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# OUR MISSION

## MISSIO SACBC - PONTIFICAL MISSION SOCIETIES

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Hi dear friends of **OUR MISSION!**

The annual General Assembly of all the National Directors of the Pontifical Mission Societies (Missio) took place in Rome from 30 May to 4 June 2016 and was well attended by the majority of the 116 National Directors, (representing many more countries as some of the directors represent more than one country) unfortunately some few directors were unable to attend because of visa issues.



The Assembly grants a wonderful opportunity to share experiences, challenges and the realities of the specific countries in which we work. It is so special to meet those who represent Catholic life and mission in countries which normally receive less exposure like: East Timor, Taiwan, Indonesia, Iran, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Kazakhstan, amongst others. It opens one's mind to the amazing universality of the Church and its particular mission activity in places where Catholics and other Christian churches are often tiny minorities.

We are thankful to the Lord that this year once again, through the generosity and sacrifices of the faithful throughout the world we were able to distribute in a just manner help for thousands of projects originating in over 1150 dioceses mostly in Asia and Africa. The challenge that we are facing over the past few years is the reality of a constant decrease in funds from donations and an ever increasing need by young Churches for help to properly train local priests, Religious and Lay leaders to

evangelise the people as well as to provide much needed help in the precarious situations of the local people in these regions.

Our biggest challenge is to promote the Universal Missionary activity of the Church in such a way that all the faithful feel involved, enthusiastic and committed and realise the urgency of the evangelisation process throughout the whole world and the need for their active participation and collaboration.



All, without exception, are called to be involved in this missionary activity whether they are from so-called donor countries or from young churches. The Catholic Church in Africa and Asia are going to have to become ever more protagonists in the missionary activity of the Church as increasingly European and other so-called developed countries become more and more secularised and their people declare themselves as belonging to no faith.

The Church in Africa urgently needs to become ever more self-supporting and self-reliant—we need local clergy and Religious. We also need to become truly Missionary by sending Priests and Religious as missionaries and by supporting financially the new mission territories of the world. The time is ripe for the Catholic Church in Southern Africa to take up the challenge and live her Missionary responsibility!

*Gordon Rees*

**Fr. Gordon Rees mccj  
 National (Missio SACBC) PMS Director -  
 South Africa, Botswana & Swaziland**

# "WE NEED TO GROW IN EVANGELICAL PASSION"

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides)

On Saturday, June 4, the Holy Father received in audience the participants at the Assembly of the Pontifical Mission Societies, to whom he addressed the following speech:

Your Eminence, Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood, dear brothers and sisters, We welcome all of you, National Directors of the Pontifical Mission Societies and collaborators of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples. I thank Cardinal Fernando Filoni for the words addressed to me, and all of you for your valuable service to the Church's mission which is to bring the Gospel "to every creature" (Mark 16:15). This year our meeting is taking place in the centenary of the founding of the Pontifical Missionary Union (PMU). The work is inspired by Blessed Paolo Manna, a missionary priest of the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions. Backed by St. Guido Maria Conforti, it was approved by Pope Benedict XV October 31, 1916; and forty years later the Venerable Pius XII qualified it as "Pontifical". Through the intuition of Blessed Paolo Manna and the mediation of the Apostolic See, the Holy Spirit has led the Church to have a greater awareness of her missionary nature, then brought to fruition by the Second Vatican Council.

Bl. Paolo Manna understood very well that forming and educating in the mystery of the Church and its inherent missionary vocation is a purpose that concerns the entire holy People of God, in various states of life and ministries. "Among the tasks of Missionary Union some are of a cultural nature, others of a spiritual nature, others still of a practical and organisational nature. The Missionary Union has the duty to enlighten, to motivate, to act by organising the priests, and through them all the faithful for the missions", as the founder of the Pontifical Missionary Union expressed himself in 1936 in his historic speech, made at the second International PMU Congress.

However, forming bishops and priests for mission did not mean reducing the Pontifical Missionary Union to a simply clerical reality, but supporting the hierarchy in its service to the missionary nature of the Church, which is proper to everyone, in their own way: the faithful and pastors, married and consecrated virgins, the universal Church and particular Churches. By implementing this service with their own charity, Pastors maintain the Church always and everywhere in a state of mission, which is always ultimately the work of God, and belongs, through Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist, to all believers.

Dear National Directors of the Pontifical Mission Societies, **mission makes the Church** and keeps her faithful to the salvific will of God. For this reason, while it is important to worry about the collection and distribution of economic aid that is diligently administered in favor of the many churches and many needy Christians, a service for which I thank you, I urge you to not just limit yourself to that. Mystique is necessary. We need to grow in evangelical passion.

***I fear - I confess - that your work might remain very organised, perfectly organised, but without passion. This also an NGO can do, but you are not an NGO! A mission without the "mystique of the saints and the martyrs will not do - and if something needs to be sacrificed, we sacrifice the organisation, and go forward with the mystique of the saints.***

Today, your missionary Union needs this: the mystique of Saints and Martyrs. And this is the generous work of ongoing formation in the mission that you have to do; which is not only an intellectual course, but inserted within this wave of missionary passion, the witness of martyrs. The recently founded Churches, served by you for their missionary formation, can transmit to the already established Churches, sometimes burdened by their history and a little 'tired, the ardor of young faith, the witness of Christian hope, sustained by the admirable courage of martyrdom. I encourage you to serve with great love the Churches in which, thanks to their martyrs, we witness how the Gospel makes us participants in the life of God, and how they do this by attraction and not by proselytising.

In this Holy Year of Mercy, the missionary zeal that consumed Blessed Paolo Manna, and from which sprang the Pontifical Missionary Union, still continues today to inflame, excite, renew, rethink and reform the service that this work is called to offer to the whole Church. Your Union must not be the same next year as this year it has to change in this direction, it must convert with this missionary passion.

While we thank the Lord for his one hundred years, I hope that the passion for God and for the mission of the Church lead the Pontifical Missionary Union to also rethink its docility to the Holy Spirit for a proper reform of its methods - appropriate reform, that is conversion and reform - and implementation of an authentic renewal for the sake of ongoing formation in the mission of all the Churches. To the Virgin Mary, Queen of the Missions, to the saints Peter and Paul, to St. Conforti and Bl. Paolo Manna we entrust your service with gratitude. I cordially bless you and ask you to please pray for me, so I do not slip into a "blissful tranquility"; so I always have the missionary zeal to move forward. And now let us pray the Angelus together.



Fr. Gordon, PMS National Director, with Pope Francis at the Audience

# DOCTOR TOM CATENA MISSIONARY-DISCIPLE IN SOUTH SUDAN

*After seeing a video clip posted on Facebook about Dr Tom, Catena being awarded an Honorary Doctorate I was very inspired with the Christian witness of this lay person. (See the video clip: [www.facebook.com/DoctorTomCatena](http://www.facebook.com/DoctorTomCatena)). I checked out his details on Google, there is so much—here I share some extracts from what I found. He is a wonderful example of what it means to be a Missionary-Disciple.*

## **Extracts from Wikipedia:**

Tom Catena or Thomas Catena is an American physician who has been practicing in Gidel in the Nuba Mountains of Sudan since 2008.

The region has been an area of active conflict since early 2011, and Catena is the only surgeon for the surrounding population of 750,000 people. Patients frequently travel by foot or hitchhiking for up to a week to reach the Mother of Mercy Hospital, where Catena practices. The hospital's catchment area covers roughly one third of South Kordofan, equivalent in size to the entire country of Austria. Patients visit the hospital for ailments varying from fractures, diarrhea, thyroid disease and cancer but also an increasing number of victims of bombing attacks or malnourishment spurred on by the war.

The hospital has at any one time between 300–350 in-patients, and was subject to bombings in May 2014, although at the time no one was injured. In preparation in case of bombings the compound now has a number of foxholes where patients and staff can flee for the duration.

Catena credits his Catholic faith for his work, and says he is inspired by St. Francis of Assisi. He is known by locals as "Dr. Tom" and is widely respected by the population. A local Muslim chief said of Catena, "He's Jesus Christ", owing to Catena constantly healing the sick, helping the lame walk, and making the blind see.

## **Extracts from: Brown Alumni magazine**

<http://www.browنالumni magazine.com/>

The bombs didn't stop, not even on Christmas night, when they fell less than two miles away. At Mother of Mercy Hospital in the village of Gidel in Sudan's Nuba Mountains, Christian missionary Tom Catena kept working. As the only medical doctor at the only hospital in the entire region, he had little choice.

A war over oil had broken out in 2011 between Sudan and South Sudan, and Catena found himself in the middle of it. "When the fighting started, almost all of the expatriates that were here left," Catena says. "For me, I think the initial thought was that in good conscience I can't leave the hospital. I was the only doctor here. I'm still the only doctor, pretty much for all of the Nuba Mountains. For me, it was fairly simple. I could not live with myself if I just packed up and left the place and left all the people here in that situation."

During the evacuation, Catena's nurse anesthetist left. So did his lab technician and pharmacist. "Anybody that had any training was taking off," Catena says. "I thought, 'Let me just stay around, and I will do my best.'" Two nuns stayed behind to help him. Meanwhile victims from the bombings streamed to the hospital.

Catena, whom other doctors have praised as a modern-



day Albert Schweitzer, praised the local Nuba people, who helped to pick up the slack. Although they had little formal education, they became

Catena's nurses, assisting him as he performed surgery. He says he probably performs more than a thousand operations a year at the hospital. "People survived, much to our disbelief," he says. "That gave us confidence, and we kept going."

For Catena, who lives with his staff in a concrete building near the hospital, a typical day starts at 6:30 with morning Mass. He begins rounds at 7:30. The hospital has 300 beds, but sometimes there are

so many patients they must sleep two or three to a bed. On some days there is no water; on others, no electricity. "You get worn out," he says. "You get tired. You get frustrated."

Catena remains on call throughout the night. With no administrative staff, he also uses the evenings to order supplies and keep patient records up-to-date. Despite the fatigue and the stress, he persists. "Some days are better than others," he says. "I enjoy the work, but some days it is drudgery. Whether terrible things happen or whether we are in danger or there is no food, the idea is we are here to serve. It is as simple as that."

Catena's Christian faith was apparent even at Brown, where Campus Crusade for Christ director Kent Dahlberg was a mentor and spiritual teacher. A mechanical engineering concentrator, Catena excelled academically and was a Rhodes Scholar candidate. He was also a good athlete, an Associated Press honorable mention All-American football player, and a first-team All-Ivy pick as a defensive lineman.

"Quite simply, he's the nicest, most unselfish person I know," says George Reilly. "In college he was my spiritual mentor, my super-tough teammate, my big brother, my comic relief. He led a Bible study in our fraternity and always led by example. He walked the walk."

It was during his fourth year at Duke that he went on his first mission to Kenya. If he had any doubts about what he wanted to do with the rest of his life, they vanished in Kenya. His two months there, he says, "sort of cemented my belief. For me it was such exciting work: you got to do all kinds of different things medically. You were dealing with a population that had very little access to health care. For me this was what medicine was about."

***His challenge to the graduating doctors: "...If you really want fulfillment ... get rid of everything you have... go out and live a life of full and total service to other people. If you do that you will find the rewards are incredible and you will find fulfillment more than you ever could have imagined".***

# NUN ATTACKED IN SOUTH SUDAN DIES FROM GUNSHOT WOUNDS

Juba, South Sudan, May 23, 2016 / 02:58 pm (CNA/EWTN News).-

A Slovak nun and medical doctor died Friday from gunshot wounds she suffered in an attack in Yei, South Sudan last week.

Sister Veronika Terézia Racková was shot and wounded by three soldiers on May 16, and died from her injuries on May 20, said Martin Kramara, spokesperson of the Slovak Bishops Conference.

The sister had been driving a patient to a nearby hospital when she was attacked and shot in the stomach and suffered multiple other injuries, including fractures to her pelvis, according to several reports. She underwent surgery at a local hospital before being flown to Nairobi, Kenya, for further treatment.

A member of the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters (SSpS), Sr. Veronika was the head of St Bakhita's Medical Centre in Yei, South Sudan. She has also served in Italy, the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Indonesia, and Ghana.

"Precious indeed is the life given for Mission," said a tribute post to Sr. Veronika, posted on her order's Facebook page.

"Thank you so much for all your precious prayers and support extended. Though we are in deep pain and sorrow for the death of Sr. Veronika we offer peace, healing and compassion to the people in South Sudan for whom she gave her life, especially those who wounded her. May the love of the Triune GOD be sown in every heart," the message read.

A Mass was celebrated in memory of Sr. Veronika Rackova over the weekend at Yei's Christ the King Cathedral in South Sudan,. Vicar General of Yei Diocese, Fr. Zachariah Angutuwa Sebit told the tearful congregation at the Mass that Sr. Veronika had known she was dying.

According to media reports in South Sudan, three suspects have been arrested in connection with the shooting - soldiers from the 'Joint Military Unit' which provides security for civilians at night.

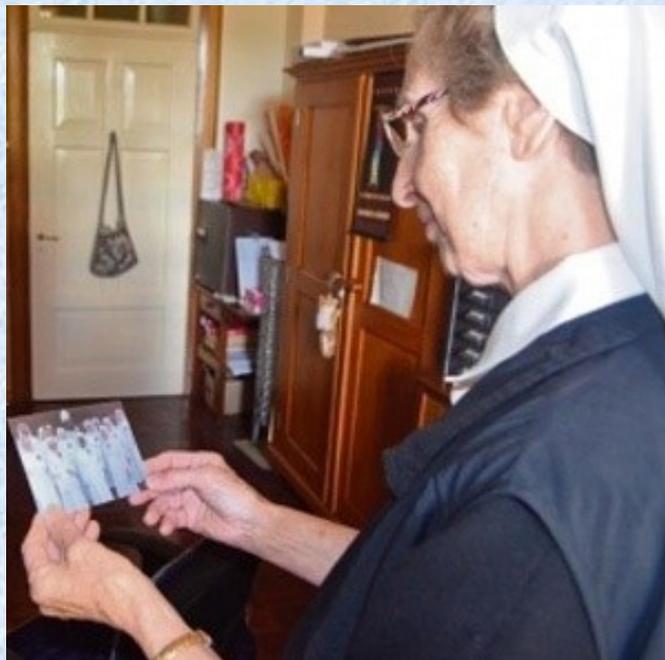
Earlier in the week, Secretary General of the Diocese of Yei, Fr. Emmanuel Sebit told media that he believed the shooting of Sr. Veronika was "a tragic accident," since it happened on the eve of anniversary celebrations marking 30 years of Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLA), and the military had been deployed in large numbers that night to protect civilians.

At the Mass, Bishop of Yei, Erkolano Lodu Tombe, spoke of his sadness at the death of Sr. Veronika, especially at a time when the war-torn country had just begun to take steps towards peace. He also urged the government to punish soldiers who abuse their role while protecting civilians.

Provincial Regional Superior of the SSpS sisters, Sister Maria Jerly told journalists that the death of Sr. Veronika was a tragedy for all her sisters,

especially those working in South Sudan. Still, she reiterated the order's commitment to staying in the area despite the risks.

"It is our hope to continue to serve the needy people of this great nation of Africa despite this unfortunate incident," Sister Jerly said.



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