

Mercedarian Missionaries of Berriz

100 years

Celebration of the
centennial of the
first foundations



100.mmberriz.org



Crossing borders to give life

**“The Spirit of Redemption
has made us missionaries”**

(Margarita M. López de Maturana)

What are we celebrating?

There are events so unexpected and surprising that, from a faith perspective, they leave us convinced that they were made possible only by the Spirit—the Ruah of God—the creator who continually brings newness into our lives and into history.

We, the Mercedarian Missionary of Berriz Family, recognize this movement in the process that, in a few years, led to the transformation of the Mercedarian Monastery of La Vera Cruz in Berriz —hidden in the mountains of Vizcaya since 1541— into a missionary institute now incarnate on all five continents.

That movement began little by little in the heart of Margarita María López de Maturana, when, in her early years as a contemplative nun, she cherished a strong desire to make Jesus known “to those whom He has entrusted to me, which is the whole world” (1912). That desire took root like a seed, nourished by encounters with religious from distant lands and by the missionary movement, which was gaining new vigor in the Church during the early decades of the 20th century.

From Margarita’s heart, that dynamism overflowed to the students at the Berriz Boarding School, to whose education she devoted her best abilities and energies.

Enthusiasm for the missions filled classrooms and hallways, giving rise to the Mercedarian Missionary Youth, the first youth missionary association in Spain.

And from there, the missionary impulse—the impulse of the Spirit—reached the heart of that community of women who knew how to listen to God in the signs of the times. And so, with the boldness that comes from the certainty of a call, they were able to break through the centuries-old cloister and open the external and internal window grills, driven by the desire to share the Good News of Jesus and his Gospel with people who did not yet know him.

With her gaze fixed on Christ and his redeeming love, and discovering who were “the slaves whom the Church wishes to redeem at this time,” Margarita Maria, together with the community of Berriz, transformed the liberating Mercedarian charism and opened up new horizons for it, extending it to the entire world, “the great family of God.”

Having received a few months earlier the rescript of approval from the Congregation for Religious and Propaganda Fide to leave the cloister and found missions in mission countries:

- On September 19, 1926, the first six missionaries left Berriz for **Wuhu (China)**, where they arrived on November 5. The window grills of the cloister opened definitively to live out and express the universality of God's love.
- No sooner had they departed than those who remained began preparing for a new missionary journey, which set out from Berriz on October 30, 1927, and would lead to the founding of **Saipan (Mariana Islands)**, where they arrived on March 4, 1928.
- Once again, Berriz bid farewell to the third expedition on August 5, 1928; they arrived in **Tokyo (Japan)** on September 23 and in **Pohnpei (Caroline Islands)** on November 11.

Today, 100 years later, the MMB Family (sisters and laity members) continues this story and celebrates the memory of those origins. We are driven by the desire to continue embracing the dynamism of the Spirit that inspired Margarita Maria and our first sisters to **CROSS BORDERS TO GIVE LIFE**, to recreate it in our present, and to project this story into the future.

From the deeply Mercedarian and contemplative roots of Berriz, the boldness and dynamism of its missionary transformation took shape, which moves us today as well to go out into a world that is also paradoxical and challenging, toward a creation groaning in labor pains, toward the new generations.

The meaning of this celebration

With the celebration of this **Centennial of the First Foundations (2026–2028)**, we wish to:

GIVE THANKS FOR OUR HISTORY, for the dynamism of our origins, driven by the action of God who always recreates, renews, opens, expands, invites us to go out, to go further, to overcome fears, to take risks, to give our lives.

- **We are grateful for Margarita Maria's openness and fidelity** to the newness of the Spirit, which—welcomed also by the community of Berriz — made an unimaginable dream possible.
- **We are grateful for the courage of the sisters who set out for distant lands**, moved by the desire to “work and suffer for the Kingdom...” and who had to face so many difficulties: wars, exile, persecution, imprisonment, economic hardship...
- **And we give thanks for the missionary history** that has been woven over the course of these 100 years across the five continents.

Rereading this story, “letting it sink into our hearts,” leads us to rejoice in blessings both great and small and moves us to give back the abundant graces we have received from God, from others, and from the peoples with whom we share life today, in their cultural diversity.

REDISCOVER THE TREASURE that gives meaning to our lives, the foundations of our missionary vocation. It is a matter of accepting the invitation extended to us by the document of our General Chapter XVII, “To allow ourselves to be shaped anew by the God of Jesus”: “Reignite the gift of God that is within you” (2 Tim 1:6), allowing the Ruah to breathe within us and make our fire burn more fiercely (cf. n°. 110).

May this celebration renew within the MMB family:

- **Our experience of Jesus**, who is our greatest treasure, roots us more deeply in Him and transforms us according to His choices and His way of being and living.
- **The missionary spirit that drives us to GO OUT** and share the Good News of Jesus with all peoples, with all persons (especially the most vulnerable), and with all of creation through meaning, accompaniment, faith, care, hospitality, justice, dialogue, and encounter with the different, compassion, LIBERATION...
- **The experience of communion** that led the community of Berriz to unite their hearts by listening to God’s will in the cries of humanity.
- **The mercedarian vocation** in which Margarita Maria wanted to see “the entire Institute immersed,” expressed in a special way in the **Redemptive Fourth Vow**, which must be the hallmark of our life-mission: to give our lives so that others may have life.

SHARE THE CHARISM WE HAVE RECEIVED. Because we experience the joy of having found a treasure and feel compelled to share it so that Jesus and his Good News may continue to touch people, to offer meaning and open paths of liberation to new generations, nations, and the Earth. Today, too, **WE WANT TO CONTINUE CROSSING BORDERS TO GIVE LIFE.**

To do this, we must sharpen our creativity. And, above all, we must embody in our life the gifts we have received, so that they may continue to enrich humanity and creation—sometimes weighed down by despair, but always inhabited by the Ruah that kindles the spark to burn, to give warmth, shelter, and kindness, and to illuminate in Communion.

May this truly be a time of grace for the entire MMB Family.

**“I wish to make Jesus known
and to imprint His image
—obscured on the cross—
upon all peoples and all races,
to the ends of the earth.”**

(Margarita M. López de Maturana,
Jubilee Year 1934)



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