

Christmas 2019

*Dear Friend of Mission Helpers,*

*Recently I was asked why cardinals are associated with Christmas. There's nothing in the Bible that mentions cardinals at the birth of Jesus—the red bird has no habitat near the Holy Land and is indigenous only to North America.*

*Cardinals are at the center of much folklore, tradition and symbolism. The most widely held belief is that the birds are spiritual messengers, bringing news from loved ones who have died or a “heads up” that change is coming.*

*But what's the connection to Christmas? Unlike other birds, cardinals do not migrate to sunny, warmer climes during the bleak months of winter. They stay with us. Their flame-red color and their welcome song of “cheer, cheer, chirreep,” have come to symbolize faith, light and warmth against the cold, gray or snow-white landscape of the Christmas season.*

*It is said that “If a cardinal appears in your yard, you have a visitor from heaven.” And the more I learn about these fabled red birds, the more I am reminded of my beloved Mission Helper Sisters.*

*I think of the thousands of lives that have been changed or made whole because Mission Helpers have “appeared in the yard” of people throughout the United States and Latin America. For nearly 130 years the Sisters have been bringing the Gospel to adults and children, walking with them through the sacramental rites, counseling and teaching the young as they grew, caring for the poor and homeless, and renewing the faith of people in the winter of their lives.*

*Like the cardinals, the Sisters remain with the people they serve—in the cold, dark days of winter as well as the sun-drenched days of summer. Steadfast in their love of God and God's people, they face life's challenges with compassion and faith in the future.*

*During this blessed Christmas season, we ask that you continue to walk with us on the next phase of our journey by holding us in your prayers and generously contributing to the funding of our ministries and the care and support of those Sisters who are now in the winter of their lives.*

*With grateful prayers and Christmas blessings,*

Sister Elizabeth Langmead, MSHS  
President

