

March Mission Intention

That the Holy Spirit may grant perseverance to those who are persecuted for their faith, particularly in Asia.



Blessed are the persecuted, theirs is the Kingdom of God

Country Focus: Pakistan: Seeing the Cost of Faith

The country of Pakistan was created in 1947, but the people and cultures of this land can be traced back over 5000 years. Pakistan was established as a separate nation for India's Muslims in hopes of bringing an end to conflicts between Hindus and Muslims in India. Sadly, there have been several wars, conflicts, border disputes and mutual suspicion between Pakistan and India.

Since 1983, it has been mostly ruled by the military with a weak civilian government. In 1986, Pakistan changed its constitution to make it an Islamic republic. This change has affected the legal system and made it more difficult for non-Muslims to practice their faith freely.



Christians in Pakistan make up only 2% of the population. The Catholic Church is most known for its education system and health care facilities, which serve all people. Christians lived in relative peace with Muslims in Pakistan until the war in Iraq began. Since then, Christians have been targets of violence and increased discrimination. For example, in 2009 Christians were killed during riots as a result of religious tensions.

Christians and other non-Muslim groups are struggling to maintain their faith and practice freely. It is uncertain at this time whether this situation will improve. It is a personal sacrifice for Christians to live out their faith.

God's Word for Mission

Promoting Knowledge of Faith

"Before all this happens, however, they will seize and persecute you, they will hand you over to the synagogues and to prisons, and they will have you led before kings and governors because of my name.... By your perseverance you will secure your lives (Luke 21:12; 19).

"Religious freedom must be given effective constitutional protection everywhere and that highest of man's rights and duties - to lead a religious life with freedom in society - must be respected" (Declaration on Religious Liberty, #15).

Saint for the Lost : St. Anthony of Padua

Education for Community Life

St. Anthony was born in Lisbon, Portugal near the end of the twelfth century. He entered the community of St. Augustine, but eventually became a Franciscan as he was inspired by Franciscan martyrs in north Africa. He pursued missionary work among the Moslems in Morocco. After becoming seriously ill, he was forced to return home, but his ship was blown off course and he landed in Italy.

It was there that his abilities as a preacher and teacher became known. He preached along the countryside of northern Italy and inspired many to faith through his humility



Patron saint of finding what is lost:

and fire for the Gospel. He died in 1231 at the age of 36.

Devotion to St. Anthony is spread around the world and reaches to many faiths. In Pakistan and India, Catholics, Protestants, Hindus and Muslims celebrate St. Anthony as one who hears their prayers and helps them when they feel lost or desperate. He reflects the Word made flesh, who humbled himself and became poor so that he might bring good news and hope to the poor.



CENTER for MISSION
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Religious Liberty

Catholic teaching declares that all people have a right to practice their religious faith freely without coercion because it is part of respecting human dignity. It is important that freedom of religious expression be incorporated into civil law and governments. This freedom also honors the freedom of living according to one's conscience.

But, there are times and places when this religious freedom can be stifled through coercion, manipulation and force limiting people's ability to practice their faith - especially for minority faiths. As the family of nations interact more, the need for respecting the dignity of a diversity of faiths is more important than ever.



Photo from: www.areluctantsinner.com

My Lenten Offering - Prayer, Fasting and Charity

Moral Formation

Each Lent we are called to deepen our discipleship by practicing ways of prayer, fasting and charity. *Prayer* is a way to make our time holy. *Fasting* is way to open us to God and our neighbor. *Charity* is a way to share our gifts with the poor in body, mind and spirit. We can offer these practices to be in solidarity with God's mission in our world.

- Give an hour of prayer for those who are persecuted for their faith.
- Fast from a food item or other activity and remember those who are not able to worship or practice their faith..
- Practice charity by participating in Operation Rice Bowl as a way to be in touch with brothers and sisters in need around the world. (www.orb.crs.org)



www.vaticaninsider.com



Give a Buck for Mission

Give \$1 to **Catholic Relief Services** which exists to provide emergency relief and development in over 100 countries. CRS serves the poor overseas who need basic necessities, provide safety and shelter to refugees and work toward peace and justice in areas of conflict.

For more information on Catholic Relief Services, go to www.crs.org. For Operation Rice Bowl, go to www.orb.crs.org.

Place gift commitments and offerings in your Holy Bucket. If you do not have one and would like one, contact Eric Simon at simone@archspm.org.

Petitions for Mission

Liturgical Education

- ✚ Let us pray in gratitude for the gift of faith and the freedom to practice our faith.
- ✚ Let us pray for those who suffer for their faith; especially in Pakistan.
- ✚ Let us pray for those who do not know God that they may experience the gift of faith.
- ✚ Let us pray that we may deepen our faith in Jesus Christ during the season of Lent.
- ✚ Let us pray that we can each live our faith and share it with others.

Prayer for Mission

Missionary Initiative

Dear Jesus, you came to show us the love that God has for all people. Lead us and guide us in your ways so that we may reflect your image to all we meet. Amen.