

## ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S MISSION AND ITS WORK

The missionary spirit of our Bishop brought us to spread the Gospel of the Lord in the mountains of our enchanted island, where few or none missionary work was done by the Roman Catholic Church, who had been working in Puerto Rico since its discovery.

In the year 1935, the Bishop bought a plot of land, in a ward of the town of Lares, called Bartolo. It is a place in the most highest part of the island and about its center. On its fertile mountains grows the luxuriant coffee and bananas plantations, crossed by the road coming from Yauco to Lares. Near it, at Km. 35, the travelers can see St. Bartholomew's Chapel.

As soon as this mission was established, I fixed my residence in the same jurisdiction and started the missionary work, visiting all the inhabitants of the surroundings. I have to ride on horseback to visit the most remote places of the ward where our missionary services are demanded.

The news of the establishment of our church in this place have been rapidly spread and the enthusiasm grows among the people. Many baptisms and marriages have been celebrated Sunday after Sunday since that date.

The Religious Education is increasing gradually. We have an enrollment of more than one hundred adults and children at the present time in our Sunday School.

Also we have organized societies for the young people to develop their social and moral customs.

A year after we started our work, forty-one people received the Holy Sacrament of the Confirmation and a new group of sixty-one candidates were confirmed and received as communicants of our church on December 11, 1938.

St. Bartholomew's Mission has two more Missionary Centers. I visit one of them occasionally to have religious services and to administer the Holy Sacraments. This is about six Kms. from our church. In that center in one day I administered the Holy Baptism to twenty-three children. The other center, five Kms. apart, is where the Puerto Rico Relief Administration has a Communal Center. It is a community consisting of two hundred fifty families, each one living in three acres of land and a small house. We have regular services in this mission.

The living condition of the people in this region of the island is very poor. Their salaries consist of fifty cents per day. Most of them has large families. So, they earn less than what they need for their food and shelter.

The nearest town is Lares, at a distance of twenty-two Kms. We have to go there for physician, medicines, and other needs. With our social work we help the congregation with clothing, medicine and other services.

The priest has to serve as a physician, lawyer, judge and teacher. The work is quite complicated. For this social work we have not special appropriation. The work is carried on personally with the help of my wife.

We have been cut and cut not bearing in mind that the figures are insignificant as compared with the great missionary work that is being done in foreign lands.

Great are the encouragements, the enthusiasms and the inspiration which shows that the light of Jesus Christ is burning everywhere. The discontinuation of the christian work will be painful as our love for every christian encreases.

Rafael D. Pagán

The Rev. Rafael D. Pagán,  
(Priest in Charge)

July 21, 1939,  
Lares, P. R.