Catholics in Albania have lived through very difficult times, even though the first Apostles of Jesus brought the Faith to them. The Communist government, which governed Albania for 45 years, sought to abolish all religion from the country. In 1967, all churches were closed down and it was forbidden to practice Christianity or show that you were Catholic in any way. Even speaking about Jesus or carrying a Rosary was not allowed.

Albania declared itself the first Atheistic State—the first country not to believe in God at ALL. Every Missionary was forced to leave Albania.

During this time, there were many brave Catholics who wanted to protect their faith and show their love for Christ. They gathered Mass in hidden places, willing to risk their life just so they could worship God. Many people were martyred, dying for their faith in Christ and for being faithful to Him. Several died saying, “Long live Christ the King! Long live Albania!” Finally In 1990 the communist government in Albania collapsed; people were free to practice their Religion in public again. Missionaries were able to come back to Albania and little by little the churches are being rebuilt and growing again.

The following words are those of a Missionary in Albania as she remembers the beginning of her Orders’ Mission in Albania:

“The way to the little village of Kalivaç, situated in the middle of the mountains, was long and nothing more than a dirt road up, which crossed a river that did not always follow its course. Arriving in Kalivaç, we realized that the town consisted of a school, a little store, the Immaculate Heart of Mary parish, a small dispensary and the house of the Sisters. Then between the mountains, far in the distance you could see a little house and then another. The work of the Sisters was mainly to help with parish activities, and if possible, to work in the dispensary. Despite not knowing the language, they began with Catechism classes. The children who attended the school came walking from far away. Many of them had to cross the river, sometimes in very low temperatures, on foot, without shoes.

At the end of school hours, they would come to our house to learn about Jesus. It was beautiful to see their enthusiasm on arrival, despite having been at school all morning. Their school was in bad repair, to the point that many of the classrooms did not have glass in the windows, and the floor was missing in various places. One couldn’t imagine spending all day there learning. And then, since our house did not have room for all of them, some of the classes were outside [in the freezing cold]. Nevertheless each child remained attentive to the words of the Religious Sisters.

I should point out that the children, like most of the Albanian people, were weather beaten and suffered. They did not, however, complain. Whether inclement weather, cold or windy, hard work, absence of electricity [they could only count on this a few hours per day], the unpredictability of having food, etc., they continued to learn about Jesus. And— it impressive how they treated the Missionaries, seeking to give them the best that they had, even in the midst of their poverty. It was normal to see them come to our house to give us goat cheese, milk, or some cabbages. They were very generous and very respectful of those sent by God.

Now it’s your turn!
† Pray for the Missionaries and those they are serving in Albania
† Imitate Mother Teresa’s love for the poor and try to see Jesus in every person
† Make a sacrifice to Jesus and do not complain when it is cold outside [the children in Albania oftentimes do not even have heat in their houses].
† Pray for all Christians who can not live their faith freely because of the government of their countries

Excerpts from Sister Crucified of the Lord and the Virgin of Matara, Diocese of Washington