

## Celebrating 50 Years of the Notre Dame Mission in Tocantins Our Lady Aparecida Province, Brasil



As “Pilgrims of Gratitude and Hope,” a group of Sisters traveled from southern Brazil to Tocantins to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Notre Dame mission in the northern region of the country. This sister’s missionary presence there began in 1974, following appeals from the Church for religious sisters to serve in the Central-Northern region of Brazil. The sisters embraced the request made by Father Pedro Clear, a Redemptorist missionary in Paraíso do Norte, as a sign of Saint Julie Billiard’s intercession on behalf of the poor.

Following the Missioning Mass, celebrated on January 24, 1974, the first Sisters embarked on a journey of more than 3,400 kilometers (2,113 miles), and arrived in Tocantins on January 26. Since then, the Notre Dame mission has flourished. The Sisters work in a variety of ministries: education, pastoral care, catechesis, healthcare, vocational promotion, and formation for religious life.

As part of the jubilee celebration, the visiting Sisters took part in commemorative activities in Palmas and Porto Nacional, visited historical sites, and, on Pentecost Sunday, gathered in Paraíso do Tocantins for a solemn Mass of Thanksgiving. Bishop Wellington de Queiroz Vieira of the Diocese of Cristalândia, TO, concelebrated the Liturgy with Father Gilmar Divino da Silva, the local pastor. A festive lunch, which followed the Mass, was filled with joy and emotion as participants celebrated the fruits of the mission.

Sister Shirle Maria, Provincial Superior, expressed her deep gratitude for the support of the local Church and Community over these 50 years. She also asked for prayers for religious vocations so that the Notre Dame mission may continue to bear fruit in Tocantins.