WORKSHEET 8

Missionary of communion: the ecclesial face of Sister Maria Troncatti

In Sister Maria Troncatti's journey, we discover the beauty of belonging to the Church lived in everyday life life. As a living member of the Body of Christ, she manifested with her life that every personal talent is a gift for the building up of the community. Her extraordinary capacity to collaborate, her spirit of service, and her complete dedication reveal a profound awareness that in the Church no one is superfluous and everyone is needed. We are not called to imitate her path exactly, but to be inspired by her faithfulness to the vocation we received, recognizing our unique place in God's plan and generously living out our contribution to the Church's mission.

GOD'S WORD.

"For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of that body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all given to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member but many… Now **you are the body of Christ, and individually members. God has appointed in the church: first, apostles, second, prophets, third, teachers; then, miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of governing, of speaking in tongues. Are** all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But desire earnestly the greater gifts. Then I show you the more excellent way" (1 Cor. 12:12-31).

Video: **Interview with Mons.Néstor Montesdeoca Becerra SDB**

FROM THE LETTERS OF SISTER MARIA TRONCATTI

To the Superior General, Mother Luisa Vaschetti

This is a third letter from Sister Maria Troncatti, published in the magazine Gioventù Missionaria in 1927, signed and addressed to the Superior General.

The letter shows how she appreciates the prayers of her Sisters. She knows that the Church is not only her, but a community of people who pray. The letter also shows a great respect for the priesthood, a great desire for sacramental priestly ministry, which has not always been sufficient in mission.

From a letter to Mother General

[Macas, 1927]

Oh, yes, the word "Missionary" arouses in the heart something poetic, which excites and attracts the soul in the hours of fervent dreams of apostolate and immolation; but in practice, how it makes one feel an imperious dream of exclaiming, "Pray, pray, that our strength may not fail us["]. There are so many moral struggles, so many material difficulties, that nature often rebels, and discouragement tries to bring us down when, after weeks and months of work and sacrifice among these poor natives, we do not succeed to make them understand anything, not even a small idea of the Lord and eternal life!

We feel, however, the effect of the spiritual help that comes to us from the dear Sisters, and from the good souls who pray for us; and the Lord does not let us lack the rays of sunshine among the storm clouds that sometimes surround us. As the fruit of great sacrifices, we have been able to gather seven little Kivarets whom, God willing, we shall have the comfort of seeing regenerated with Holy Baptism during the imminent visit of His Excellency Bishop Comin, who will soon arrive at the Mission; and with him will also come our Provincial, who is for us the angel of comfort[1] .(...)

We also had the great distress of seeing good Father Duroni, the only priest we presently have here in the Mission, fall seriously ill. Think of what anguish we have had during these long days, without a doctor, without a priest in this solitude of the forest! I sent word to the Missionaries of Méndez, 8 days' journey from Macas; and meanwhile, with what faith we invoked our Mother Mazzarello, that she would come to our aid to save the good Missionary from death and to restore him to us in health! At last a Priest arrived from Méndez, and the sick man little by little began to improve. He has been in bed for two months; now he is convalescent, but he cannot yet attend to the sacred ministry, given the extreme weakness to which he was reduced .[2]

Our health leaves something to be desired. The miserable little hut in which we live is so damp; and since we have not yet become accustomed to the climate of this region, we are also feeling its effects.

A young lady lives here,[3] who has supported religion among the white Christians in this population for about 28 years, without a single priest having been seen such a long time. She is a true heroine, and it is due to her that there is still some faith and piety among the civilized residents here. This holy creature is a real help to us and and an incentive not to be beaten by her zeal.

We really need a reinforcement of personnel, for the work is much and is increasing. Our House embraces all the Works: here we receive the sick and the little children; here we have the school, the Oratory, the workshop and whatever else the Lord gives us of good to do; each of us must do the work of four. May the Lord awaken many generous missionary vocations because the field is extensive and the workers are scarce.

Most obliged and affectionate Sister Maria Troncatti F. di M. A.

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[1] Refers to the visit of Bishop Domenico Comin and Sr. Carolina Mioletti which took place in February and March 1927.

[2] Cf COLLINO, *La grazia di un sì* 154-156: Ombre di morte su padre Duroni.

[3] Mercedes Navarrete Gallegos (1892-1942), the daughter of Higinio Navarrete and Mercedes Gallegos, a family of good reputation and economic opportunity, was born in Riobamba. At the age of 23, she lost her parents and, with the help of her siblings, earned a teacher's diploma and taught children in Macas. After the arrival of the FMA, she collaborated with them and supported them in various activities in Macas and Sucúa. In 1930 she founded the first mixed school for Shuar and settlers, which was inaugurated by Msgr. Comin on May 26, 1931, under the name St. Dominic de Guzmán. Today the school bears the name of Mercedes Navarrete. The educational contribution of this exemplary woman was and is appreciated by the government,

A TESTIMONY TAKEN FROM THE BIOGRAPHY OF SISTER MARIA TRONCATTI

"Father Vigna was for several years director and pastor in Macas, and he does not hesitate to say that most of the pastoral success he achieved among the white settlers, he owes to Sister Troncatti. Even the young men confided in her. In particular, the missionary admired the educational methods she used toward the women, white or Kivara, young or mature in years. They were methods that knew how to take everything into account: essential principles and individual and environmental characteristics, with an intuition and wisdom of decisions that certainly did not come to her from academic studies, but that were born from her deeply evangelical humanity.
Testimony of Father Vigna, taken from *Summarium* 463: "In truth, not only in Sister Troncatti did I notice, later, these charisms, but also in many others of our missionaries of that time. Sister Troncatti, however, remains for me the prototype in this as in many other manifestations of special gifts or charisms. And do not think that Sister Troncatti was weak in demanding the fulfillment of duty, even with her own Sisters! When the the boarding schools for the Kivarets began to function and it was essential to give them a specific imprint with the necessary characteristics of elasticity, I remember that with her and with other of my wonderful missionaries, it became necessary to examine how to solve certain problems of a disciplinary and formative nature that were inherent in ancestral laws and millenary customs. The Kivara woman, through our formative action, was coming to acquire dignity and social status, placing herself on the same level as the male. As soon as girls became aware of this change, they were tempted to abuse it. Struggling with new customs and new demands, it was not uncommon for the deep-rooted ways of a semi-savage life to create turmoil, confusion, and crisis in the girls, leading them to make contagious mistakes. The common sense and human balance of my Sisters knew how to remedy, even resorting to radical means. When the error was public, serious, and easily transmitted, it was Sister Troncatti who decided, after serious and serene examination, to adopt the system in force among the Kivaros: to gather all the girls in a circle, with the culprit at the center, to publicly apply punishment to her. It is wonderful to recall, at the distance of almost fifty years, the system by which the boarders were educated, to prepare them to assume the responsibilities of life and marriage. I, who lived twenty-three years in contact with these Sisters, can affirm say that today, after so many decades, it seems logical to me to conclude that **God was acting in them and with them**"" (COLLINO Maria, *La grazia di un sì tutto donato,* Leumann, Elledici 2012, 161-162).

FOR REFLECTION

The life of Sister Maria Troncatti deeply questions us about our ecclesial belonging and our contribution to the common mission.

- Have I discovered my place in the world, in the Church?
- Am I capable of collaborating with others in mission, valuing the different charisms and vocations present in the Church, like Sister Maria Troncatti?
- How can I grow in the awareness that my life, even in the simplest and most everyday things, contributes to the growth of the Kingdom of God?
- Have I already told someone this week that they are precious to me? Can I try?

Some people do not know how important they are.
Some people don't know how good it does just to look at them.

Some do not know how powerful their kind smile is. Some do not know how abundant their closeness is.
Some do not know how much poorer we are without them.
Some people do not know that they are a gift from heaven.
They would know if we told them.
Bruno Ferrero

FOR PRAYER

Prayer inspired by the words of Pope Francis (cf. Gaudete et exsultate, 144):

Jesus invited his disciples to pay attention to details.
The small detail that the wine was running out at a party.
The small detail that a sheep was missing.
The small detail of the widow who offered her two coins.
The small detail of having spare oil for the lamps if the groom is delayed.
The small detail of asking the disciples to see how many loaves they had.
The small detail of having a fire ready
and fish on the grill as he waited for the disciples at dawn.

Jesus, I offer you what I know how to do.
Maybe they are not great things at this time,
But I want to do them with love.
Amen.