

#### Spiritual Discernment

That the Church may appreciate the urgency of formation in spiritual discernment, both on the personal and community levels.

*During Lent, we are each invited to pray to discern God's call in our own lives and pray that the Church around the world will listen and discern God's will.*

Bolivia is a landlocked country in the middle of South America and also the poorest. It is the home to beautiful rain forests in the east and the Andes Mountains in the west. It is rich in natural resources and has a long history of mining and farming.

Bolivians can trace their history to the Incan Empire which lasted until 1533 when they were conquered by the Spanish. In 1545, silver was discovered and the Spanish forced the native people to work in the mines where many died from harsh conditions and disease.

After 300 years of foreign rule, the Bolivians achieved independence.

The Catholic Church accompanied the Spanish colonizers. Many were baptized and the Church grew. After independence, the Church separated from colonial ways and entered a period of reform which is evident today.

Now, Bolivia is stable and growing and the Church plays a vital role in all parts of society.



### Promoting Knowledge of Faith

#### God's Word for Mission

*“Solid food is for the mature, for those whose faculties are trained by practice to discern good from evil. Therefore, let us leave behind the basic teaching about Christ and advance to maturity...” (Hebrews 5:14-6:1).*

*“We have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the things freely given us by God. And we speak about them...with words taught by the Spirit describing spiritual realities in spiritual terms” (1Corinthians 2:12-14).*

#### A Saint for Mission: St. Peter Claver



A native of Spain, young Jesuit Peter Claver discerned a missionary call to the Americas and left his homeland forever in 1610 landing in Cartagena (today known as Colombia). Peter quickly learned that Cartagena was a chief center for the slave trade in the Americas and saw tens of thousands of African slaves coming into the port after suffering conditions so foul and inhuman that an estimated 1/3 of all slaves died during the journey.

Peter discerned his mission calling to devote himself to the service of the slaves and declared himself “the slave of the Negroes forever.” As each slave ship entered the port, Peter Claver moved into the hold of the ship to meet the exhausted passengers and offer them food, drink, medicine and respect of their human dignity. He tried to encourage them with words of God's love and basic teachings of Christ. During the 40 years of his ministry, Claver baptized an estimated 300,000 slaves.

Beyond caring for slaves, Claver also became a moral force for good by preaching in city squares and giving teachings to sailors and traders to learn the ways of Christ. Eventually he became ill and was forced to be inactive. During that time, Claver was mostly neglected for four years until he died on September 8, 1654. Peter Claver was canonized a saint in 1888 and became the patron saint of African Americans, African missions and racial justice. His feast day is September 8th.

## Rights and Responsibilities



Silver Mining in Bolivia

The Catholic Church teaches that all human beings have basic rights and a right to those things required for human decency. That means that each person has the right to things that create proper development such as food, clothing, shelter, medical care and school. With these rights come responsibilities such as supporting one's family and giving to the community.

There can be circumstances when difficult choices must be made to do what is responsible even if it means sacrificing one's own rights. In many countries, such as Bolivia, children are sometimes urged to work in dangerous conditions to earn money for their families, giving up the right to attend school for a better life.

Agustin Leandro is a young boy who must sacrifice his own rights to attend school and pursue a better life in order to help his mother and siblings. After his father died from mining, Agustin began working in what is called "one of the most dangerous mines on earth": a silver mine in Bolivia.

Fortunately, Agustin has been able to quit the dangerous mining work and now gives tours to visitors showing them the terrible working conditions miners face. Agustin knows that he must continue to give mine tours even though it means abandoning his right to receive a formal education. His brother, Santiago, who also works in the silver mine with Agustin to help the family, must continue and ignore school, too.

## Agustin Leandro: Child Labor in Dangerous Silver Mines in Bolivia



Watch the video about Agustin Leandro:

1. What is the difficult choice that many children in the world, such as Agustin and his brother, face each day?
2. What are some of the rights children working in mines of Bolivia have sacrificed to support their families?
3. Are you surprised at the young age of children who work in the mines?
4. After learning about Agustin and his brother, how might their example change your attitude about doing your household chores as a responsible family member?

## Mission Petitions

- ✚ Let us pray that all Christians may discern the Lord's call in their own lives.
- ✚ Let us pray for the gift of the Spirit to help us discern good from evil as we make decisions in our lives.
- ✚ Let us pray that the people of Bolivia will be guided by a spirit of peace and love and service in all things.
- ✚ Let us pray for those who work in harsh and inhuman conditions to support their families. May they receive relief and be treated with greater dignity and justice.

Dear Lord,  
You made me in your image and likeness and, out of love, you sent Jesus to show me how to love you and my neighbor. Help me to discern my calling and to learn your will for my life in what I say and what I do. In Jesus' name, I pray.  
Amen