

Our Union group *MitMission* continues to feel very close to Kloster Marienborn, where we felt at home for a long time, and coming to Limburg is still a homecoming for us”.

From the Pallotti-MaZ Mission Statement:

Mission means setting out, getting on the road, leaving everything behind, to go out from oneself, breaking the shell of egoism, that imprisons us in our own ego. Mission means, first of all, to open oneself to others, to discover and encounter them as brothers and sisters.

Some questions for our reflection:

- What image do I have of old/young people? How do I think of them? Do I feel close to them? What can I learn from them?
- What opportunities do we find to strengthen or awaken the call to the apostolate in persons of other generations?
- To what kind of prophecy are we called together today?

Annamaria Stahl, UAC and Sr. Maria Landsberger, SAC

The beginnings of the MaZ Project

In 1986, as a young Pallottine Missionary Sister, Sr. Irene Weber SAC was sent from Germany to northeastern Brazil for a six-month experience to work with the poor. Due to poor health and in order to continue her studies, she returned to Germany, but enthused by her missionary experience and wanting to offer young lay people a similar opportunity, she began, with the consent of her Provincial and in collaboration with a Pallottine priest, the volunteer project MaZ (temporary missionaries). The joys and struggles of her own experience, in her dialogue with the Lord, brought forth this fruit of a much broader dialogue and collaboration, in which more than 500 young people have gone out so far to many different countries! Last May, just a few months before her death at just 56 years of age, Sr. Irene had the great joy that 11 members of the MaZ coordinating team, including Barbara, Roswitha and Annamaria, applied to become and were accepted as a community of the Union, the “MitMission” Group, and they made their Act of Apostolic Commitment on November 6th 2016.

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Apostles for Today

Prayer and Reflection - March 2017

DIALOGUE BETWEEN GENERATIONS

Encounter, Dialogue, Missioning – across generations – an experience of temporary missionaries in Kloster Marienborn, Limburg

Each year for 27 years, a group of about 12 young women and some young men from all over Germany, came to Kloster Marienborn, the Provincial house of the Pallottine Missionary Sisters in Limburg, Germany, five times a year, to prepare themselves as “Temporary Missionaries” for a one-year missionary experience and then to be sent out to different parts of the world. More than 50 of these have remained involved as part of the MaZ coordinating team, helping to prepare new volunteers. Two such former temporary missionaries, Barbara Leyendecker and Roswitha Breu, now direct the project under the sponsorship of the German Pallottine Missionary Sisters. Since last year, the house of the Pallottine Fathers and Brothers in Friedberg hosts these seminars, with continued accompaniment by Fr. Jochen Ruiner SAC and occasional input from one of the Sisters in certain units. In their one year missionary experience, in Brazil, Rwanda, India . . . , the young people *live, pray and work together* with Pallottine Sisters or Fathers/Brothers, or with other religious. Coming to experience first-hand life in a religious community before their placement, therefore, is an integral part of their preparation, alongside the more formal content received. Team member Annamaria writes: “For some of us it was something almost unimaginable at the beginning of our time of preparation to live for some days with Sisters in a convent. Getting up early in the morning for prayer, keeping silence on the corridors in order not to disturb the Sisters . . . But at the same time, whenever we came we experienced the warmth with which the Sisters welcomed us, their interest in our lives and in our individual mission project and in our reports on mission experiences abroad when we returned”.

Here is a description of the preparation as it was when at Marienborn: there were 4 (week and weekend) meetings before a placement and one

seminar after returning. During these meetings, besides the study units, the different encounters with the mainly elderly Sisters took place in a variety of settings: the refectory, the chapel, helping in the infirmary and in the varied fields of work. Particularly special were the personal exchanges with the accompanying Sister. Each young person, during her/his commitment was specially accompanied by one sister with prayer, and if possible, also correspondence. Part of the programme of the MaZ week was a coffee time with this Sister - which allowed a vivid exchange to take place, especially during the post-placement seminar.

The motivation of the young people is to come to know the life of the less-privileged and of the Church in another country, in order to become fully engaged there. During the meetings, they encountered Sisters who lived their mission either in Germany (working within their own communities or, for example, in hospitals, schools, in a prison) or abroad: (in South Africa, Belize, Brazil ...). There was great mutual interest. The young people's questions reawakened the missionary enthusiasm of the Sisters, questions such as: Why did you become a Pallottine Missionary Sister? Was it your own decision to remain in Germany, or to go to South Africa? Would you enter again today? On the other hand, the Sisters' questions stimulated the young people: What do your parents think of your decision to go abroad? How do other young people view your being engaged in the Church?

The young people livened up the house. For some Sisters this was not always easy, while others found it a joy. For the young people, this regulated life, with the daily timetable, the rhythm of prayer, was something new. They tried to adapt to a slower rhythm and, for instance, to speak more clearly with those who had hearing difficulties. The communication between young and old was a mutual learning process.

Pope Francis said: "*Communication is an art learned in moments of peace in order to be practised in moments of difficulty*" (*Amoris Laetitia*, n. 234). – "*Our elderly are men and women... who came before us on our own road [...] Indeed, how I would like a Church that challenges the throw-away culture by the overflowing joy of a new embrace between young and old!*" (*Amoris Laetitia*, n. 191, citing his Catechesis from 11 March 2015)

Pallotti lived with a consciousness that we are made in the image of God, and that we are people who are sent - and remain so even until our last breath. *The evangelising activity, prayer and all contributions are to be united for the reviving and spreading of faith* (cf. V. Pallotti, May Appeal n. 6). Pallotti was convinced that

ALL, who in any way take part in the apostolate, need each other to be able to effectively fulfil the mission of the Church.

Referring to the generations in the Church, Pope Francis said: "*it is good for us to take the dream of those who came before us in order to be able to speak in a prophetic way today ... Dream and Prophecy together. The memory of how our fathers and mothers dreamt, and the courage to go ahead in a prophetic way with this dream!*" (02.02.2017)

To go ahead in a prophetic way with this dream! Here Annamaria, who lived her missionary commitment in Brazil in 2012/13, shares:

"The exchange with the Sisters, praying for each other and thinking of each other, marked us during our time of commitment and afterwards. Through our missioning by the Provincial Superior, Sr. Helga Weidemann SAC, we were sent out into the world. This trust in having been sent by God moved me very deeply. Learning about the spirituality of St. Vincent Pallotti was part of our time of preparation. His thought that each one of us is wished by God as we are, and accepted by God with our strengths and weaknesses, and that we are each sent according to our own abilities and condition of life to work for a better world and for the realisation of the Kingdom of God on earth, inspires and strengthens me in my life.

Some of the former temporary missionaries, who continue to be involved with MaZ and collaborate in the preparation of new young missionaries, felt similarly to me, and had the idea of officially becoming part of the Union, the large family of St. Vincent Pallotti. It was a very natural step for us, since we had already seen ourselves for a long time as part of the community. In November 2016, we made our formal commitment as the *MitMission* Group. We wish to engage in the Catholic Church and take on an active role in shaping the Church.

Faith in a God who loves without limits, who accepts me as I am, exactly as Pallotti says, touches me much more than the image of a punishing God which I encountered at times in the generation of my grandparents and also during my missionary experience in Brazil. As a young voice in the Church, I hope that her teaching everywhere in the world will come closer to the lived reality of the faithful, and to my own lived reality, and that hierarchical thinking will be overcome. A Church in which each person sees themselves as a disciple of Jesus. I hope that I, in and with the Church, can bear witness to this marvellous love of God.