

ONE DAY IN A BENGAL HOSPITAL

Sister Teresa

In the hospital pharmacy hangs a picture of the Savior with a despondent pair burdened by the weight of life. I look at this picture every morning before I start my work. In this picture, everything is summarized, everything that I feel: Jesus, for you and for souls! Then I open the door. The small veranda is full of patients, wretched and afflicted. All eyes are fixed on me with much expectation. Mothers offer me their sick children . . . a picture nearly like the one on the wall. My heart beats joyfully: I am permitted to follow Him, my good Jesus. I am permitted to soothe much pain, comfort and heal, say a few words about the best Friend of the soul. Even in the church, I lead this and that [*sic*]. It is encouraging to see our converts gathered in prayer before the Prisoner of Love.

Many have come from far away. From the village of Balvarava, it is a good three day's walk from here. What do they look like? Full of scabs on their ears and legs. On their backs are whole mountains and valleys of ulcers. Many stayed at home. They cannot come. They are weak from tropical fever. One is in the final throes of tuberculosis. . . Medicines have to be sent to these people. A good amount of time passes until I give each one the necessary medicines and instructions. It is necessary to explain how a particular medicine is used at least three times, and it is necessary to respond to each question at least three times. The wretched people are so unlearned!

In line is a man of low stature, a long black beard, flat nose. With shining eyes he squints like a rascal, and under his long wavy mustache he smiles with satisfaction. He has no desires. But his little interesting wife! Her ears hurt. So, quickly on the operating table, so I can tend to her ears, which have been waiting a long time for a good spray of water. The operating table is very simple: a low chest, in which we received gifts from the homeland several days ago. No matter how simple this chest appeared, nevertheless that wise head did not know that you are supposed to sit on it. She stands in front of the chest as if she were in front of a monster, lifting first her right leg and then her left. I said to her that she should sit down and not stand on the chest. In vain! She is not capable of solving that task. Here an old man will help her. He sits on the

chest and says: "Here, do it this way!" The woman had never sat on anything higher than ground level.

A couple of women are still squatting. With anxiety in their hearts they are waiting for the moment when their children will have their turn. What parent's heart would not tremble? The children's backs are full of purulent ulcers, as large as fists. I should lance, squeeze and bind them. I went to work. A woman called out from a corner: "My husband didn't want to let me go to see you, Mother of Christians. He said angrily that a barber could perform this operation on the child! But I will take the child to Mother, I replied, and escaped from the hut in a fury.

I finished everything and wanted to close the door, when another procession came.

"Where are you from, good people?"

"From Belvarave, Mother of Christians. People who came to you this morning told the whole village about you. Misfortune has forced us to seek your charitable love and goodness."

Certainly, they are in much need because in India people do not go on such a long trip for no reason. I tell them to bring me the children "whom physicians can no longer help. For them I have an excellent medicine." They promise me and keep their promise. I rejoice because I can give them the best medicine, the holy cross, blessed eternity!

(Photograph)

In the Himalayas in Kurseong: Graves of Bengal missionaries

Here is a woman with a broken arm. Then a young man with a knife in the back. Then there is a man with a bundle, from which the little legs of a child are sticking out like to dry twigs. The child is completely weak. I see that he will shortly go to eternity. I hurry for baptismal water. Meanwhile, the man has started to become afraid that we shall not keep the child with us and says: If you do not accept him, I will throw him somewhere in the grass. The jackals certainly will not disdain him. — I feel trepidation in my heart. The poor child! Weak and blind, completely blind! I call the head sister. She, full of charitable love, takes the child in her arms and wraps him in an apron. The child has found another mother. "Who receives one of these children, receives me," said the Divine Friend of children. The blind little boy was the crown of all my work that day.

ON NEW MISSION WORK

Mother Little Teresa of the Child Jesus

I received another new field of work, the school of St. Thérèse. It is located in Calcutta. On the same day, when it was entrusted to me, I went there, to see everything. It is far away. Therefore, I ride in an Indian coach every day. Because the Indian coaches rock like cradles, it is not often that I feel ill but I do not give up because I arrive more quickly by coach to my little black children, and there is so much work.

When they saw me on the first day, the little black children, they asked each other whether I was a goddess or an evil spirit. For them there is nothing in between: who is good to them, they adore as their divinity; and who is peevish to them, they fear as an evil spirit, and only bow to him [sic]. I roll up my sleeves immediately, move the things in the room, take water and a brush in my hands, and begin to scrub the floor. This surprised them very much. They only stared at me because they had never seen that one of the teachers would start with such work, especially when this work is for the lowest class of people in India. However, seeing that I was cheerful and smiling, the little girls started to help me, one after another, and the little boys brought water. In two hours, the dirty room was transformed somewhat into a schoolroom. It was completely clean. It is a long room that once served as a chapel, and now five classes occupy it.

When I came here, I found 520 [sic] children. Today there are already over 300 [sic]. Moreover, I have still another school building, where there are up to 200 children, but that building is like a stable. I can say that I also have a third school, but in a courtyard. When I saw where they sleep and what they eat, it tugged my heart because it is not possible to find greater misery than that. Nonetheless, they are happy. Blessed children's souls!

When we became somewhat acquainted, they were besides themselves with happiness. What did they do? They began to jump and sing around me, until I placed my hand on each one of their dirty little heads. From that day, they have called me only one name, "Ma," which means mother. Oh, how little these souls need to make them happy!

Mothers have begun to bring their little children for me to bless them. I was initially perplexed by this request but in the missions we have to be prepared for everything, and even to give a blessing! I thought to myself how my family at home would smile if they saw what I am doing!

Two of my little pupils invited me to their home, where their sick father lies. They do not have a mother — she died. He was an old man with his three daughters. The oldest did not come to school because she cared for her father. When I reached the threshold of the hut, the old man summoned his last energy and called me to him. The air in the hut was heavy, so that I felt faint. But the old man had a lot to tell me: “O, Ma, I am dying. You are my mother. You are the mother of my children. Guard them and defend them, be theirs when they lose me.” I promised everything to the old man, that I would care for them as a mother and place them in an orphanage. At my words, the old man smiled blissfully from happiness and started blessing me. How happy I was when I saw that Jesus had called me here, to cheer the lives of these most wretched people in the world!

I asked my pupils one day in school whether it was a sin to eat meat on Friday. All of them immediately responded that it was a sin. And I asked them further, whether it is same sin if we eat chicken or pork. The majority of them did not know the answer, and those who thought that they did said after a short pause in a single voice: It is a greater sin to eat pork than chicken, because pork is much heavier!”

One day a little black child came to school, blacker than the blackness of his face Her clothing was torn and dirty. I called him over and rubbed him well with soap. When I had washed and combed him, I dressed her in some old clothing I had received from a benefactor of the mission. Then I sent him back into the classroom. What a miracle! No one recognized him any longer. All of them started to shout, “Ma, Ma, nuton, nuton! Mother, Mother, a new child has come!” I started to laugh from my heart. The little boy felt ashamed and from that day on he was clean when he came to school.

BEAUTIFUL BENGALESE EYES

Sister Little Teresa Bojadis **I.B.M.**

In our Bošontija, our missionaries have much to endure. That evil person gives them countless difficulties but our missionaries joyfully and courageously also bear the heavy cross. I shall not write about that because they have certainly written about it themselves.

I was in Raghampur. Father Poderžaj invited me, to see the girls' school. It is very nice but there is a lot of work. He works with an old Jesuit, Father Mukerdjija. They have a very beautiful school but it is necessary to improve it academically.

Now something about my dear little black children, about little Gouri. She is ten years old. She is not exactly pretty but she has beautiful Bengalese eyes. She is tall and not round. She is poor. Her father and mother work as day workers, in order to feed the family. Gouri is the oldest. She eagerly comes to school and learns well. She has already heard sermons about the Savior often but her parents are pagans, so for now she must be as well.

One day she was not in school. This surprised me because she came to school very eagerly, even several times with a high fever. The next day she came. But what changes! She was all adorned, dressed in beautiful Bengalese clothing. Silver Indian jewelry glittered on her hands and feet. A beautiful necklace around her dusky neck especially stood out. On her forehead was a red dot, the part in her hair had a red line. All of this indicated to me that she had certainly married. I did not wait long. She came of her own accord to me and said: "You know, Mother, I got married yesterday. All of this that I am wearing was given to me by "that one." By the words "that one," she meant her husband. According to Bengalese superstition a woman must never mention the name of her husband, because this would betray him to an evil spirit who could do something malicious to him. "And what is that on your forehead?" I asked pityingly.

"This is a sign that we belong to the gods. And the red line on my head says that I belong to him. As my whole body and everything that is in me must serve God, listen to him and sacrifice for him, thus must I from now on be obedient to him and respect 'that one' as a god."

"Won't you be coming to school anymore?" I asked her further

“Oh, certainly I’ll come because I am still at home. But when “that one” wants, he can take me to his home and do whatever he wants with me.”

“Have you seen ‘that one?’ What is he like? Did you know him from before?”

“No, I still haven’t seen him, not even when we were married. I only know that he has a very heavy hand, because I was very frightened when he placed the red on my head. I thought that I would fall. That’s how heavy his hand is. But my parents know everything. They arranged everything.” With these words, she left the classroom. She had married an older man.

During the school vacation, I saw her father, as he came and brought rice for his Gouri. I was surprised because he had never done something like that before. Gouri used to come to school very hungry and thirsty. I asked him why he had brought Gouri rice that day. He replied: “Ah, Mother, you know that Gouri was married yesterday. Now we have to fatten her up. If she is not well fattened, her husband will demand that we return the money that he paid for her.”

“And how much did you receive for her? For how much did you sell her?” I ask.

“Ten rupees,” he replied. In our currency, that is 200 dinars. Thus, poor beautiful Gouri is not worth even as much as a cow costs in our country, I think with pain.

After several weeks had passed, Gouri no longer came to school. I immediately thought that she had to go to her husband. Then her father and mother came, threw themselves down at my feet, and started to cry and sob. I asked them what was the matter. Had someone died? How is Gouri?

“Ah, Mother, black fate! A black fate has befallen her!”

“And what happened to her?” I ask.

“Ah, Mother, Mother, a black fate has befallen our child!”

I ask them again, because a Bengali never shows his pain without a long introduction. “Tell me, how is Gouri?”

At that her father rose and started to speak: “Her husband came for her and took her, to show her to his relatives. He promised that he would return her home the same day but they kept her. They kept her in one room. My Gouri cries day and night, and what is even worse, they did not pay me the money and they are already keeping her. Mother, save my child!”

It is not good at all for me to interfere in these affairs and their pagan customs, I thought, because this could have very unpleasant repercussions according to Indian law. Therefore, I turned to him and

said: "Why don't you go to the police and report her? They can do far more than I can. Go and explain the whole matter to them!" He listened to me and went.

Several days later, my little Gouri was back in school. She was no longer so cheerful. Her face was pale. Her head hung down sadly. On her body there were wounds in many places. I asked her, what these wounds meant. She replied: "'That one' and his mother beat me terribly. They wanted to see whether I am strong enough. When they saw that I am not, that I still bear blows with difficulty, they let me go home again." My poor Gouri! Such a little, innocent flower and already you are enveloped in the black prison of inhumane slavery. I would rather see you dead than in the hands of those cruel pagans!

She comes to school regularly again. I don't know how long she will come because she has started to be tormented by the coughing and fever of tuberculosis. She is failing rapidly. I believe that this little flower will soon wilt. Pray to Jesus that I shall be able to baptize her before her sad life ends.

TEKMAJA'S SMILE AND PAIN

Mother Teresa

Last time, I wrote about the little pagan Gouri. Today I wish to acquaint you with my little pupil, Tekmaja. She is a pagan and very unfortunate, because her parents are terribly poor. Most often she is starving and eats refuse that they gather on the streets of the large city of Calcutta. Besides that, whenever I see her, even when she is extremely hungry, she is always smiling. Although she is a pagan, little Tekmaja loves Jesus very much. Her little heart does not only want food but far more, for her father and mother to know Jesus. That is why she learns all the prayers and catechism in school diligently. She knows them by heart, without a single error. At home she repeats aloud what she has learned in school, for everyone to hear, because in this guileless manner she wants to teach other pagans.

Her sorrow was great because her father would not stop drinking brandy. She told me how her father had come home drunk one day and that this had caused her heart great pain. She did not say anything but stayed up all night and prayed before her cross, that she always wore hidden on her belt. She prayed fervently to the dear Savior, for him to take pity on her father and turn him away from drunkenness. In the morning before her father left for work, little Tekmaja went up to him and in her childish way she said: "Dear father, if you drink as you did yesterday, God will punish you. This hurts me very much because I love you with my whole soul!" — And the drunkard, who nearly never came home sober, stopped drinking from that day.

Now little Tekmaja instructs her father in the holy faith every morning. She is teaching him morning and evening prayers. He already knows everything about Jesus so that little Tekmaja has even shown him her secret little cross and has told him much about the crucified Jesus. Thus Tekmaja, the little pagan, is acting like a genuine missionary. However, she must suffer much because only through suffering and sacrifices are souls converted.

A couple of days ago, a terrible ulcer appeared on her face, the size of an egg, and very hard. I did not know what to do, how to help her, because she was suffering a lot. I treated her the way I knew how and could. When the ulcer was ripe, she told me to squeeze it and not to think about her pain at all. That is what I did. What little Tekmaja suffered, only she knows. While I squeezed the large ulcer, she did not utter a cry

of pain or shed a little tear but from her lips I only heard the little prayer: “Dear Jesus, I love you. Let me suffer for you as you have suffered for me!” A blessed smile glowed on her face because she was convinced that with these sufferings she would convert her father and mother. Please remember and pray that my little Tekmaja will convert her father first, because then he will convert her whole family.

WHAT DOES SISTER TERESA DO?

It was before I took my final vows. One day a little black boy came to me, all pale and sad. He asked me if I was going to come back to them because he heard that I was going to become “Mother.” Finally, he started to cry and said to me through his tears: “Oh, don’t, don’t become ‘Mother’!” I clasped him to myself: “What is it, my little one? Don’t be afraid. I shall return and will always remain your ‘Ma.’” — Then the little black boy cheered up again and ran to the playground. — When I returned, they all wanted to see whether I was still the same “Ma” and adorned me with wreaths. I smile from my heart because they finally concluded that I was the same, because I still smile as before.

An Englishman visited me at the school and marveled at the large number of children. In two large rooms, I have 375 of them. You can imagine what it looks like. That day they were writing their weekly assignment, which would determine the color of the award paper they would receive. For the best assignments they receive a red paper, for a good assignment a yellow paper, and for a poor assignment dark blue. Naturally, there is a genuine competition here because they must show the papers to their parents. — During the visit, perfect silence prevailed in the school. The gentleman was very surprised by this and asked me what punishment I use, how I maintain such order. “The greatest punishment for them is when don’t look at them and let them do whatever they want. Then they are convinced that they have disappointed me. What will blows do for them? They have enough of that at home, in abundance!” — The Protestant smiled but finally said to me: “The children must love you, and you love them, so that in this way you are working for their good.”

Six of my students received diplomas for sewing. All of them passed with the highest marks, and one even received a silver medal. — Now I am preparing another ten for sewing. I hope that they will work well because at least they will be able to earn their own bread later.

Last December it was very lively in the school. I announced a written examination from the Catechism. They will receive three questions from the New Testament and three from the Old Testament. Oh, how they studied! At home, on the street, in church and on the playground, and even at night under the moonlight. Finally the day of the examination came. In the school there was silence. All of them prayed and crossed themselves for the hundredth time and eagerly looked toward the door. When I came in, they all rose. Then I assign questions to them.

After prayer, they begin to write. In two and half hours, the bell rings. The assignments were completed. All of them ran to me: “Ma, I knew everything, I didn’t make a single mistake” etc.

A month later, the archbishop came to our school. Little Paulina, who answered the best, received a large silver cross. St. Mary’s received the second prize and our Raghampur received the third prize.

Little Dorothy in heaven. It was in May. Little Dorothy became ill. She had two ulcers on her head. She suffered greatly but was calm and endured everything cheerfully for Jesus. The physician performed an operation but did not succeed because he failed to notice that a blood vessel had ruptured. The child immediately lost consciousness and I left her, nearly dead. I prayed to the good God to take her to himself as soon as possible. My prayers were joined by those of the entire school. Then there was a miracle! Dorothy regained consciousness, received Jesus and the Last Rites, and then flew to heaven. Her parents are bearing their pain in a Christian way. A couple of months ago, they lost Theresia, the darling of the family, and now Dorothy has left them. However, they know that they now have two angels in heaven.

A scorpion in the school. It is Saturday. They are all working diligently because each wants his or her classroom to be the cleanest. Suddenly a horrible scream is heard. I hurry to see what’s the matter. A terrible scorpion is hanging from the hand of a child, and the child is screaming like crazy. I quickly take the child by the hand and shake the poisonous animal off him. Then I kill the scorpion with a broom. — However, the child has become pale. The poison has started to work. Since I have nothing special for such a case, I take the insides of the scorpion and place them on the wound. In half an hour, the child was completely healthy. Thus the same scorpion served as an antidote, in order to save the child from certain death.

When it rains. The streets and our school are under water. However, the children know that their “Ma” is waiting for them and they come. How many times have we been as wet as mice? This has been the occasion of many happy hours because my little ones know about little sacrifices. Sometimes they receive a small coin to purchase what they want during recess. However, although they do not eat until evening, they make little sacrifices and save money for the missions. Thus, they have saved 25 dinars. With this we were able to purchase one hundred little catechisms and sent them to Father Mesarić for new converts. Thus, poor as they are, they sacrifice their little wealth for the missions.

What did I see? Every Sunday I visit the poor in the Calcutta caves. I cannot help them because I have nothing but I go in order to cheer them up. Last time, approximately twenty little ones were waiting

for their “Ma.” When they saw me, they ran up to meet me, jumping on one leg. Twelve families were living in this “para,” as they call their collective house. Each family has only one room, 2 meters in length and 1.5 meters in width. The door is so narrow that I could hardly enter and the ceiling so low that I could not stand straight. And now, imagine! — For this prison, these poor people must pay 4 s. (80 dinars)! If they do not pay on time, they are thrown on the street. Now I do not wonder why my poor little ones love their school so much, and why so many of them are suffering from tuberculosis. A poor mother did not utter a word of complaint about her poverty. It was terribly hard for me but at the same time I was very happy when I saw that they were happy that I had come to see them.

Finally, one mother said to me: “O, Ma, come again! Your smile brought sunshine into this house!” On my return, I thought: “O, God. It is so easy to make them happy! Give me the strength to always be a light of their lives, and thus to bring all of them to you!”

TWO UNUSUAL VIGNETTES

Mother Little Teresa of the Child Jesus — Calcutta

Two weeks ago, I took our schoolchildren to Holy Mass at the Church of St. Teresa. We had to go there on foot. On our return trip, something very unpleasant and ghastly occurred. I was alone with 180 little girls, dressed in white suits with red borders. The heat was quite unbearable. My little umbrella/parasol was actually hot. However, something is better than nothing!

We were just passing nearby the police station when we saw a water buffalo tied up in the immediate vicinity of the building. Never in my life did I see such a colossal animal. He was as black as the Evil One. Suddenly, he started to roar and bellow. He tugged at his ropes wildly. The red color on the suits of the little girls must have provoked him. Although I was greatly frightened because of the children, I did not, thank God, lose presence of spirit. I stood and shouted at the girls, as well as I could, for them to throw themselves down on the ground. In a second, all of them lay on the ground as if they had been mown down. Then the water buffalo jerked, broke his ropes and ran toward me, when he could not attack the children. He struck me so hard with his powerful head that I flew to the other side of the road and fell down. Like a true Albanian woman, I quickly got up, grabbed my umbrella/parasol, and went after the raging water buffalo. Now it was his turn to escape from the blows of my umbrella/parasol. Meanwhile, a crowd of people had gathered on the street. Several men came out of the police station with hoes and ropes. Over twenty men had to struggle in order to catch and tie that water buffalo, which had gone berserk.

Collecting the children, I entered the police station. The girls were trembling from fright. Although of dark complexion, it could be seen that their faces had turned green from such great fright. They looked at me with trepidation. First we sat down, until the first wave of fear had passed. After that, I caught the police inspector and gave him a good lesson in the Bengalese language, to which he did not respond with a single syllable. He just stared at me in surprise. Whether he was marveling at my daring or fearlessness was all the same to me. He finally mumbled some apology and said that something like that would not happen again. He was aware that he had not performed his duties. After that, I turned my back on him and led the excited little girls away.

Nothing happened to a single one of the little girls, except that one had broken her glasses.

The same day, the police inspector telephoned Mother Superior, to congratulate the sister who had behaved so bravely ... Thank you very much!

But that day, there was another misfortune. For a change, it happened at night. The girls had gone to bed and I was expecting some of them to call out in their sleep, reliving the events of today's struggle with the bull. Precisely at one in the morning, a terrible cry arose from the bedroom. I immediately dressed and ran to see what was the matter. As soon as they saw me, the children ran to me in the dark, crying, screaming and shaking. In unison, they shouted that a man had gotten into the bedroom. I gathered all my strength and in a strong voice commanded each girl to go to her own bed. In a moment, everything was quiet. I hurried to the next bedroom, where I saw a man running toward the exit. When I got to the door, the darkness had already swallowed him up. In his haste, the poor man had lost a bundle with some of his official papers, from which I learned his address.

The police station was informed. The police inspector himself came, my old "acquaintance" from the water buffalo incident. As soon as he saw me, he started bowing to the ground. He, a pagan, greeted me with our Christian greeting: *Djizu pronam* — Praise be to Jesus. The children recognized him immediately and were happy. The poor intruder served his sentence and perhaps decided that he would not try to visit us at night, at least as long as I am here. Do not think that these events are entertaining to me. I don't want any more because they get on my nerves, which I really need in the difficult training and education of the young natives of this impoverished and abandoned Bengalese nation.

Blagovijest, Year 1, No. 1, Skopje, March 25, 1928, p. 4

Lecture. For the purpose of educating the Catholic people, experts will hold lectures on Sunday afternoons. Prof. Grafenauer will present a lecture on SS. Cyril and Methodius and another on **Slovenifi**, Mr. Andrej Tumpej, a missionary, will speak about the physical exertions of missionaries, Dr. Meršol about tuberculosis and other contagious diseases. Mr. Anton Smerdel will conduct his first lecture on the difficult circumstances and persecutions of Catholics in Mexico, the second on Dalmatia and the third on Ancient Greek and Roman artworks.

However, pictures also arrived of some of the most important Mexican martyrs, which will adorn our auditorium, besides the picture of St. Teresa.

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[Our Missionary])

Blagovest on Mother Teresa

An eighteen-year-old girl from Skopje, whose Albanian name Gondja (Rose) is well known to you, became a nun and received the name of Little Teresa. Until last autumn, she helped in Skopje with church singing, won the admiration of her colleagues in the Marian Society for the Assistance of Christian Missions, rehearsed little girls and was a model student at the girls' secondary school there. On December 9, 1928, traveling by boat across the Mediterranean Sea, she wrote to the readers of *Blagovest* and presented her pious sentiments in a simple letter. We present a short excerpt from this letter now, when we can also state her precise address: Mother Teresa Bojadjij, Noviciate, Loreto Convent, Darjeeling, British India. May this excerpt and letter provide incentive to Catholic youth in Skopje, particularly those who know the words: sacrifice yourself!

Dear Readers,

So that you don't think perhaps that I have forgotten you in my happiness, I am joyfully writing to you today. Two months have already passed since I left Skopje and set out to follow the voice of God, who had called me for so long. I was in Dublin for seven weeks, where I became acquainted with my future religious life and also prepared for the missions. The day of the journey arrived that I had anticipated so eagerly. I set out for my new homeland, legendary India. . . (She describes the boat and life on the boat). A Slovenian woman and three English women are going with me . . . (She describes the journey)

*I leave my acquaintances,
I leave my family and home,
My heart pulls me,
To serve my Christ.*

*O, farewell, dear Mother,
Farewell to all the rest,
I am more impelled by force
Toward dazzling India . . .*

*The boat moves slowly,
Cutting the waves.
The eye sees the dear European shores
For the last time.*

*On the boat is a bold,
Cheerful, calm face,
Christ's happy little
New bride.*

*In her hand an iron cross
On which the Savior hangs.
Her soul is ready to
Offer a great sacrifice that hour.*

*Receive, God, this sacrifice
As a sign of my love!
Help your creature
To glorify your name!*

*In return, I only pray to you
O most good Father of ours,
Give me one, at least one
Of those souls — You already know!*

*And tiny, pure as summer dew
Hot tears silently flow,
Hot tears silently flow,
To confirm and sanctify
The great sacrifice offered.*

Pray for your missionary, for Jesus to help her to save as many immortal souls as possible from the darkness of heresy.

Yours in Jesus,
Missionary