



A Catechist

A CATECHIST is the legs, the lungs, the brain and the heart of the Missionary priest among the heathens.

He is the precursor, and apostle of the priest and is for the Missionary what John and Peter were to Christ: he is a Missionary, minus the power of the priest, but a Missionary with some power which a foreign priest lacks among pagans.

The Missionary, as Jesus in the Holy Land, wanders around through valleys and mountains, stopping a few days here and preaching a week there, instructing, encouraging, sowing the good seed on the barren field of the pagan's ignorance and heathen morality.

What does the poor Igorote understand about God, His infinite goodness, justice and mercy? What does he know about Christ, the Savior and the practice and belief in His divine doctrine? The Igorote never or rarely studies, reading for the most part is unknown to him, and his untrained brains, hardened by years of intellectual rest and rust, are hardly fit to receive the

sublime godly instructions, which tend to christianize and civilize him to make him worthy of God and Heaven. Little by little and often must he hear and be shown the way to heaven.

The priest who enters a pagan village for the first time is a foreigner. Alas! the poor children of nature have perhaps been despised, perhaps been abused by strangers. They distrust him, and trust only their fellow countrymen whom they know. The Missionary knows all this and previous to his arrival he first sends or brings with him the native catechist.

He is usually a pious man, trained by the priest in virtue and knowledge of the doctrine he has to teach so as to touch the heart and captivate the mind of the heathen. Next he introduces the Father, then all prejudice against the minister of Christ disappears. Little by little the Father may speak. They listen.

But their unretentive memory soon forgets the instruction, when the Father is gone. But the catechist remains. He repeats the words of

the priest. First he is John the Baptist, to announce the priest, then he continues the work of Christ as Peter did when His Master was gone to heaven. Jesus was followed by thousands day and night. The poor Igorote has to give his time during the day to his daily labor. At night he has patience to listen and to learn. The Father may pass a few nights amidst his wondering listeners, but others wait for him on the other slope of the mountain: he must needs go.

But the catechist remains. He stays for weeks and months. He instructs, he gathers the catechumens, prepares them for baptism and finally, thanks to his patience and perseverance, the catechumens can receive the waters of baptism which make them children of God.

In the meantime a child was born in the small town. Poor baby! death accompanied its beginning of life. But before the first and last sleep closed its innocent eyes, the catechist baptized it and opened its way to heaven and eternal happiness.

In the meantime, too, malaria or another disease brought one of the inhabitants to the brink of eternity. The catechist visits him, calls the priest: before death deprives the miserable sick person of life, the catechist and the priest have assured his pardon before God and his glorious resurrection for ever.

The recently baptized unknowingly celebrate some superstitious feast. The catechist shows them the futility of their vain observances and in-

forms the priest.

On the day when the missionary visits his neophytes again, the catechist has prepared them for confession and Communion, he presents the catechumens he instructed at night. He takes care of the priest, adorns the altar, serves the Mass, helps the Christians to pray, presents the children he has instructed for first Communion, and when the priest is gone to some other field in God's vineyard, he repeats his words, reminds the faithful of their duties, calls them together on Sundays in the chapel or in the biggest house, recites with them the rosary, gives the signal for morning and evening prayers and . . . and . . . what does a good catechist not do to double the priest's activity, zeal and success? Churches, hospitals, dispensaries, asylums, necessary though they be, are of secondary importance, when compared with the work of the catechist, for his is essentially the propagation of the Faith.

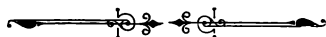
Is it then any wonder that all Missionaries beg for Catechists? The Missionaries are few, the harvest is ripe, the catechists can be multiplied to gather God's crops.

But . . . a catechist must live, must be paid. He does not ask much. Forty pesos a month and a high place in Heaven are all he asks and surely deserves . . . but yet . . . there are the forty pesos to be found. Give me fifty good catechists and I can convert the whole Mountain Province in a few years. Or rather give me the salary of fifty cat-

echists and . . .

And you who shall have given the monthly salary of a catechist, who shall have given in this way to God the souls He thirsted after on Golgotha, do not be afraid to appear

before your Judge, when He calls you: you have given Him what He as Savior died for, He will grant you what as a Christian you live for: heaven multiplied by the number of souls you help to save.



What the Mission of Pugo Has Cost

during the last ten years.

The Pugo mission is one of the best organized missions of the Mountain Province. Its center has a primary school and an intermediate too. The hamlets of Ambangonan, Maoasoas, Cuenca, Llaban and Linapao possess a primary school. Thus Pugo is endowed with six schools. In 1914—1915 425 pupils attended the classes. Every year the number increased and in 1923—1924 the enrollment was 781 pupils. From 1914 till 1924 the exact expenses were ₱ 43,970.27. During the year 1923—1924 they were ₱ 8,397.92. Thus Pugo seems to be a rich parish with many revenues? To be exact: the revenues of the Pugo mission can not keep one Father's body and soul together and there are two Fathers at Pugo. Not even twenty pesos a month enter the mission as revenues to support the Fathers and their schools. Now note that in all these expenses there is not at all included what was paid for the support of the two missionaries, for the building of their house (some of the schoolbuildings of Pugo are in better conditions than the convent) and for the construction of the nice chapel (this alone costs more than 6,000 pesos). In round sums the Pugo mission has cost during these last ten years nearly ₱ 80,000. And where did that enormous sum of money come from? Tuition fees and industrial work produced in 10 years some ₱ 10,000. The rest had to come

and came from Providence, from charity, but, alas! very little from the Philippines. Was the result worth all these expenses? First: the salvation of a single soul is worth much more than all the money in the world: one soul is worth the price of the Blood of Our Savior. When the mission of Pugo was opened, very few of its inhabitants had been baptized, or if they had, they had received little or no instruction. Actually very few heathens remain to be converted. For a population of about 3,000 in 1910, only 84 baptisms and 47 Holy Communion were registered that year. But in 1910 there was only one Catholic school at Pugo. In 1913 there were three Catholic schools and the baptisms numbered that year 212 and the Holy Communion 900. And so the increase went on until 1923 when we can count 6 schools, 16,111 Holy Communion received and 205 baptisms administered.

The number of Holy Communion is the barometer of living faith and devotion in a Christian town. To show how at Pugo Holy Communion are on a rapid increase. I quote here the numbers of the latter years: 1920: 5,900; 1921: 7,820; 1922: 9,635; and 1923: 16,111. Such an increase deserves the blessings of God upon the mission of Pugo, its benefactors and its catholic schools: true factories of practical catholics.