



The Montfortian Mission at Mary, Seat of Wisdom Station in Tanjung Lokang

A Beginning: Faith-Cultural Dialogue between Catholics and Protestants

KALIMANTAN, Indonesia – On Easter Day 2021, in the midst of a resurging pandemic, the Parish priest of the Epiphany Parish sent us to hold a service at the farthest station, which is called the Tanjung Lokang Station. In addition to celebrating the entire Easter mystery, we had the opportunity to have a dialogue and share our faith with several community leaders. From this dialogue and sharing, there are several pastoral concerns that demand real action. First, the dualism between Catholics and Protestants regarding respect for the dead. Second, the limited understanding of the Catholic faith has an impact on the appreciation of the faith which is purely administrative in nature. Again, they are not able to account for the Catholic faith in the face of satire or attacks that are blaming the Catholic faith from Protestant circles. Third, the assistance of early childhood and youth, as well as Catholic Youth, is very minimal. This leaves them with insufficient knowledge of the faith from an early age and lacks interest in being involved in Church activities.

The mission of the Montfortians: 16-21 July 2021

Even though it took place in July, the people's mission plan had been prepared since June starting with the formation of a mission team (a combination of Montfortians and lay people), meetings with several community leaders and making activity proposals. A week before leaving, the meeting was held intensively. 5 important activities are prepared during the mission.

1. Faith-building for early childhood
2. Orang Muda Katolik (Catholic Youth) development
3. Family visits and giving of crosses and rosaries

4. The catechesis on Culture and Faith and the departed spirit Mass at the place of the ancestors
5. Free Medical Treatment
6. Planting of Mission Cross

The journey to Tanjung Lokang Station went smoothly, although the day before leaving, the weather conditions were not friendly. People have been eagerly waiting for the arrival of the mission team.

Activity Dynamics during the Mission

All activities went well. Careful preparation of the team helped each activity run smoothly. Although for the formation of Catholic Youth, their involvement was very minimal. Many were ashamed and chose to leave the village. This is because they feel inferior and insecure. Although only a few attended the training, the team remained enthusiastic. Meanwhile, the development of elementary school-age children was successful and impressive. They wore cross necklaces that were given to them by their companions and asked that activities like this be carried out more often. Likewise, the family visiting team managed to visit all the Catholic families in the station except for a few families who were not there.

The celebration of the Sunday Mass on July 18 went well and lively. There were a good number of people present. Then, together with the people, the mission team went to the place of the ancestors who were buried in rock caves. Traveling through the rushing water of the river, they were not discouraged to meet and gather the people. We set up camp by the river and spent the night with the people with recreational activities. On July 19, 2021, we held a catechesis by the river before celebrating Mass to pray for the spirits of the ancestors. This activity was quite pleasing to the people because it finds the theological strength in which respect for ancestors has no conflict with faith. After the Mass, we paid a visit to the cave where the ancestors of this tribe are buried. Then, we returned to Tanjung Lokang. On July 20, free medical treatment was held targeting all levels of society. Protestants in this village also took part in this activity.

All mission activities were closed with the planting of the Mission Cross which was located in front of the Stasi Church. This celebration is very interesting because it was held lively. The procession to the place of the cross was carried out with inculturation colors, where they wore traditional clothes and traditional tribal attributes. On this occasion, we encouraged them to love Jesus in the Catholic faith without losing the richness of local culture. People are hoping that activities like these will be carried out more often because it uplifts the spirit of the people's faith. They also hoped that at their station, a Cave for Mary would be built. After the mission, it is worth remembering that they are in the care of Mary, the Seat of Wisdom.

The end of the mission: an ongoing work...

On July 21, the mission team returned to Putussibau full of joy. The following activity is to report to the parishioners about the mission activities and some pastoral recommendations to be followed up by the parish priest and the parish pastoral team.

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