### Maryknoll Sisters of Saint Dominic, Inc. August 2, 2020 18th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

Good Morning/Evening. I’m a Maryknoll Sister. I was raised in Chicago and was really looking forward to coming back here to personally share with about my mission experiences and about the missionary work of Maryknoll Sisters around the world. Unfortunately, due to the situation of the Covid19 virus, it is not possible for me to travel Chicago to be with you. However, I was very grateful that Ms. Megan Mio, from your Mission Office, asked me to send my mission appeal to you to be read in my absence.

Our gospel reading today begins with the chilling line: “When Jesus heard of the death of John the Baptist, he withdrew in a boat to a deserted place by himself.” After his cousin’s death, Jesus KNEW that the path he was walking would probably led to his death, as well, so he went off to a deserted place to pray. Alone in that place he may have turned to God and asked the same question that Paul pondered in our 2nd reading today: “What will separate us from the love of God? Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword?” Jesus surely receiving the same answer: NOTHING can ever separate us from the love of God, and so when he saw the crowds, he continued his loving outreach to the poor nourishing them with his teaching and feeding them with bread for their journey.

Many of our Maryknoll Sisters work with poor people who don’t have enough to eat and have opened soup kitchens to feed the hungry. Often they wonder where they were going to get enough food to feed the people, but it always comes. Recently I helped out in a hospitality house in El Paso for refugees fleeing violence in Latin America. In order to feed the people who came, we were totally dependent on food given by the people of El Paso, and somehow there was always enough. But as Jesus reminded us, we don’t live on bread alone. As missionaries we journey with people, pray with them, support them and help them as best we can, but I’ve found that the greatest joy of being a missioner is not solving people’s problems myself, but standing with them, praying with them and together watching the power of God’s Love transform their lives.

I worked in Guatemala for 6 years. I’m reminded of a friend of mine there, Rosario Caal. She and her family lived in a mountain village at the time when Guatemala was in the midst of a civil war. Rosario told me of the terrible day when the army came through their village. All the people had to run for their lives. She ran holding her infant in her arms. Their little three year old daughter was running with them, but the little one couldn’t run fast enough. When the army opened fire, their little 3 year old daughter was shot in the back and killed. Rosario and her husband had to keep running. She couldn’t turn back; she had her baby to protect. She and her husband and all in the village ran to the hills for shelter. After the danger was over, they made their way over the mountains and into the capitol. They settled in a squatter area on the south side of Guatemala City, where I worked. Though their faith was strong, Rosario told me that she couldn’t stop thinking about her daughter who was shot. With tears in her eyes she told me she couldn’t pray the Our Father, because she couldn’t forgive the army who killed her daughter. One day when I stopped by to visit her, she had a smile on her face that I had never seen before. She said, “Sister, let me tell you what happened last night. My daughter came to me in a dream. She had the most beautiful smile and she said, “Don’t worry about me, Mama. I am fine.” With tears in her eyes Rosario told me of the peace that came over her after seeing her daughter. She knew that God had taken her daughter to Himself, and that she was indeed fine. Today Mr. & Mrs. Caal have seven lovely children and continue to be beautiful people of faith and leaders in the Catholic community. Rosario taught me that indeed NOTHING can stop God’s love.

It is this unconditional Love of God that motivates women from 29 different countries to become Maryknoll Sisters and join us in our mission work—in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and also here in the US. Maryknoll Sisters work with youth, with the sick and dying, in the soup kitchens, anywhere where there is need. And we all have experienced firsthand that when we reach out to people in need, miracles happen: the poor are fed, the sick are healed, and God’s Love is shared.

We, Maryknoll Sisters, know very well that we couldn’t do ANY of this work without the help of generous people like yourselves. Maryknoll was founded here in the States in the early 1900’s. Since our beginning, it has been the support of American Catholics that has allowed us to be in mission. First and foremost, I want to thank you for your support of the missions over the years. But I’d also like to invite you to join us in mission. If you sense a desire in your heart to go to other countries and share your gifts and talents with people of different lands, I invite you to consider joining us in Maryknoll—as Sister, brother, priest or lay missioner. It’s a wonderful vocation. If you have any questions, I invite you look up Maryknoll Sisters on our Website: <https://www.maryknollsisters.org/>

There are two other ways that you can help us. The most important way is through your prayers. Please remember to include Maryknoll Sisters and all missioners in your good prayers. You can be assured that as partners in mission with us, we will be remembering you and your families in our prayers, as well.

Another way that you can help us is through your financial support. There will be a second collection for the Maryknoll Sisters. I thank you in advance for whatever you are able to share with us. Recently one of our young Sisters from Tanzania was assigned to our China Region. We were all thrilled, but of course, that means that her travel expenses and language school all have to be covered, so we do need your help. Through your prayers and financial support you become one with us in our mission work.

So whether we Maryknoll Sisters are sharing our faith with a group of non-Christians in an RCIA class in Asia, or sitting in a hut in Africa at the bedside of a person suffering with AIDS or treating a malnourished child in one of our clinics in Latin America, we know that it is because of YOUR help we are able to bring God’s Love and compassion to the poor. And so on behalf of all Maryknoll Sisters around the world and all the people we serve, I thank you very much and pray that God bless each of you and your families.