

Mongolia



The country of Mongolia is located in east central Asia and is landlocked. Bordered by Russia to the north and China to the east, west, and south, it is the 19th largest country in the world. Mongolia is also the most sparsely populated independent country in the world with about 2.9 million people spread across almost



A cross marks a local Catholic church in Mongolia. The church is built like a traditional house—a ger.

604,000 sq. miles, which makes it slightly smaller than Alaska. People who live in Mongolia are called Mongolians but were once called Mongols. The Mongols gained worldwide

fame centuries ago when they established a Eurasian dynasty (meaning the land they took over spread across vast parts of Europe and Asia). Eventually the Mongols returned to their original steppe homeland—a wide prairie-like country where they currently live. Although many Mongols (about 45%) live in or near the capital city of Ulaanbaatar, others are nomadic herders, traveling constantly and living in temporary housing while they find grazing land for their animals.

Just recently the country of Mongolia has cut its illiteracy rate significantly by offering seasonal boarding schools for the children of herders so that they can keep up with their education while their parents earn a living. The current group of first graders will be the first Mongolians to go to school for a required twelve years.

Most people who live in Mongolia are Buddhists. (about 61%); almost 40% identify themselves as having no religion at all, while 3% say they are Muslim and another 2% call themselves Christian of some kind.

MCA in Mongolia

After the fall of a Communist government 20 years ago, then-Father Wenceslao (Wens) Padilla, a missionary priest from the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, or Missionhurst, arrived in Mongolia with two other priests determined to help build the Catholic Church in that country. He found a people searching “for God and for holiness”. Local catechists were trained and faith formation began. Now-Bishop Wens sees a great change. He and his fellow missionaries started from zero—no Catholics! There are now over a thousand with twenty to fifty being added each year.

The outreach services offered are tremendous. One example is The Verbist Care Center in the capital of Ulaanbaatar. Street children who have no one to care for them are shown God’s love with help from the Missionary Childhood Association (MCA).

Soko and Oldoh live in this special place. Soko is 15 years old and Oldoh is 13 years old. Soko feels very happy at the center because she no longer lives underground, next to pipes that carry hot water to people’s homes. Soko was not alone there—because of the extreme Mongolian cold, many homeless people take refuge near the warmth of the pipes. Before she came to the center, Soko was badly burned when her mother accidentally spilled boiling water on her face while she was cooking. At the Verbist Care Center, she receives the care

she needs. Soko says when she is older she wants to be a make-up artist. She also loves to help care for younger children at the center.

Oldoh wants to be a teacher when he is older. He loves learning, especially about Genghis Khan and Mongolia’s dynastic history. Oldoh came to the center because his family couldn’t care for him because they were so poor. They left him outside a hospital when he was eight. He was unable to walk and had to be carried by his friends or adults. Since coming to the Center, Oldoh has had operations on his feet and can not



Children at the Verbist Care Center in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia learn that God loves them with the help of the Missionary Childhood Association!

only walk, he has learned to love playing basketball! The children at the center go to school so they can have a better future. They have healthy food and can see a doctor when they are sick.

Last year, MCA members sacrificed \$17,500 so that Bishop Wens can continue his work with the children of Mongolia.

Missionary Childhood Association

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