

An abridged version of the Holy Father's Message for World Mission Sunday 2017

Mission at the Heart of the Christian Faith

World Mission Sunday this year gathers us once again around Jesus, 'the first and greatest evangeliser' (Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 7), who sends us out to proclaim the Gospel. We are asked to reflect on mission at the heart of the Christian faith. As believers in a world marked by disappointment, frustration, and torn apart by war, it is important to ask ourselves: What is the *basis* of our mission? What is the *heart* of our mission? What are the *essential approaches* we need to take in carrying out our mission?



Mission: the Way, the Truth and the Life

The Church's mission is based on the life-changing power of the Gospel. Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life (cf. *Jn* 14:6). He is the *Way* who invites us to follow him with courage. Doing this, we experience *Truth* and receive his *Life*, a life that sets us free from selfishness, encouraging us to love. God wants us to be transformed by being open to the Holy Spirit and following Christ, ensuring the Gospel becomes a vital and effective tool to live by.

A contemporary mission

The Church's mission is not to spread a religious or grandiose ideology. Instead, Jesus Christ continues to evangelise and to act. Through the Gospel, the risen Jesus becomes our contemporary. 'Christ's resurrection is not an event of the past; it contains a vital power which has permeated the world. Where all seems to be dead, signs of the resurrection suddenly spring up. It is an irresistible force.' (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 276).

'Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a decisive direction' (Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 1). The Gospel invites us to live our life




participating in the Sacraments. Through *Baptism*, the Gospel becomes a source of new life. Through *Confirmation*, it becomes a fortifying anointing, pointing out new ways for witness. Through the *Eucharist*, it becomes food for new life (Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Ephesios*, 20, 2).


The world vitally needs the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Through the Church, Christ continues his mission as *Good Samaritan*, caring for humanity's wounds, and as *Good Shepherd*, seeking out those who are lost on paths that lead nowhere. There are countless testimonies as to how the transformative power of the Gospel helps to overcome conflict, while promoting reconciliation.

Mission: a spirit of exodus, pilgrimage and exile

The Church's mission is enlivened by a spirit of *constant exodus*. We are challenged 'to go forth from our own comfort zone to reach all the 'peripheries' (margins) in need of the Gospel' (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 20). The Church's mission urges us to undertake a *constant pilgrimage* across various deserts of life, as we hunger and thirst for truth and justice. The Church's mission inspires a sense of *constant exile*, as we journey towards our final home in the Kingdom of Heaven.



Mission reminds us that we should not be a self-referential, self-obsessed Church. We should be 'a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security' (*ibid.*, 49).



Young people, the hope of mission

Young people are the hope of mission. 'There are many young people who engage in various forms of activism and volunteering... How beautiful it is to see that young people are "street preachers", joyfully bringing Jesus to every street, every town square and every corner of the earth!' (*ibid.*, 106). The next Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in 2018 is on the theme *Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment*.

The Pontifical Mission Societies (Missio)

The Pontifical Mission Societies (**Missio**) are a precious means of awakening in Christian communities - young people, adults, families, priests, bishops and religious orders - a desire to reach beyond their own confines to proclaim the Gospel to all.

World Mission Sunday, promoted by Missio's APF (Association for the Propagation of the Faith), is the ideal way for us all to support the pressing needs of evangelisation through our prayer, our witness and our giving.

Mission with Mary, Mother of Evangelisation

In carrying out our mission, let us draw inspiration from Mary, Mother of Evangelisation. Moved by the Spirit, she welcomed the Word of life. May she help us to say our own 'yes', conscious of the need to make the Good News of Jesus resonate in our time. May she intercede for us so we can discover new ways to bring the gift of salvation to everyone.



This is an abridged version of the Pope's message. The full text is available from Missio at missio.org.uk

The Holy Father's Prayer Intentions 2018

Please include these in your Parish Newsletter and in the Sunday Prayers of the Faithful at least once a month.

Join with the Holy Father in praying:

January	Religious minorities in Asia – That Christians, and other religious minorities in Asian countries, may be able to practise their faith in full freedom.
February	Say “No” to corruption – That those who have material, political or spiritual power may resist the lure of corruption.
March	Formation in spiritual discernment – That the Church may appreciate the urgent need for formation in spiritual discernment, both on the personal and community levels.
April	For those who have responsibility in economic matters – That leaders in financial affairs may have the courage to reject economic measures that exclude people and rather seek new inclusive approaches.
May	The mission of the Laity – That the lay faithful may fulfil their specific mission, by responding with creativity to the challenges that face the world today.
June	Social networks – That social networks may work towards that inclusiveness which respects others for their differences.
July	Priests and their pastoral ministry – That priests, who experience fatigue and loneliness in their pastoral work, may find help and comfort in their intimacy with the Lord and in their friendship with their brother priests.
August	The treasure of families – That any far-reaching decisions of economists and politicians may protect the family as one of the treasures of humanity.
September	Young people in Africa – That young people in Africa may have access to education and work in their own countries.
October	The mission of Religious men and women – That consecrated religious men and women may actively seek to be present among the poor, the marginalised, and those who have no voice.
November	In the service of peace – That the language of love and dialogue may always prevail over the language of conflict.
December	In the service of the transmission of faith – That in their dialogue with culture, people involved in the service and transmission of faith, may find a language that is appropriate to the present time.

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