023



BEAR FRUIT THAT WILL LAST:
Fr. Dan Estes, SOLT

A HUNDRED TIMES MORE:
Sr. Megan Mary Thibodeau, SOLT

TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH:
Fr. Ronald de Jesus, SOLT



SOCIETY *of* OUR LADY
of the Most Holy Trinity

A message from the
**GENERAL
PRIEST
SERVANT**



Testimonies of Faith

As the General Priest Servant of SOLT, I often see the challenges in missionary life, but much more notable are the amazing moments of faith that I have the blessing and privilege of witnessing in the life of our community.

Some of those moments have taken place while attending the funerals of parents of our priests. While there is a strong element of sadness in the separation that death causes, more than anything, the funeral celebrations of our priests' parents have been real testimonies of faith. It has been incredibly moving to see the faith of our SOLT priests in such moments and to see the kind of faith-filled families that our priests typically

come from. In those challenging moments, it also becomes very evident how blessed and proud the families are of their sons and brothers who became priests and are thus able to accompany their own families in such a beautiful and unique way.

Other moments of faith and inspiration have come from attending ordinations. Recently in the Philippines, we had three priests ordained. Fr. Sherwin and Fr. Victor came to us from our SOLT parishes in the Philippines, and Fr. Martin came to us from Vietnam. In each case, the joy and pride of the families in their sons who followed God's call to become priests was tangible and a real testimony of faith to what the sacred priesthood is. The joy and gratitude of the thirteen members of Fr. Martin's family who traveled to the

Fr. Tony Anderson and missionary volunteers (left to right) Karen, Kelsey, and Abigail celebrating the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception in the village of Arenal in Belize.





Disciples of Jesus through Mary living in Marian-Trinitarian communion, serving on Ecclesial Family Teams in areas of deepest apostolic need

Philippines for the ordination was particularly notable given that Fr. Martin's father had passed away precisely 40 days before his son's ordination. Once again, it was a shining and inspiring testimony of faith in God's presence in the family, which is the domestic Church, and that God continues to call men to the priesthood. Thankfully, in the next six months, we will also be blessed to celebrate the ordination of five more priests and a deacon in SOLT.

Opening a new mission is another opportunity to witness great faith. In this issue of Mission Magazine, you will read about our new SOLT mission opening on Panay Island, in the Diocese of Virac. The new mission is classical mission ground. The local Bishop hopes, for the first time, to establish a parish on the most remote island of his diocese. There is a reason why there has not been a parish there to date - it is very remote, isolated, and totally exposed to the Pacific Ocean, such that if you got caught in a current pulling you away from the island, your

next stop would probably be the coast of Mexico! In discerning whether to open a new mission in such a place, I pointed out to our Asia-Pacific Regional Servant all of the risks and challenges of incurring such a responsibility, and he assured me that the entire body of the SOLT Asia-Pacific Region was extremely keen to open a mission in precisely such a challenging place, in continuity with so many of our other mission foundations.

I sincerely hope and pray that in your life too, there are many tangible moments of faith which provide encouragement and consolation to know that God is acting in our lives!

FR. PETER MARSALEK, SOLT is originally from Burlington, Ontario. He currently serves as the General Priest Servant and resides in Corpus Christi, Texas.

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Bear Fruit That Will Last

Nestled in the foothills of the Sierra

Gorda mountains of central Mexico in the state of Querétaro is the home called Santa Maria del Mexicano. Thousands of young men, women, and elderly have passed through our doors. Time and time again we hear that some of the best moments of their lives were in Santa Maria. The reasons that someone arrives at Santa Maria are many and varied, but it is always the case that there is some great need. Our hope is always that those who come will leave better off, capable of providing for themselves and faithful to Christ.

We serve some 140 children, youth, and young adults ranging from 5 to 22 years old. We also serve 20 elderly that are nearing the end of their journey here on earth. Needless to say, there is plenty of excitement on a daily basis from successes in school, soccer games, broken arms, and everything in between.

We are in the process of building a new home for our girls. It is quite the place and they are all excited about the opportunity to move into their new home. One of the many satisfying things about the construction is that one of our students





Previous page: *We are very proud of our graduates, including Moises and Teresa.*

Above: *Javier serving dessert to the boys at Casa San Jose; the chapel at the home for the girls that Javier designed.*



who recently graduated from university, Javier Molina Cornelio, is the architect for the project. Before Javier had even graduated from university, I had mentioned that I wanted him to propose a design for the project, which he was happy to do. Javier is now seeing his work come to fruition as the building rises before our eyes.

One of our young ladies, Teresa de Jesus Felix Olvera, recently graduated as a dentist. She came to us when she was in middle school. When she finished high school, she didn't have many opportunities for her future. Since she was a smart and hard-working young lady, we decided to send her to university. After many long hours and hard work of study, she is now a dentist and continues to help us with our little girls and attend to the many dental needs of our children. Teresa is intent on giving back to Santa Maria, recognizing all that she has received.

Another of our former students, Moises Rodriguez Manzanares, showed from an early age that he was a stellar young man that was an excellent leader. Before he graduated from high school, he manifested that he could be put in charge of other young men. He finished his studies in education and is now teaching for us in the middle school while finishing his master's degree in administration. We hope that Moises may someday help us to open and direct a high school so that our students no longer need to study online.

Javier, Teresa and Moises and many others remind us of the importance of our work and it is a delight to see the fruit of our labors. For more information about this mission, please visit santamariadelmexicano.org



FR. DAN ESTES, SOLT *is originally from Powell, Wyoming and was ordained a priest for SOLT in 1999. He has been serving at Santa Maria del Mexicano since 2016.*



A Hundred Times More

Missionaries and the Motherhouse

One of the scriptures that guided our founder Fr. Flanagan's life and our community is "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations (ad gentes), baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20)

From its very beginnings in 1958, SOLT has been missionary "ad gentes" (to all nations) and continues to respond to the needs of bishops from around the world. There has always been a burning desire to go and make disciples and to serve in whatever capacity was most needed. In 1975, Sr. Margaret Mary and Sr. Mary of the Trinity joined Fr. Tom Gier in answering the call to go serve God's people on the remote island of Cabasan in the Philippines. They packed up their few belongings in Kansas City and went to what must have felt like the end of the earth. In going to the Philippines, they experienced the fulfillment of Our Lord's promise, "And everyone who has given up houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for the sake of my name will receive a hundred times more, and will inherit eternal life." (Matthew 19:29)





Above: An artistic rendering of the Motherhouse; Sr. Maria Gemma sharing the joy of the Lord.

Our first missionaries personally received a hundred times more, and the greater SOLT family did as well. We quickly received vocations, and our mission and charism spread through the Philippines and soon expanded to Thailand and then on to Papua New Guinea. Sr. Mary of the Redemption and Sr. Maria Teresita, our first Filipina vocation, were among our first Sisters to go to Thailand to serve at our rehabilitation centers for those with drug addictions. At the same time, our missions were expanding in the Americas as well, and our members were being sent to serve and make disciples in Belize, Guatemala, and Mexico.

These Sisters, along with so many others, spent and consumed themselves for souls. Now having arrived at a new phase in their consecrated lives, they are experiencing a new fulfillment of Our Lord's promise to "receive a hundred times more." Thanks to the generosity of so many, on December 2, 2022, we broke ground for our

first ever motherhouse, in Violet, Texas. Our goal for building a motherhouse is about more than a building, much more. It is about building our future and preserving our roots. It is about anchoring ourselves firmly within the Diocese of Corpus Christi so that we can continue to go to the ends of the earth. We desire to witness to the culture of life by providing a place for our sisters, who have served tirelessly in the missions for so many years, to come home to, and from where they can witness to the world, the Church and their sisters that aging and suffering are redemptive, and that Jesus continues to keep His promises.

Please consider joining the Motherhouse Campaign as we build for the future, while honoring our past. More information, as well as a link to give can be found at solt.net/Motherhouse. We pray that in giving you, too, will "receive a hundred times more."



Previous Page: SOLT sisters joyfully breaking ground for the new Motherhouse; Sr. Margaret Mary, Sr. Mary of the Trinity and Fr. Tom Gier during the foundation of the SOLT missions in the Philippines.

SR. MEGAN MARY THIBODEAU, SOLT is originally from Monroe, CT. She professed her first vows in 2000 in Italy and has been serving as the General Sister Servant since 2013.



To the Ends of the Earth

CATANDUANES ISLAND

Catanduanes is a remote and isolated island province in the eastern part of the Philippines located in the Bicol Region of Luzon. It is known for its rolling hills, stunning beaches, and lush green landscapes. The capital city of the province is Virac.

The island of Catanduanes is a predominantly Catholic province. Catholicism was introduced to the island during the Spanish colonial period, and over time it has become deeply ingrained in the local culture and tradition. The Catholic heritage in the province is vibrant, as manifested in the colorful festivals and religious celebrations, notably the Fiesta of the Immaculate Conception, a significant event in the province. Touring around the island, one finds several historic churches

and sacred sites, considered as architectural landmarks of the province.

However, Catanduanes, as an island province, is susceptible to typhoons and other natural disasters such as floods, landslides, and earthquakes. This island is situated in an area known to experience frequent typhoons. In recent years, the province has experienced several devastating typhoons, which have caused damage of properties and loss of lives. The local government and the Church have been working to mitigate the impact of future typhoons and other natural disasters. The good bishop has a continuing project of building typhoon-proof houses for low-income families in the coastal areas, which significantly helps the recipients around the island of Catanduanes.

Above: Approaching Barangay Suchan; Light moments with Bishop Manolo de los Santos



Above: Crossing Panay Island from Bagamanoc; The Bishop boarding a boat to cross the sea and travel to Panay Island.

DIOCESE OF VIRAC

The Diocese of Virac received its ecclesiastical jurisdiction in 1974, with Bishop Jose Crisologo Sorra as the first bishop who hailed from Catanduanes. When Bishop Sorra was transferred to the Diocese of Legazpi, he was replaced by Msgr. Manolo Alarcon de los Santos in 1994, the current and second bishop of the diocese.

During Bishop Sorra's tenure, SOLT was already spreading its mission in the four island parishes of Legazpi. Bishop Manolo, who was also familiar with the SOLT's presence in the Bicol Region, had been expressing his desire to the Regionalate for SOLT to mission in Virac. In May 2022, Bishop Manolo met Fr. Ronald de Jesus at the headquarters of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines

(CBCP), where he reiterated his invitation for SOLT to work in his diocese. We are grateful that we are now ready to send missionaries to Virac.

At present, the Diocese of Virac has forty-four Parishes. As part of the preparation for the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the diocese, Bishop Manolo aspires to establish six more parishes, to bring the total to fifty parishes. According to him, given the province's geographical location and the faithful's deep pastoral need, the diocese is aptly called a "mission place." Hence the parishes should instead be called "Mission Churches." Indeed, this island province presents a deep apostolic need for pastoral service, particularly for the inhabitants of another small island adjacent to Catanduanes, the Panay island.

PANAY ISLAND

Panay Island is a mission area offered by the Diocese to SOLT. This is the 44th Mission Church under the jurisdiction of the diocese. It faces the Pacific Ocean. Previously it was used as an American military outpost tasked with the defense of the Benham Rise. Today, it is the base for the Philippine Coast Guard. This mission parish comprises four small villages: Babaguan, Suchan, Quigaray, and Panay. The priests at Bagamanoc have been in charge of providing religious services to the residents of Panay island. Since there is no parish on that island, the priests can only serve them by crossing the sea to get to Panay, depending on the favorable weather conditions.

After initial dialogues between SOLT and the diocese, we made a trip to Panay Island on November 23, 2022. We visited Quigaray and Suchan. Led by Bishop Manolo, we had a fruitful conversation with the people about opening up a mission on the island. Fr Oliver Estor and Deacon Victor Andeza were introduced to the faithful as the team being prepared to serve them. People

SOLT

Asia-Pacific Region



THAILAND

RATCHABURI
CHANTABURI

AUSTRALIA

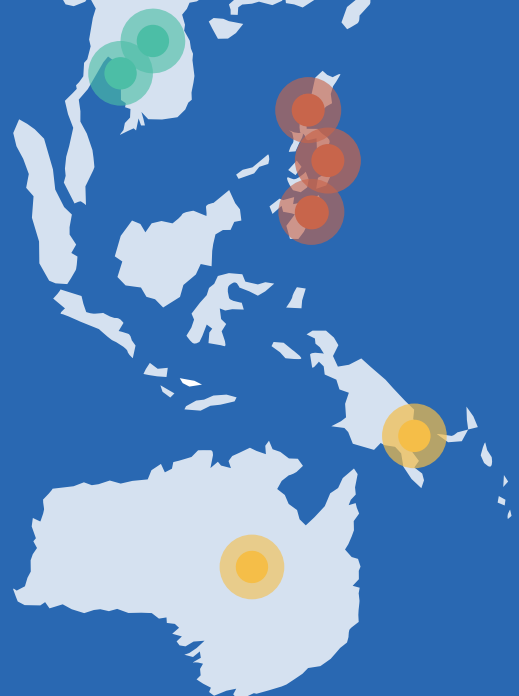
BROKEN BAY

PAPUA, NEW GUINEA

MT. HAGEN

PHILIPPINES

CACERES
LEGAZPI
SORSOOGON
DAET
NOVALICHES
LIBMANAN
SAN JOSE IN
NUEVA ECIJA





Above: At the Tabaco Port, taking a picture before traveling to Catanduanes; The parishioners of Bgy. Suchan

warmly received us and gave the assurance of their support. Some villagers from Barangay Suchan had pledged to donate a parcel of land for the future location of the parish church and rectory. Another family offered land to use as a Catholic cemetery.

During the conversation with the people, the Bishop mentioned the possibility of having the SOLT team serve during the Simbang Gabi (a traditional nine-day novena before Christmas). It would be an opportunity for SOLT to assess the mission and have the team experience living with the people. The villagers were very excited about it since it would be the first time they would experience this beautiful tradition.

So it happened, in December 2022, Fr. Oliver and Deacon Victor went to Panay island and served the people there until the first week of January 2023. Since no rectory was available, they stayed at the Barangay Health Center of Suchan, where people brought daily provisions.

While the people, of their own initiative, are starting to build a makeshift rectory out of light materials available in that place, Fr. Oliver and Deacon Victor are preparing for the formal mission opening in Panay island, Catanduanes.

SOLT APOSTOLATE

In line with the mission and evangelization thrust of the Diocese, our team will begin to conduct house to house visitation in the four barangays (districts) of Panay island. They desire to engage deeply in the people's lives and hopefully develop a pastoral plan. They plan to build a parish church and a rectory to prepare for a complete ecclesial family team to serve on the island. This place presents the deepest apostolic need and a potential avenue for volunteers in education, livelihood, and primary health access. We hope our two missionaries can prepare the place for the complete ecclesial family team to work according to SOLT's charism and mission.

One remarkable feature of this new mission is that the parish will be dedicated to Nuestra Señora de la Santissima Trinidad. Bishop Manolo de los Santos suggested the name as he prepared for SOLT to work on Panay Island. Hence, this will be the very first parish to be named after Our Lady of the Trinity in the Bicol Region, if not in the Philippines.

Submitted by Fr. Ronald de Jesus, SOLT and Fr. Fausto Rodel Malanyaon, SOLT from the Asia-Pacific Region.



Above: Sr. Janet Marie and Sr. Stella Maris enjoy their friendship during the Motherhouse groundbreaking celebration.



SOCIETY of OUR LADY
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On the front cover: Sr. Maria Asuncion with one of God's little ones at St. Martin de Porres Parish, our SOLT mission in Guatemala.

Right: The parishioners of Barangy Quigaray



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