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Mission Today

Spring 2024

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Cover: Visiting a remote parish via boat in Myanmar. Image: Missio Australia.

The National Director writes



If you want to make God laugh, then tell him your plans' is an amusing reminder that in spite of our best efforts, life is not totally in our own hands. We have all experienced those times when our lives are unexpectedly turned upside down by the twists and turns of life: some a joyful surprise, others a devastating blow.

However, God's presence among us is not to control us. By following Jesus Christ and his teachings we are offered life in abundance (see John 10:10). Just as God had a plan for our salvation, so we are called to plan our lives in accordance with his will. And when we get it wrong God calls us back with love and compassion.

Part of Missio's mission is to support the future of the Church in countries where it is young or struggling. One way we do this is by sponsoring students for the priesthood in seminaries across Africa and

Asia. You can read the updates from the Rectors of these seminaries, and messages sent to you from the students, on pages 8-11.

Your prayers and ongoing financial support have helped people like Fr Dominic who ministers to thousands of refugees in Thailand. You can read about my pastoral visit to a refugee camp with him on pages 4-5.

In this edition of *Mission Today* there are many encouraging stories of how the Priests and Sisters you have helped to train are sharing their faith and giving life to those most in need of God's compassion and love.

May God bless you with life in abundance throughout 2024,

Fr Anthony Chantry

Fr Anthony Chantry
Missio National Director



Fr Anthony with seminarians in Malawi



Be a missionary through prayer

Whoever and wherever we are, we can all be missionary: joining together in prayer with the wider Church, volunteering for Missio, or giving generously through the Red Box. These are all valuable ways to further the work of mission.

See the Holy Father's monthly Prayer Intentions for 2024 on pages 14-15



Morning Offering

Eternal Father, I offer you everything I do this day – my thoughts, works, joys and sufferings. Grant that, enlivened by the Holy Spirit and united to Jesus in the Eucharist, my life this day may be of service to you and to others. And with Mary and the whole Church I pray especially for the Pope's prayer intention this month.

Amen.

‘It’s like living in a cage’

Fr Anthony Chantry, the National Director of Missio, was recently invited to visit refugee camps in Thailand. The purpose of his visit was to express solidarity, and offer support, to our sisters and brothers who have faced ongoing persecution and hardship due to the political turmoil in Myanmar. Here is his personal reflection on his experience:

It has been some time since I travelled down an unwelcoming road. As we twisted our way through a dense forest, the track was potholed throughout and waterlogged in several places. ‘I wonder whether this road will be tarmacked one day,’ I pondered in the smooth silence of my imagination. However, it proved to be a very apt preparation for what, in contrast, I was to experience in the refugee camp at Mae Hong Son in northern Thailand.



I was with Fr Dominic, effectively the Parish Priest of the camp, who must travel the same route every day as he is not allowed to live in the camp itself. He is a priest from Myanmar (Burma), unable to return to his home because of the ongoing civil war instigated by its military dictatorship. It is a largely unreported conflict, which usually gives licence to those who choose to create humanitarian crises.

Ethnic groups in the northwest and southeast of Myanmar are seeking their right to self-determination, which has been met with an unrelenting suppression by the local Armed Forces. For three years there has been full blown civil war, which shows no sign of ending.

According to reports, more than 2 million people are now internally displaced and require urgent assistance. An estimated 77,000 civilian properties, including houses, religious structures, education, and health facilities, have reportedly been destroyed.

Driven from their homes, many fearing for their lives have fled into neighbouring Thailand. Thousands of families have sought safety at the Mae Hong Son refugee camp.

The unwelcoming road ended at the police checkpoint where Fr Dominic negotiated my entry into the camp with the permits already granted and issued for our visit.

In contrast to the journey, the welcome we received from the people as they gathered for Sunday Mass is something to treasure. ‘Thank you for visiting us because we often feel forgotten and abandoned by the outside world. Your visit gives us hope,’ was the widespread reaction to our visit.

Mae Hong Son is the home to thousands of refugees, among them a large Catholic community. The church, which they built themselves, is a fragile wooden structure holding two to three hundred people for Mass.



On that Sunday the church was packed, with many outside, and for over two hours the people sang their hearts out in praise and adoration of the One who stands with them in their suffering.

Mary Nanja shared her situation with me: her husband was somehow able to leave for work overseas, leaving her in the camp with her three children. ‘There is nothing left for me in Burma. Our home was destroyed, and we were forced to leave the country. Life is very tough here in the camp, but at least we

are safe. I hope my children will have a better future. It is like living in a cage, but I know God is with us and will help us one day to be free.’

Fr Dominic works hard to bring people together and give them the hope that Jesus gives in his mission. Jesus was sent by the Father, armed with the power of the Spirit, to ‘set captives free’ and to be Good News to those who are powerless.

Not all is hopeless. Both humanitarian and Catholic organisations are striving to alleviate the suffering of the refugees.

I am happy to report that Missio – that’s you and I – stand in solidarity with them through prayer and action. We are helping them to build a better structure for their place of community and worship. A church that will provide a welcome, and give hope to our brothers and sisters who face an uncertain future.

As I left Mae Hong Son I realised, as I have many times before, that I leave richer than I entered. Their faith has strengthened mine; their hope has enriched mine; their love has challenged mine. And somehow, that road doesn’t seem so unwelcoming.



Fr Elvost MHM: welcome to Pakistan

In last year's Autumn edition of *Mission Today*, we shared news of Fr Elvost – a newly ordained Mill Hill Missionary from Malaysia. We are delighted to share that Fr Elvost has now taken up his post in Pakistan.



Fr Elvost completed his studies in Nairobi and was later ordained in his home country of Malaysia. He has now been appointed to Pakistan where he will fulfil his call to discipleship and mission to serve 'the last, least and the lost' as a Mill Hill Missionary.

Insight and empathy

Mill Hill Missionaries go wherever they are most needed: to serve the people, build local communities, learn new ways of life, and respond to unfamiliar situations with God's love and the courage of the Holy Spirit.

While Fr Elvost is new to Pakistan, his experience of belonging to a minority community in Malaysia – that continues to be persecuted – will no doubt give him precious insights in his new post. We hope and pray that his appointment will allow him to share his great gifts with the Kutchi Kohli community in the Diocese of Hyderabad.

Nobody is 'untouchable' in God's eyes

The Kutchi Kohli people belong to one of the Indigenous ethnic minorities of Hindu background in Pakistan. They are officially referred to as 'Scheduled Castes' which really means 'outcasts' or 'untouchables'. Economically, they are very poor. Most of them are landless farmers who work for feudal landowners. They earn extremely low wages and landowners often manipulate them, taking advantage of their lack of education. As a result, the Kutchi Kohli people often become caught in a debilitating cycle of poverty and debt.

The Mill Hill Mission in Hyderabad

Many of the Kutchi Kohli people also live in constant fear. They fear their landlords, and

the majority and dominant populace. They fear for the security of their women and girls. And they fear the Hindu deities who they believe will be quick to inflict calamities and sickness on disobedient devotees. But in Jesus, they see a God who shares their joys and sorrows, and freely offers them unconditional love, mercy, and forgiveness.

In the late 1970s the Mill Hill Missionaries responded to the invitation of the Bishop of Hyderabad to work with minorities in Sindh. There is a big population of Kutchi Kohli people living around Tando Allahyar, so the Mill Hill Missionaries made this the centre of their apostolate.

Today, Mill Hill parish teams are responsible for the evangelisation and pastoral care of desperately poor tribal families in hundreds of villages.

The parish pastoral team visits over 900 families scattered in more than 400 villages across an area of roughly 60 kilometres. It involves a lot of travelling and overnight stays in these villages.

As the Kutchi Kohli Christians are a minority within their Hindu community, their faith is young and fragile. They face discrimination, and their own Hindu relatives or fellow villagers often pressure them to renounce their Christianity.

That is why the Mill Hill Missionaries make it a pastoral priority to support and help people. Now, numbers of the Kutchi Kohli Catholics are increasing.

A main pillar of Mill Hill's apostolate and outreach to the Kutchi Kohli is the provision of primary and secondary education, along with boarding houses for both boys and girls who live too far away to travel to school each day. Education is a vital tool in lifting

the next generation out of poverty and ensuring that the Kutchi Koli people are less vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. In the work they do in education, along with medical ministry and promoting the rights of women, the Mill Hill Missionaries work alongside the Presentation Sisters and other Church groups.

Prayers for Father Elvost

As Fr Elvost joins the Mill Hill mission in Pakistan, we pray that God will watch over him and make his mission fruitful. We were delighted to receive these photographs of the people of the Parish welcoming Fr Elvost as he starts his work for the glory of God. His dedication and kind-hearted spirit, together with the help of the people he serves will, we are sure, bear great fruit.

Let us join together in prayer and best wishes for Fr Elvost as he undertakes this new ministry.



With thanks to the Mill Hill Missionaries for originally sharing this great news!

For further updates, please visit millhillmissionaries.com

Building a vibrant Church

Missio England and Wales has a long-standing relationship with five seminaries in Kenya, India, Malawi, Nigeria, and Sri Lanka. These seminaries offer the opportunity to sponsor the training of a future Priest. When you sponsor a seminarian, you are building the Church of tomorrow, today.

As you will see from reading the accounts shared by the Seminary Rectors and students, your support in 2023 made a real difference to their lives as they endeavour to respond to God's call in times of economic hardship, and sometimes frightening circumstances. Here are their updates on the challenges and joys they experienced:

Christ the King Major Seminary, Kenya

In 2023, our country experienced drought and inflation, and everything became more expensive. But the past year was successful despite some challenges, and five of our seminarians were ordained Deacons.

It is our hope that 2024 will bring good tidings in matters of growth in faith for our people, and in the increase of vocations to the Priesthood and Religious life. This year we had many applications from good and faithful young men who desired to join the seminary, but unfortunately we couldn't admit them all due to lack of accommodation. It is our prayer that the new year will continue to give us more vocations and encourage people of good will to support us in increasing our capacity.

We thank God for his providence during this



past year. And to our benefactors from Missio, we thank you most sincerely for your enormous support that we have received from you all these years.

Fr Peter, Rector

Message from a student: God's graces have always been sufficient in guiding me as I continue to respond to his call with docility of heart. I know by the grace of God, and support from friends like you, I will ascend to the altar of the Lord. I assure you of my prayers in all you do, that the good Lord may keep you safe, steadfast in faith, and in his service.

Br Hongo



St John's Regional Seminary, India

Our seminary is currently providing formation to 94 seminarians. This past year, 17 seminarians were ordained Deacons.

Vocations are many in India. There is a lot of scope for evangelisation and more Priests are required to do this mission. Many seminarians come from rural villages with poor economic backgrounds. Their parents are either sustenance farmers or daily wage labourers with a meagre income; not even sufficient to make ends meet – they cannot contribute anything.

Many thanks to Missio's sponsors and supporters for their prayerful and tremendous financial support in providing for the formation of future Priests.

Fr Marreddy, Rector

Message from a student: Dear sponsor, you have been making sacrifices in your daily life so that my formation may continue, and I thank you for your generous heart.

Missio's sponsorship is helping me and my fellow students to meet the basic needs of our priestly studies, food, and medicine. The help, both spiritual and financial from my sponsor, is helping me to give my time and talents for the common good of the community.

I assure you that when I reach that altar of God I will continue to pray for my sponsor and for their family.

Br Kotte



St Peter's Major Seminary, Malawi

2023 has been a very challenging year. Firstly, Malawi was hit hard by Cyclone Freddy that claimed more than 600 lives. Roads and infrastructure were damaged making communication and electric power supply difficult. Secondly, in November the local currency was devalued by 44%. As a result, the cost of goods on the market almost tripled and so sustainability became so difficult. It is now a hand-to-mouth situation.

Despite such drawbacks, we joyfully witnessed 24 Deacons receiving priestly ordination, and 20 seminarians ordained as Deacons. We have opened our Academic Year with a total of 109 seminarians.

Seminarians are engaged in various kinds of services within the seminary community, such as pig and chicken rearing, fish farming, and vegetable growing. Through manual work, the seminarians help to make their own home habitable, and help in a concrete way to provide seminary necessities with their own hands.

We foresee 2024 to be more challenging – the economy of Malawi has nearly collapsed. The cost of goods on the market keeps skyrocketing. Despite such a sad economic front, we are joyful for the continued growth of faith and vocations.

Fr Daniel, Rector



Message from a student: I am strengthened and comforted on my journey towards priesthood, knowing that I have someone praying for me in my vocation and supporting me financially. With such support, I have a guiding light and lamp on my priestly formation path. As I enjoy the fruits of such support, I will always remember those who have planted the tree.

Br Innocent



Bigard Memorial Seminary, Nigeria

We currently have 780 students studying at our Seminary.

The year 2023 started with financial crises which set off an avalanche of economic woes that made the acquisition of goods and services difficult and at very high costs.

In the political arena, the general election that took place in 2023 left much to be desired. Cases of violence, kidnappings, destruction of lives and property were recorded in abundance.

It is very sad that Nigeria continues to face infrastructural challenges across various sectors like transportation, water, power supply, and healthcare.

We look towards 2024 with optimism – this year our Seminary joyfully celebrates 100 years of its establishment (1924-2024). The Church in Nigeria has also continued to grow in leaps and bounds. We can see an increase in the number of parishes, deaneries, and even dioceses.

We sincerely hope that this positive growth will continue, and that the security situation in our country will improve and bring an end to the persecution and killing of Christians in different parts of the country.

May we use this opportunity to thank our benefactors and friends for their support through the years, and also continue to appeal for financial assistance in order to provide basic amenities needed for the smooth running of the seminary.

Fr Albert, Rector



Message from a student: I remain grateful to you for the incredible support and generosity which you have extended through the Missio Sponsorship programme. Financially, your sponsorship has provided essential resources that have helped me to meet my daily needs and provide basic commodities. With this financial stress removed from me, I am better able to focus on the formation processes in this Seminary.

More so, I am gladdened to know that our sponsors not only give us financial assistance but also pray for us. Your prayers have been a guiding light, offering encouragement in trying times and inspiring hope for a better tomorrow.

Br Cyprian



Our Lady of Lanka National Seminary, Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is grappling with its worst economic crisis since its independence, resulting in shortages of basic goods including food, fuel, and medical supplies.

With the inflation of food prices at a record rate of 94.9%, it was extremely difficult to manage food expenses. We are planning to further expand and develop the Seminary farm so that it can provide sustenance for the Seminary community, and the excess can be sold to villagers to generate additional income.

We have 200 seminarians who are studying for the Priesthood. It is with gratitude to God that 28 Diocesan Priests and 14 Religious Priests were ordained in 2023.

May we have divine guidance in our endeavour to prepare holy and committed missionary priests, whose lives are configured to Christ, rooted in His Word and Sacrament, and dedicated to serve the People of God.

Fr Quintus, Rector

Read the full messages from the Rectors and seminarians at missio.org.uk

Message from a student: To know that someone is praying specifically for my priestly journey is a great source of strength and encouragement, as it is a journey of many challenges and numerous difficulties.

In Sri Lanka, many parents cannot afford the expenses involved in our priestly formation. All we receive in the Seminary is thanks to the generosity of benefactors like you. We are aware of the sacrifices that you make to contribute towards our priestly formation. 'Thank You' for all you are to me and may the Good Lord richly reward your generosity.

Br Roy



To find out how you can sponsor the training of a future Priest as an individual, or as a family, a community or a parish project, please turn to page 24.

When you sponsor a seminarian, you build the Church of tomorrow, today.

A wonderful journey of faith

With your generous support, the worldwide Missio network helps train over 25,000 future Priests and 11,000 Religious Sisters every year. Seminarians are supported both through donations, and through our Seminarian Sponsorship Programme. We recently spent time with Fr Vincent, Missio's National Director in Malawi, who shared how precious and important his Missio Sponsorship became, and the immense difference Missio made to him and so many others.

Missio supports health services all over poor countries like Malawi; hospitals and clinics... all the services,' Fr Vincent explains. 'I was not born at the mission hospital, but we received childcare services from there when I was very young, and then as I grew up, we got all the medical support and services from there.



Vincent (left) with one of his sisters

'My primary school was funded by Missio. Many of the crucial people in Malawi were supported by schools run by the Church. The incumbent president of the country and the vice-president came through secondary schools run by the Catholic Church, supported by Missio. My birth, my primary education and secondary education were all made possible by Missio. Of course, I never understood how things work; it was only when I was appointed to be a Missio National Director that I realised!'

When Fr Vincent was studying at St Peter's Major Seminary to become a Priest in Malawi, Teresa Gleeson from Bury St Edmunds began sponsoring him. Missio's Sponsorship Programme pairs trainee Priests overseas to people in England and Wales who support them both financially and spiritually.

Sponsors have the option to correspond with their seminarian through the Missio office and the Rector of the student's seminary. While some people prefer not to, others feel that correspondence is an essential part of being a sponsor: exchanging letters, news of their parish, and photographs throughout the student's years of training.

'Teresa was my (spiritual) mother,' says Fr Vincent. 'Of course, we never met in person, but she shared her faith through her letters, her prayers, and her financial support. She used to write faith-filled letters encouraging me, telling me what she was doing as a faithful Catholic, and praying for me.

'Teresa Gleeson's prayers were answered. She produced me!' he laughs. 'She offered prayers for me, and here I am: I'm a Priest. I'm the living example; the response to Jesus Christ and the Blessed Sacrament.

'I was trained through Missio, and by God's grace, I'm now the Missio Director in Malawi. So today, I am giving the ripple effect of what Teresa did for me. I teach people about the importance of sponsoring and praying for seminarians, and praying for young people that they become Priests.'

Fr Vincent is clear how important sponsorship is to the Church's mission of igniting God's love throughout the world.

'You have to continue this [sponsoring],' he says, 'because after me, Priests are to come in perpetuity... we need Priests in those years to come.

'Teresa died in 2019. But she continues to live on through me, and through my programme of animation and teaching in Malawi. She will continue to live forever, because what I'm teaching today, others will continue.

'I see today there are young people in the seminary whom I animate and encourage through Mission Together (Missio's children's branch) in Malawi. I know for sure there will be Priests. And I know among some of my family, my nephews and nieces, there will be a Priest; there will be a Sister! It's not me of course; it's Jesus, who works through me.

'Missio is all about bringing good to humanity across the whole world, especially in the places that are more in need, like the young churches, the poor churches - Malawi, Zimbabwe, Zambia, India, and many other parts of the world.

'I know the good Teresa has done for me and for the whole Church through Missio. And I am certain that she must be in a better place in heaven, with Jesus and Mother Mary and the Saints.'



To find out how you can sponsor the training of a future Priest - like Fr Vincent - either as an individual, a family, a community or a parish project, please turn to page 24.

When you sponsor a seminarian, you build the Church of tomorrow, today.

The Holy Father's Prayer Intentions 2024

Please join Pope Francis and the whole Church in praying these monthly intentions, particularly on Fridays at 12:30pm



Prayer is central to everything we do. Stay connected with us online for more prayers and reflections: missio.org.uk/pray
And follow us on social media:
Facebook: /MissioUK
Twitter: @MissioUK
Instagram: Missio_UK
YouTube: MissioUK

JANUARY

We pray that the Holy Spirit may help us to recognise the gift of different charisms within the Christian community, and to discover the richness of the different rites within the Catholic Church.

FEBRUARY

We pray for the sick who are in the final stages of life, and for their families; may they always receive the necessary medical and human care, and the accompaniment they need.

MARCH

We pray for those who risk their lives for the Gospel in various parts of the world; may their courage and missionary zeal permeate the Church.

APRIL

We pray for the dignity and worth of women to be recognised in every culture, and for an end to the discrimination they face in various parts of the world.

MAY

We pray for those training for the Religious life and for the Priesthood; may they grow to be credible witnesses of the Gospel through the human, pastoral, spiritual, and community formation they receive.

JUNE

We pray for migrants fleeing from war or hunger, forced to undertake journeys fraught with danger and violence; may they find welcome and new life opportunities in their host countries.

JULY

We pray that the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick may grant the Lord's strength to those who receive it and to their loved ones, and that it may become for everyone an ever more visible sign of compassion and hope.

AUGUST

We pray for political leaders to be at the service of their people, working for their integral human development and the common good, taking care of those who have lost their jobs and giving priority to the poor.

SEPTEMBER

We pray that we may listen with our hearts to the cry of the Earth, and to the victims of environmental disasters and the climate crisis; may each of us make a personal commitment to care for the world we inhabit.

OCTOBER

We pray that the Church may continue on the synodal path of co-responsibility, which promotes the participation, communion and mission shared by priests, religious and laity.

NOVEMBER

We pray for all parents who mourn the loss of a son or daughter to find support in their community, and for the Spirit of consolation to bring peace to their hearts.

DECEMBER

We pray that the forthcoming Jubilee may strengthen us in our faith, helping us to recognise the Risen Christ in the midst of our lives, transforming us into pilgrims of Christian hope.

Setting hearts ablaze in Kenya

For World Mission Sunday in 2023, Missio highlighted the work of Sister Mary and Linet in Kibera – the biggest ‘slum’ in Africa, located in Kenya. Together, they live out their faith by rescuing and fostering children who are at risk from harm.



Sr Mary has been in touch to thank you for your support which is enabling her to live out her mission and transform the lives of suffering children in her homeland:

‘Isn’t your reaching out not a miracle? I thank you and all who networked with you through Missio. I am truly full of gratitude. Nothing is small when offered with love.

‘I have no words, absolutely no words, to express my feelings. It feels like I am dreaming. I thank God who moved you to

think of us and I thank your team too for overwhelming us with your generosity.’

World Mission Sunday is vital to the growth of the Church and the spread of the Gospel in predominantly impoverished and remote areas overseas. It is a moment of grace to express solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Christ who are living in situations of poverty, violence, and oppression.

The funds raised build much-needed infrastructure, from chapels and schools to



orphanages, clinics, and dispensaries. Requested by the local community, the support from Missio transforms lives and creates a hub from which the young Church can flourish and grow.

Every penny, pound, and prayer you contribute to Missio helps missionaries everywhere continue their work and supports faith and outreach projects.

World Mission Sunday is a lifeline for missionaries like Sr Mary, who give their whole lives to bring the love and hope of Jesus to situations of extreme poverty and injustice.

Sr Mary experiences many challenges in her work, but her faith and trust in God encourage her in moments of despair. She shared the following:

‘My heart breaks when young children are in trouble. Linet currently has children who have suffered abuse living in her house – she recently had to travel eight hours by bus to rescue a young girl. I admire her courage! She has enrolled the child in secondary school while providing healing for her trauma. The head teacher agreed that we can pay school fees bit by bit.

‘Schooling for these children is giving them hope and a future. Schooling keeps them away from the streets, or joining bandit groups or gangs, and from substance abuse.

‘I had a meeting with Linet: two of the girls living with her need medication, and a young lady with disabilities gave birth to a lovely baby boy and lives with her mother but comes to Linet seeking food. Linet’s home continues to be a place of refuge.’

Thank you so much for being part of the amazing work missionaries do around the world. They could not do what they do without you!



To support the work of missionaries in Kenya and around the world, please share what you can: missio.org.uk/donate



The Changing Missionary Landscape

Fr Michael Corcoran MHM, General Superior of St Joseph's Missionary Society, reports on the latest news from the Mill Hill Missionaries:

On a recent visit to Mill Hill Missionaries in Uganda, I was moved to see that our founder's passion for service and mission was alive and well; with our missionaries having faith, enthusiasm, and the message of God's great love as the tools at their disposal. As our missionaries reach out to rural communities in the semi-nomadic regions of Karamoja in Uganda, or the urban apostolates they are engaged with, I witnessed their creative fidelity to God's dream for our world, truly listening, discerning, trusting, and cooperating with God's spirit.



As General Superior of the Mill Hill Missionaries I have the great privilege of visiting our missionaries worldwide, experiencing the many challenges that they face daily. I have seen their enthusiasm and zeal. They are missionary landscapers who,

rooted in God's love and convinced of God's dream, live as authentic witnesses amongst the people they live and work with, and before all of Creation as we move forward together.



I once again acknowledge and celebrate the changing face of our own missionaries. Mill Hill Missionaries are now coming from the flourishing churches in Africa and Asia which were once served by Mill Hill Missionaries from Europe and North America. These young missionaries from different continents continue the missionary journey to witness the beauty and power of the Gospel across the huge spectrum of human diversity.

This is truly Good News, as emerging churches once evangelised by European and American missionaries now want to send out missionaries from their own communities. They stand ready to continue our missionary tradition to 'go out and proclaim the Good News to those in greatest need'.

While visiting our Formation Community in Uganda, I met with thirty students from Kenya and Uganda who have responded to the call to become Mill Hill Missionaries. What greater gift from God can we ask for, than to have these young missionaries as our future, and with many more to follow? They too will face hardships, difficulties, and challenges, but with our support and encouragement, they will overcome.

May our motto 'Amare et Servire', to love and to serve, continue to echo and give hope to the people entrusted to our pastoral care.



For more Mill Hill news, please visit millhillmissionaries.com or follow them on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/MillHillsocialcommunications) /MillHillsocialcommunications

National Novena to St Joseph

10-18 March 2024



Each year the Mill Hill community prepares for the feast day of St Joseph, our patron, with a special Novena of Masses and prayers. The Novena is a wonderful way for Red Box supporters to pray for each other, and build links of prayer across the world for missionaries and the people they serve.

You can join in at home by praying the daily Novena and prayer and/or by sending your petitions to us at 6 Colby Gardens, Maidenhead, Berkshire, SL6 7GZ. You can also join us online – Masses from St Joseph's in Maidenhead will be held via Zoom: 11:00am on Sunday 10 March, 10:00am on weekdays and Saturday 16 March, and 11:00am on Sunday 17 March 2024. Simply visit the Mill Hill Missionaries website to access the link:

millhillmissionaries.com/novena

From 10 – 17 March, at 6pm each day, this link will also enable you to join in the Evening and Novena Prayers being recited in the Mill Hill community chapel in Maidenhead.

As well as the Novena prayer leaflet of daily reflections and the Novena Prayer, a new Prayer Booklet with additional prayers and reflections, is also available on request. All donations to help cover printing and postage will be gratefully received.

For more information, or to request a petition slip, prayer booklet or newsletter, please email: novenamhm@gmail.com

During office hours, you can also call: 020 7821 9755

Missionaries killed in 2023

Last year, 20 missionaries met violent deaths worldwide: one Bishop, eight Priests, two Religious Brothers, one Seminarian, one Novice, and seven Lay people were killed.

Sadly, the past year saw many missionaries and pastoral workers become victims of violence as they were going about their everyday lives and activities.

Many of them were killed in places and situations marked by conflict – by soldiers, militia, terrorist groups, or individuals wielding weapons.

In the mystery which unites them to the Passion and Resurrection of Christ, these witnesses of faith also share in the pain of Christ for all the innocent who suffer unjustly. The gift of their lives reflects Christ's salvation offered to all humanity, and manifests God's love for all.

During the Angelus on St Stephen's day, Pope Francis said: 'There are many in our world who suffer and die to bear witness to Jesus... the seed of their sacrifices, which seems to die, germinates and bears fruit, because God, through them, continues to work miracles (cf. Acts 18:9-10), changing hearts and saving humankind.

'Let us ask ourselves, then: do I care about and pray for those who, in various parts of the world, still suffer and die for the faith today? And in turn, do I try to bear witness to the Gospel consistently, with gentleness and confidence? Do I believe that the seed of goodness will bear fruit even if I do not see the immediate results?'

Fr Jacques Yaro Zerbo, 67, was killed on 2 January while on his way to carry out pastoral activities in the Boucle du Mouhoun region of Burkina Faso. The unidentified armed men murdered him and drove away in his car.

Fr Isaac Achi, 61, died on 15 January during an attack on his parish in northern Nigeria. The armed group, unable to access the presbytery, set fire to it. Whilst a fellow Priest, Fr Collins Omeh, was wounded as he fled the house, Fr Isaac was unable to escape the flames.

Diego Valencia, 65, Sacristan of the Parish of Nuestra Señora de La Palma in the province of Cadiz, Spain, was killed on 25 January whilst trying to stop an attack on parishioners by a young man armed with a machete. The perpetrator was later arrested by the police.



Fr Juan Angulo Fonseca, 53, Parish Priest of Our Lady of Guadalupe in the state of Jalisco, Mexico, was shot and died on 10 February. Sources claim that this well-respected Priest fell victim to a family member over a land dispute. (Image: Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish)

Monsignor David O'Connell, 69, Auxiliary Bishop of Los Angeles (USA), was shot by his housekeeper's husband on 18 February. The perpetrator was later arrested and confessed to the crime, possibly motivated by a dispute over money.



Br Moses Simukonde Sens, 35, a Missionary of Africa from Zambia, was killed on 29 March by a stray bullet near a military checkpoint in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso's capital. (Image: Missionnaires d'Afrique)

Fr Javier García Villafaña, 35, an Augustinian and Parish Priest in the Archdiocese of Morelia, Mexico, was murdered on 22 May when his car was riddled with bullets as he was on his way to celebrate Mass.

Fr Charles Onomhoale Igechi, a recently ordained Priest of the Archdiocese of Benin City, was killed by gunmen along Agbor Road, in Edo State, Nigeria on 7 June.

Gertrudis Cruz de Jesús and Gliserina Cruz Merino, both young catechists, were killed on 15 June, during a conflict between armed groups while on their way to a Eucharistic procession in the state of Oaxaca, Mexico. They belonged to a movement for the recognition of the human rights of their people – the Triqui.

Fr Pamphili Nada died from his injuries on 19 July whilst being taken to hospital. He had been attacked with a blunt object by a mentally unwell man in his parish of Our Lady Queen of Apostles, Arusha, Tanzania.

Seminarian Na'aman Danlami, 25, perished in a fire on 7 September. It was deliberately started by armed bandits after they failed to kidnap the Parish Priest of St Raphael's Parish of Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Godwin Eze, 31, a Benedictine Novice kidnapped from the monastery in Eruku, Kwara State, Nigeria, was shot dead and his body thrown into a river by an armed group on 18 October.

Br Cyprian Ngeh, 40, an exemplary Religious nurse of the Congregation of the Sons of the Immaculate Conception, was attacked and stabbed to death in Bamenda, Cameroon on 7 November whilst walking back to his Congregation's Health Centre.

Junrey Barbante, 24, and **Janine Arenas**, 18, students and committed volunteers of the Catholic chaplaincy community of Mindanao's State University in the Philippines, were killed on 3 December by a local group retaliating to military operations. They were among the victims and casualties of the bomb which detonated during the celebration of Mass on the first Sunday of Advent.

Fr Stephen Gutgsell, 65, died on 10 December following a knife attack during an attempted break-in at the church in Fort Cahloun, a small community in Nebraska (USA) that he had led for 11 years. The suspected attacker was arrested by police.

Fr Léopold Feyen, 82, a Salesian of Don Bosco from Belgium, was stabbed to death by an unidentified killer in the parish of St Mary Help of Christians in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo on 12 December.



Samar Kamal Anton, and her mother, **Nahida Khalil Anton**, were killed on 16 December by snipers as they were walking to the Convent of the Sisters of Mother Theresa in the parish complex of the Holy Family in Gaza. One was killed as she tried to carry the other to safety. Both belonged to a prayerful group of Catholic and Orthodox women committed to serving poor and disabled people.

(Image: Christians MENA)

All information is supplied by Fides, the Vatican-based news agency of Missio, and by Vatican News.

Please join us in giving thanks for the work and witness of these, our sisters and brothers. May they rest in peace and rise in glory. Amen.

All are Welcome!

Can imagine Jesus scratching his head as to how to describe the Kingdom of God to the people, and, as we read in the Gospels, in his 'head scratching' he came up with many wonderful images.

On one occasion he likened the Kingdom to a mustard seed (Luke 13) which would grow into a tree which the birds of the air could shelter in. A familiar image which everyone would understand – that the Kingdom of God was for everyone to enter and find shelter.

But Jesus was being a bit controversial here when he talked about the birds of the air and did not distinguish between, according to Jewish purity laws, those birds which were unclean and detestable (Leviticus 11:13-19). Jesus was, in effect, saying that all the birds of the air were welcome in the tree – clean and unclean!

Of course, what Jesus is saying is that, like a mustard tree, the Kingdom of God was shelter, shade, and rest for everyone. With no distinction between those people whom we, or others, might think of as 'unclean' or not worthy. Everyone is welcome to rest in the shelter and shade of the love of God.

Father Peter

You can write to Fr Peter at:
41 Victoria Road, Formby,
Liverpool L37 1LW

In Remembrance

Our online Book of Remembrance includes the names of people who have supported Missio and the Mill Hill Missionaries in the past. You can find the online version on our website: missio.org.uk/book-of-remembrance



All living and deceased supporters of Missio and the Mill Hill Missionaries are remembered at Mass in our chapel. Mill Hill Priests offer Mass for deceased members in November, and they are remembered at Mass every Sunday and in their Daily Office. The actual Books of Remembrance are held in the Missio chapel in London.

If you would like to give in remembrance of a relative or loved one, you can do so by visiting missio.org.uk/donate. You can opt to share their name by ticking the 'gift in memory of a loved one' option, which will then be recorded in our online Book of Remembrance.

**'Whoever lives and believes
in me will never die'**
John 11:26

Our amazing volunteers

Our volunteers are vital in igniting God's love throughout the world. It is always a joy and a privilege to thank these amazing people for their service to the Red Box family. We recently celebrated former Local Secretary, Dennis Hill, from St John's Parish in Purley.

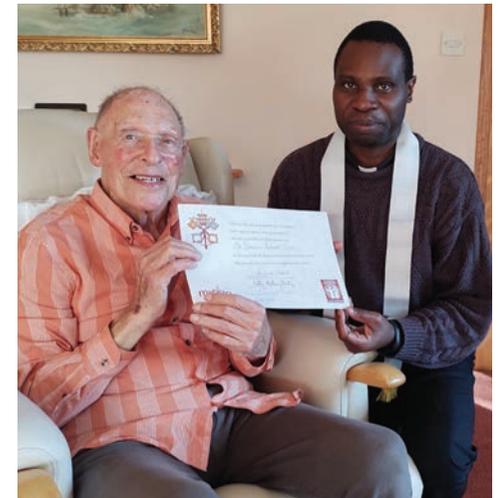
Fr Noah Monday MHM gave a moving tribute to Dennis recently, which Dennis was able to watch via livestream from his home. After Mass, Fr Noah visited Dennis with Communion, and presented him with a gold medal and certificate as a token of thanks for his years of hard work.

Dennis has been a volunteer for Missio for over 25 years. During this time, he has gathered a team of Promoters to support his parish, which has one of the highest numbers of Red Box holders in England and Wales!

In his tribute to Dennis, Fr Noah spoke for all of us when he said:

'Volunteering as Local Secretary for Missio and the Mill Hill Missionaries takes dedication and a willingness to share the Gospel message. Above all this, it takes passion, a passion for Jesus Christ – to share his love through our actions. Dennis, during his ministry as Local Secretary, has directly contributed to sharing that Gospel message, not just with this parish, but with our brothers and sisters around the world.'

'We know that Dennis continues to support Missio and the Mill Hill Missionaries through his prayers at home. It is my pleasure to award Dennis a gold long service medal.'



Dennis' son, Damian, sent us this moving message in response to Fr Noah's tribute and visit:

'Fr Noah's words at the Mass were so heartwarming and Dennis was so very proud to be recognised in such a wonderful way. His gold medal and certificate will take pride of place.

'Their meeting was made special by the fact that Fr Noah took the time to listen to Dennis' life story and that the Sacrament of Communion was shared.

'Thank you so much for all that you arranged, it is very much appreciated by the whole family and especially my father, Dennis.'

A huge "thank you" to Dennis for his dedication and gift of faith. God bless you and your family!

Tomorrow's generation of Priests and Sisters

Missio ignites God's love by helping missionaries to work alongside communities globally that are poor or in need, regardless of their background or belief. Together with our supporters, we play a vital part in creating a vibrant Catholic Church for the future.



Roy, a seminarian in Sri Lanka

Could you give £1.37 a day to help them?

If you, or your parish group, can commit £42 a month (£500 per year) for four years, you can ensure that board and lodging, building maintenance, support staff, and library books for one seminarian are paid. If you wish, you will be told the name of your student so that you can hold him in prayer, as he will you. Read more on pages 8-11.

Any gift you can make to Missio for the training of future Priests will make a real difference to our Church family overseas.

For more information about how you can support the training of a future Priest, please call 020 7821 9755, email info@missio.org.uk, visit missio.org.uk/sponsor or complete the form on the next page and return it to us.

In many mission dioceses there are increasing numbers of students for the Priesthood and Religious life. Because their communities are poor, they must undertake their training with very basic facilities and scarce resources.

Missio is the only funding organisation in the Church which guarantees a place for all who are accepted for formation in mission dioceses. This is a unique role the Pope has given to Missio.

Through Missio you can continue to share the gift of faith with others and ensure that no one who has a religious vocation to serve the Church is turned away through lack of money.

In mission dioceses, it costs at least £700 a year to train a student for the priesthood.

The local bishops, parishes and families manage collectively to raise £200 annually for each student, but it is simply not enough.

Please fill in the form below and return it in the **freepost envelope attached** (Missio, 23 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1NU)

Your details (PLEASE PRINT)

*Required fields

Title*

First Name*

Surname*

Address*

Postcode*

Tel

Parish

Email

- Please send me the monthly **Missio eNewsletter** (provide email address above)
- I want Missio to treat all donations I have made for this tax year and all donations I make in the future as Gift Aid donations until I notify Missio otherwise. I confirm that I am a UK tax payer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference. I will notify Missio if I want to cancel this declaration, change my name or home address, or no longer pay sufficient tax on my Income and/or Capital Gains.

Date

N.B. Please ensure the box is ticked.

SUPPORT

- I enclose a donation of £ _____ (please make cheques/postal orders payable to Missio-Mill Hill)
- I enclose a donation of £ _____ towards the training of future Priests and Sisters (please make cheques/postal orders payable to Missio)
- You can set up a Direct Debit or give by Card overleaf, or online at missio.org.uk or call us on 020 7821 9755 (office hours).
- Please send me information on how to sponsor a future Priest
- Please tick if you do not require a receipt

Please send me information on how to leave a gift in my Will

Please send me a free booklet for the Feast of St Joseph Novena

MASSSES

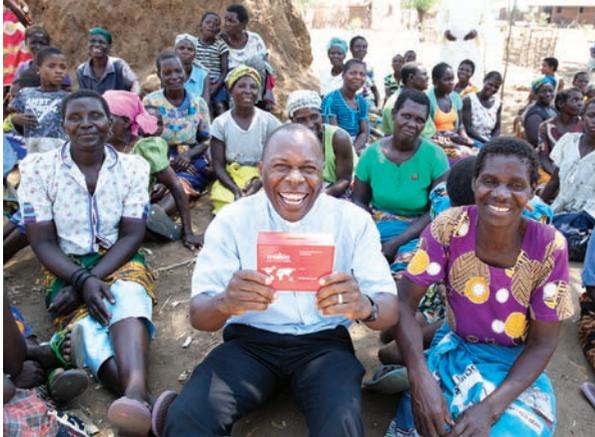
I would like _____ (please state number) Mass/es offered for the following intentions (please use a separate sheet if necessary):

Intentions:

- I enclose £ _____ (the recommended offering is £10 or more per Mass; please make cheques payable to Missio Mass a/c or see over to pay by card)
- Please tick if you do not require a receipt

If you would like to receive a Mass Card, please contact us on 020 7821 9755





Mission Today

Mission Today

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London SW1V 1NU

Tel: 020 7821 9755 (office hours)

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Missio

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Web: millhillmissionaries.com

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Mission Today is printed on paper from renewable resources – managed forests in which new trees are planted for each one felled.

Let's think outside the Box!

If it is not possible for your Red Box to be collected or for you to take it to church, here are ways to 'think outside the Box'.

Below you will find how you can send us your Red Box money today, so that together we can reach missionaries and communities who need our help as soon as possible.

How you can make a donation:



Send a cheque: Make it payable to **Missio-Mill Hill** and post it to Red Box, 23 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1NU



Give online: Go to missio.org.uk/redbox



Give via text: Text **REDBOX 5** (to donate £5) or **REDBOX 10** (to donate £10) to **70085**
This costs £5 or £10 plus your standard rate message



Give via phone: Call us on **020 7821 9755** during office hours to donate with your credit or debit card



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Thank you!

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Today. Tomorrow. Together.

