Columns
Spirituality



Children from the Missionary Childhood and Adolescence movement participate in the Easter celebration at the São Rafael Arcanjo Parish in Chibututuine, in the Archdiocese of Maputo, Mozambique, on April 26, 2025. (Courtesy of Celso Vaz)



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These days of mission in Mozambique, I have felt a deep tenderness as I carefully observe the way the youngest ones live their faith. At the Eucharist, the children's dancing and their way of praying have challenged my relationship with God. I found myself wondering why, as we grow older, we gradually drift away from the faith that was taking shape within us when we were children.

As I reflected on the word of God these days, I tried to do so through what I see in the children: relating to God with spontaneity, affection, tenderness, trust and joy. I kept thinking of one child in particular who participates in the Missionary Childhood and Adolescence movement and in catechesis, and who often dances during eucharistic celebrations.

> The faith of the children has deeply moved me. As I listen to their spontaneous prayers, asking the Lord for gifts of peace, bread, work and fraternity, I perceive a profound social consciousness, even at such a young age.
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Holy Spirit Missionary Sr. Carolina Lizárraga greets a girl after Sunday Mass at St. Anthony Parish in the Archdiocese of Maputo, Mozambique, April 27, 2025. (Courtesy of Edeltrudis Reli)

Every time this 10-year-old boy sees me, he runs to hug me and stays in my arms for a long while. I feel his embrace full of love and, at the same time, I sense that he

is seeking protection. If we meet three times in the same place, I receive that same embrace three times, always with the same intensity of tenderness. I respond in return with affection and gentleness.

I notice in him a certain lack of affection. In fact, when I have asked him on a few occasions about his mother or father, he quickly replies, "At home," and changes the subject. I understood that he did not want to talk about them, so I did not insist. Sometimes even I do not like answering questions that make me uncomfortable.

During these days, in my personal prayer, I have tried to let my encounter with God be free of concepts or ideas that so often distance me from God's real presence. I seek a living God, close to the love I offer him — not only in the solitude of prayer, but also in my encounters with others, especially with children: the smallest, the most vulnerable, transparent, sensitive and innocent.



Members of the Missionary Childhood and Adolescence movement gather at the Santa Isabel de Taninga Parish in the Archdiocese of Maputo, Mozambique, on May 17, 2025. (Courtesy of Celso Vaz)

The tenderness I have experienced while contemplating the faith of children has deeply moved me. As I listen to their spontaneous prayers, asking the Lord for gifts of peace, bread, work and fraternity for humanity, I perceive a profound social consciousness, even at such a young age. Above all, they reveal a faith in God as the giver of goods that money cannot buy.

Many children here live in situations of social injustice. Their basic needs are often unmet. And yet, when they express their faith, 95% of the children with whom I share my life do so with joy, tenderness, and trust in the God of Jesus — the God who walks, step by step, through the history of humanity.

As a grace, I ask God to give me the ability to increase my faith as if my heart were that of a child. A fragment of a poem-prayer by the Spanish writer and philosopher Miguel de Unamuno echoes within me:

> Widen the door, Father, for I cannot pass;
> you made it for children, and I have grown despite myself.
> If you do not widen the door, then make me small, I beg you;
> return me to that blessed age when living is dreaming.

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