

In my mind there are many stories that I have heard since my childhood and later in life. They are beautiful stories that many times moved my soul, mind and heart. This is one of them: I heard a homily that deeply touched me back then and even today. I never thought that one day I would use and share it in my parish bulletin what I heard during my young age sitting in a pew listening to the priest who was preaching that Sunday. If you ask me today how old I was when I heard the story that I will be sharing with you today, I would only say that I was very young, in my teens. This past event shared with you today reflects very well the work and sacrifices of missionaries around the world as we celebrate World Mission Sunday. We pray and support the missionaries around the world proclaiming and living the Gospel by word and hard work. This is the story: Two missionaries from Europe were assigned to a remote and very poor village in Africa. In that poor African village, they took good care of a young man who was very sick. It took many years to cure him and to restore his health back to normal. The young man was not Catholic. He was Muslim. During those years the two missionaries who daily came to take care of the paralyzed young man never spoke to him about Christ. They respected what the young man believed. They were dedicated to their work and fully committed to restore his physical health, but they could not speak to him about their faith and prayer life. Their dedicated and loving work was more powerful than words. The young man knew that they were not Muslims like him, but belonged to another religion unknown to him. After the hard work and many sacrifices, the young man was able to take care of himself and function. The two missionaries having accomplished their goal for helping him had to move into a new area and helping others as they did for the young man. A few days before their departure from that village, the young man said to them: **"I want to become Catholic."** They never expected to hear that statement from him. During those years the young man never asked questions regarding their Christian faith. The two humble and wise missionaries were very surprised. They looked at him and said: **"Do you want to become Catholic because we helped you? We did not help you in order to become Catholic. We helped you because in you we see Christ."** The young man looked at them and simply said: **"I want to become Catholic not because you helped me, but by becoming Catholic I want to discover through you, Christ."** Christ called you, moved and inspired you to leave your own country and come to our poor village and take care of my miserable physical condition. And, this is the reason that I want to become Catholic. "It is very moving to read these lines even today after many years and sharing with you this story that I kept in my mind. It is a unique story that we cannot hear on TV or read in the New York Times. It happened for real and lived in the faith and spirit of Christ by the two missionaries. Through their loving work the young man was moved to discover Christ, to know who is this God who called them and sent them to him. For sure there are many, many other stories more powerful and more moving than the story I shared with you, still every story of missionary faith has its own powerful value, the spirit of Christ. As we pray and support the missionaries around the world today we should look within ourselves to renew the joy of the Gospel and being responsible to announce it with word and deed. It is true, not all of us are called to leave home and country and go to remote and poor areas of the world to announce the Gospel. The responsorial psalm 121 that we read today is very helpful to understand those sacrifices of men and women who rely on the power of Almighty Father and joyfully announce the gospel: "Our help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth." Yes indeed, the two missionaries, and others around the world beg for God's Mercy and place their trust in Him during their unbearable and difficult mission work. We, too, reflecting on the inspiring story, beg for God's mercy for those times that we failed to present the spirit of Christ to others and now we place our trust in Him. We invoke today the intercession of our Blessed mother, our Lady of the Rosary to intercede for all missionaries of the world, and to also be able to joyfully proclaim the Truth of the Gospel.

Our Lady of the Rosary pray for our missionaries around the world! Amen!

