Missionary Childhood in

Brazil

The Federative Republic of Brazil is located in eastern South America and borders the Atlantic Ocean. It is the largest country on that continent. The capital city is Brasilia and the official language is Portuguese. Brazil is the only country in the Americas to have Portuguese as it official language.

The famous Christ the Redeemer statue towers over the city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

It is likely that the country's name comes from the Portuguese word for brazilwood, a tree that once grew in large amounts along the coastline. Indigenous peoples cut and sold this red wood to European (mostly Portuguese) traders for Western consumer goods. These sailors referred to the country as "land of Brazil" (Terra do Brasil) because of this commerce. Eventually, this name was shortened and became adopted as the country's name: Brazil.

Most Brazilians live along or relatively near the coastal area; the majority of the population lives around the three largest cities, Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo, and Brasilia.

About 65% of Brazilians are Catholic giving it the world's largest population of Catholics. Of those that can be contacted, most of the rest of the country identifies themselves as some other Christian denomination.

According to a report in 2007 by the National Indian Foundation, Brazil is believed to have the largest number of un-contacted peoples in the world. There could be as many as 67 different tribes living in multiple regions of Brazil who have no contact with the outside world. Imagine the cultures of which we yet have no knowledge!

Brazilians love soccer—which they call football! Currently, their men's national team is second in the world to Germany. Their women's team is ranked eighth, up a spot from last year.

The Pontifical Mission Societies in Brazil

The Vila Alianca Slums are part of the city of Rio de Janeiro. The people there live on the margins of society with very little access to government education or health care programs. Father Andrade is a local priest at the Infant Jesus of Prague Parish. He fights for the rights of the people while he works to make sure the children of the slum learn the basics of reading and writing. The parish has an outreach program for families who are in the most desperate need.

One of those families includes a little boy named Daniel. He lives with his parents and his seven brothers and two sisters. His mother does not work because some of Daniel's little brothers and sisters still need her at home. His father works occasionally, when he can find an odd job or two.

Daniel is lucky enough to go to a local school but does not have receive a meal there. He is often hungry and sick. Father Andrade visited the family to let them know that parishioners would be able to deliver a weekly food basket, containing black beans, rice, sugar, salt and corn powder. thanks to funds from the Pontifical Mission Societies—parent organization of the Missionary Childhood Association. The family was very grateful.

Father Andrade writes, "Thank you dear people for helping me to care for the little ones in my parish!"

The local parish's faith formation is an essential part of the children's lives. Recently, Father was able to prepare 120 children for the First Holy Communion. He says, "It was a great effort of the parish to make sure they were all dressed in the traditional white clothes.

Many families are so poor that they do not own 'good clothes'. Many in my parish supplied the shirts and dresses and the children looked wonderful.

Thanks to Missionary Childhood we are able to regularly bring the children here every Sunday to learn about their faith and to learn how to read and write. It is so important. You cannot stand up for yourself if you cannot read. So thanks for your support. God bless you all."

With every prayer and every sacrifice, members of the Missionary Childhood Association worldwide are making a difference for their brothers and sisters in Christ!

*Thanks to PMS Australia—Catholic Mission—for the pictures and story. We are One Family in Mission!