

# Mission TODAY

missio 



***Look what  
you've done!***

Summer 2017

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Celebrating our amazing volunteers

Explore...donate...reflect  
at [missio.org.uk](http://missio.org.uk)

### **Editorial Board:**

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*Cover: Young girls learning hairdressing and life skills in an APF-supported parish in Kenya.*

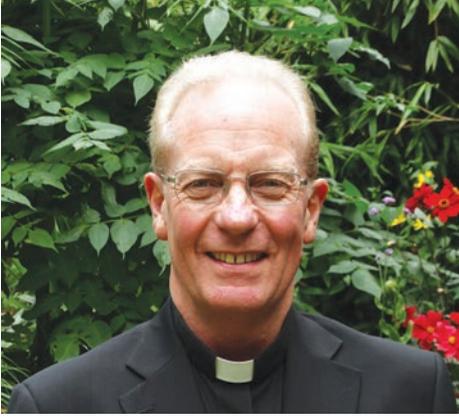
# The National Director writes

**T**his special edition of *Mission Today* is our opportunity to thank you for your loyal and generous support of Catholic communities throughout the world who really need our help.

The Church is growing in Africa and Asia, as the statistics on the following pages show. More Catholics needing more priests, catechists and religious to serve them; new parishes needing churches, convents, children's homes and schools.

You will read how the national contributions towards growing and urgent needs have increased overall this year. Given the present economic and political climate this is a huge achievement. Priests and people, Local Secretaries and Promoters – congratulations!





There are many examples of how your contributions make a difference to people in need. In this edition you will read how Fr Francis Makuba MHM in Nairobi, Kenya, is now able to help the youth in his parish to make the world a better place. And during my recent visit to Myanmar (Burma) I was privileged to visit the parish of Mine Lunn where you have helped to build a parish hall, something that takes on a whole new meaning in much of the world.

The Mill Hill Missionaries share some of their good news and we welcome Fr Jim O'Connell's reflection on seeing the 'face of God'.

This issue of *Mission Today* is dedicated to you in a special way as a token of gratitude for all you are currently doing and intend to do in the future. As missionary disciples, we are responding to the call to proclaim the coming of God's kingdom in this world. It is a mission as urgent today as it was 2,000 years ago. We accept it with joy.

Yours in Christ,

**Fr Anthony Chantry, National Director**

# The Holy Father's Prayer Intentions



**Join with the Holy Father in praying:**

## **JULY**

### **Lapsed Christians**

That through our prayer and witness to the Gospel, our brothers and sisters who have distanced themselves from the faith, may rediscover the merciful closeness of the Lord and the beauty of Christian life.

## **AUGUST**

### **Artists**

That through their creativity, artists of our time may help everyone discover the beauty of creation.

## **SEPTEMBER**

### **Parishes**

That our parishes, animated by a missionary spirit, be places where faith is communicated and charity is seen.

## **OCTOBER**

### **Workers and the unemployed**

That all workers may receive respect and protection of their rights, and that the unemployed may receive the opportunity to contribute to the common good.

### **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.

# Our global family: The Church in numbers

Each year the Vatican releases the latest statistics on our Church throughout the world. In over 1,000 missionary dioceses around the world which are too young or poor to support themselves, the work of the Church continues thanks to your generosity and prayerful support



## 53,277,784

children and young people  
are being educated in:



## 7.2bn

people in the world;  
1 in 6 are baptised  
Catholics

## 96,283

Catholic primary schools

## 46,339

Catholic secondary schools





**16,523**  
dispensaries  
and clinics



**9,492**  
orphanages



**5,158**  
hospitals



**612**  
care homes for  
people living with  
leprosy



**15,679**  
homes for the  
elderly, chronically  
ill, or disabled



**116,843**  
seminarians in their final  
4 years of study

**415,656**  
priests

This includes an increase of  
1,133 priests in Africa and an  
additional 1,104 priests in  
Asia compared with the  
previous year



**368,520**  
lay missionaries

**3,264,768**  
catechists working with children,  
young people and adults  
to explore their faith



# Red Box 2016

**Thank you for the positive difference you have made to millions of people in 2016 through your generous and prayerful support of the Red Box**

**I**n 2016, over £3 million was raised through the iconic Red Box. In England and Wales, you have supported the work of the Church in 98 dioceses across the world. Amongst other things, this year you have:

- **Helped build 88 churches, chapels and convents**
- **Supported the training of 300 Mill Hill Missionaries**
- **Provided bicycles for catechists in 26 parishes in Uganda**
- **Assisted in the ordination of Mongolia's first native priest**

Money raised through the Red Box is often used to help provide the 'ordinary subsidy' which goes to a bishop in a mission diocese. These are the dioceses which are too young or poor to support themselves. This money can then be used for things that are often overlooked when donations are made. Things such as a diocesan office. Or electricity for a parish hall. Money from the Red Box also helps specific projects, such as the Centre in Nairobi you may have seen on the 'thank you' poster at the back of church with your parish's Red Box total for 2016.

## **Cardinal Otunga Girls Empowerment Centre, Nairobi**

The Church relies on you to help people, such as certain groups of impoverished young women in Kenya. Young girls living in extreme poverty are easily trapped into prostitution and sexual exploitation in their efforts to earn a meal or a meagre living. Vulnerable and destitute, many are orphans or come from abusive relationships at home. These young women have been rescued from such situations and are being helped by the Missio-supported Cardinal Maurice Otunga Girls Empowerment Centre in Nairobi. The Home cares for up to thirty students at a time, aged between fourteen and twenty years.

Many of the girls have never been to school. At the Centre they are taught English, reading and writing. The Assumption Sisters of Nairobi also help them to regain their self-worth and self-respect by caring for them, and teaching them skills such as housekeeping, nutrition and sewing. After two years of training they are able to earn a living using their newly

## Income from Red Boxes 2016

Diocese	Income 2016	Income 2015	Increase/ Decrease (-)	Percentage change
Arundel & Brighton	£162,881	£173,873	-10,992	-6.32%
Birmingham	£300,143	£289,028	11,115	3.85%
Brentwood	£85,798	£87,014	-1,216	-1.40%
Cardiff	£95,316	£90,748	4,568	5.03%
Clifton	£123,376	£125,779	-2,403	-1.91%
East Anglia	£49,334	£49,226	108	0.22%
Hallam	£46,470	£45,153	1,317	2.92%
Hexham & Newcastle	£241,625	£242,325	-700	-0.29%
Lancaster	£92,742	£94,172	-1,430	-1.52%
Leeds	£94,874	£106,070	-11,196	-10.56%
Liverpool	£351,162	£353,193	-2,031	-0.58%
Menevia	£32,047	£29,356	2,691	9.17%
Middlesbrough	£75,724	£76,973	-1,249	-1.62%
Northampton	£65,508	£54,806	10,702	19.53%
Nottingham	£101,924	£97,496	4,428	4.54%
Plymouth	£104,617	£86,417	18,200	21.06%
Portsmouth	£151,870	£149,417	2,453	1.64%
Salford	£271,564	£270,997	567	0.21%
Shrewsbury	£129,374	£124,991	4,383	3.51%
Southwark	£204,869	£208,325	-3,456	-1.66%
Westminster	£219,575	£208,968	10,607	5.08%
Wrexham	£22,021	£22,511	-490	-2.18%
Anonymous donations	£16,717	£7,978	8,739	109.54%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>£3,039,531</b>	<b>£2,994,816</b>	<b>44,715</b>	<b>1.49%</b>



acquired skills. Some go on to work in tourism, hospitality and catering; others work as seamstresses in factories or in their own businesses. The Sisters continue to look out for the girls for two years after they have left the Home to ensure they are able to get on their feet and stay

there. The hope is that through the newly acquired skills they will become economically independent and not end up back on the streets and slums of Nairobi.

**Your support has made a tremendous difference. Thank you.**



# A parish hall with a difference

**Missio's National Director, Fr Anthony Chantry, recently visited Myanmar (Burma) and was welcomed by the Mine Lunn community**

**W**hen is a parish hall not a parish hall? This is the kind of question I was asking myself on a visit to Mine Lunn parish in a remote area of Myanmar (Burma). The parish had invited us to celebrate the opening of a children's hostel which was funded by one of our faithful supporters.

On arrival, we were led by the parish priest and the people of the parish to the church for prayers of thanksgiving and blessing. Following this, we went to the parish hall, a large rectangular building with brick walls, open windows, a corrugated iron roof and a concrete floor. Several hundred people crowded into the hall and sat on the ground. 'Please thank the people in your country who have helped us,' was the consistent message repeated in word, song and dance.



A parish hall in England and Wales usually means a place where we can hold our parish functions. Naturally there will be electricity, running water, a kitchen, furniture and toilets, and of course, clear instructions about where to go in an emergency.

Not so in Mine Lunn. Like most parish halls in Myanmar, it provides the only large space in the entire community to host any kind of function or indoor activity.

A parish hall here will give shelter to all kinds of group activities, not only of the parish but from the surrounding area: catechism classes for children and adults; meetings of leaders, teachers and self-help groups; workshops on development; mobile health clinics; cultural drama and music; feast day celebrations; vocational training; the list goes on and on.

Throughout the world Missio helps parishes build halls and when I say 'help', I do not mean provide all the funding required. Missio sends enough help to complete a project the community has begun itself and been working hard to complete. Fundraising in poor countries is a very slow business.

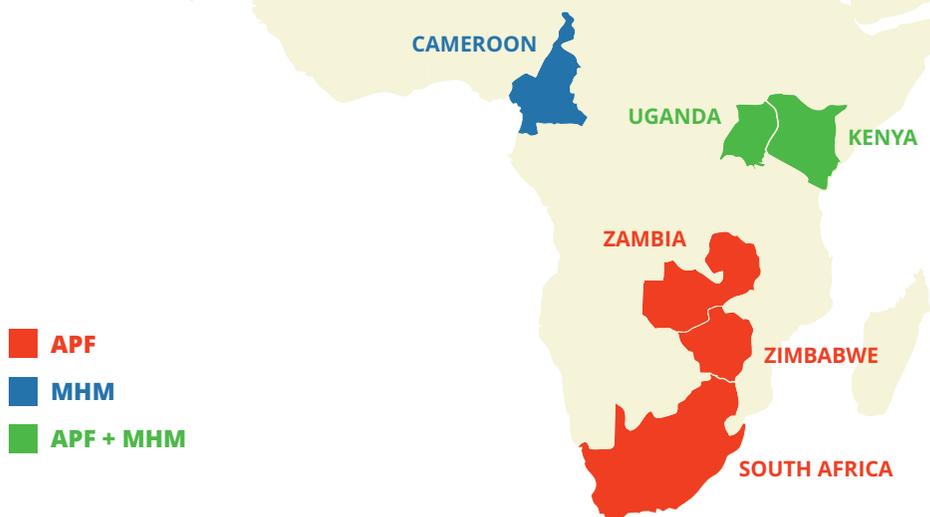
Through Missio, you give the extra push to help parish communities realise their dream of a sheltered space they can use to develop the lives of the people in that area, Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

***The answer to the question, "When is a parish hall not a parish hall?" is when it becomes a sign of hope! It is a sign of hope that, with God's guidance, the people of places such as Mine Lunn will help to make their world a better place for all.***

Your generous support of the Church and people of Myanmar shows them that they are not alone in embracing hope.



# Where you've helped



**M**issio's APF and the Mill Hill Missionaries share all of the money collected through the Red Boxes. The APF share is distributed to build churches, train Church leaders and support communities of faith, as part of its mandate to promote the worldwide mission of the Church. The Mill Hill share supports the Mill Hill Society, enabling it to train and maintain abroad its priests, brothers and lay associates and to support their overseas work.

**Missio internationally supports the work of the Catholic Church in 157 countries. The information on these pages relates to Missio England and Wales.**

**The Mill Hill Missionaries are present in 27 countries. The information on these pages relates to the countries supported through your Red Box.**



## Red Box Campaign 2017

**There could be over £500,000 lying uncollected in people's Red Boxes. All it needs is a push to encourage people to get them emptied and find out more about the impact of that small Red Box.**

This June many parishes will be saying 'thank you' to all those helping to share God's love by supporting our sisters and brothers around the world through the Red Box. Aimed to coincide with Pentecost – the Church's birthday – we're encouraging people to bake cakes in the shape of a Red Box! If you want to get involved, speak to your parish Red Box volunteer (Local Secretary). If you bake a cake, do send us a picture – there may even be a prize!

Email us at [redbox@missio.org.uk](mailto:redbox@missio.org.uk)

## Every pound coin counts!

We estimate that a Red Box could hold 350 £1 coins! With the introduction of the new twelve-sided £1 coins, why not fill up your Red Box with the old £1 coins? They go out of circulation in October this year. However, we will still be able to turn them into cash via the bank, so encourage your family and friends to put their old £1s to good use by filling up your Red Box!

Don't forget to 'like us' on Facebook and follow us on Twitter to keep up-to-date with the latest stories from the people you are supporting, as well as prayers and information on upcoming events for members of the Red Box family.



Facebook.com/MissioUK  
Facebook.com/MillHillMissionaries



Twitter.com/MissioUK



# Did you know?

**S**ince 1922, Missio has been the Catholic Church's official charity for overseas mission and is part of the worldwide network of Pontifical Mission Societies. We bring the hope of the Gospel where there is turmoil, poverty and uncertainty in the world, and where the Church is new, young or poor. Missio empowers local people to form and sustain communities of faith and we train and nurture future leaders so that the vital work of the Church in the world can take place.

## Our focus areas

To provide for the different needs of the overseas Church, Missio focuses on four main areas:

### Caring for our Church family and sending missionaries

*Association for the Propagation of the Faith (APF)*

In England and Wales Missio's APF works in partnership with the Mill Hill Missionaries through the Red Box. Find out more at: [missio.org.uk](http://missio.org.uk)

### Training future priests and sisters overseas

*Society of St Peter the Apostle (SPA)*

Through the SPA you can sponsor the training of a future priest in a mission diocese. To find out more, please contact the Missio office on 020 7821 9755

### Supporting children's faith and development projects

*Mission Together – children helping children*

For free, engaging, educational and liturgical resources for children, please visit: [missiontogether.org.uk](http://missiontogether.org.uk)

### Nurturing a worldwide missionary spirit

*Pontifical Missionary Union (PMU)*

Missio organises a conference in collaboration with the Catholic Missionary Union, Heythrop College and the Mill Hill Missionaries. Save the date: 11 October 2017. More details at [missio.org.uk](http://missio.org.uk)



## Help Missio's APF-Mill Hill bring faith and hope to where they are most needed

Your prayers and generosity make possible the essential and life-giving mission of the Church in our world.

Red Box holders and annual members are part of Missio's APF-Mill Hill worldwide family and play a vital role in the mission of the Church, bringing God's love and renewed hope to the poorest and most in need.

### Your support

To offer your support, please complete the form overleaf and return it to the address provided.

You can also call 020 7821 9755, or visit [missio.org.uk](http://missio.org.uk)



## Leave a legacy of faith – care for the future of our Church

Please help us show the love of Jesus to the children of our world.

Gifts left to us in our supporters' Wills help us to reach out with God's compassion to those who live in turmoil, poverty and uncertainty throughout the world. By making a gift to Missio's APF and/or Mill Hill in your Will, you are providing the building blocks of our churches, schools, orphanages and clinics and leaving a foundation of faith for the future.

Please ask for our information brochure (see next page), which will be sent to you in confidence and without any obligation on your part.

If you would prefer to speak to someone, please call Mary Rafat, Legacy Administrator, at Missio's National Office on 020 7821 9755.

Alternatively you can email the National Director, Fr Anthony Chantry, at: [director@missio.org.uk](mailto:director@missio.org.uk)



## Our Lady's Guild of the Sick

In the spirit of St Thérèse of Lisieux, members of Our Lady's Guild of the Sick offer up their prayers, their pains, and suffering for the mission of the Church and its missionaries.

By becoming a member of the Guild, you will receive a quarterly newsletter and a *Mission Today* magazine. On the first Friday of each month Holy Mass is offered for your intentions in the chapel at Herbert House – the Mill Hill Missionaries' home for sick and retired missionaries.

Membership is free and you can become a member of Our Lady's Guild by ticking the box in the blue section on the page opposite. Please remember to fill out your name and address above (in the white section) and return to us.

***'By making such an offering, the sick themselves become missionaries'***

St John Paul II



## Send your Mass intention to Missio

The custom of requesting a priest to offer Mass for a specific intention, even when one cannot be present at Mass, is a longstanding tradition in the Church.

The faithful usually make an offering, called a stipend, to the priest in order to apply the Mass to a specific intention, such as an anniversary or birthday. By making this offering and by parting with something that is their own, the faithful associate themselves more intimately with Christ. The offering of a stipend is also a means for Catholics to contribute to the upkeep of the clergy.

Many priests in Africa and Asia depend entirely on Mass stipends for their income. Please help them by sending your Mass intention/s to Missio and we will pass them on to a priest overseas.

**Please add your Mass intention/s on the form opposite**



**Please fill in the form below and return to:**

National Director, Missio, 23 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1NU

**Your details** (PLEASE PRINT)

**\*Required fields**

Title\* \_\_\_\_\_

First Name\* \_\_\_\_\_ Surname\* \_\_\_\_\_

Address\* \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode\* \_\_\_\_\_

Tel \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Please send me the quarterly Missio **e-newsletter** (provide email address above)

**I want Missio to claim Gift Aid on this and any future donations** until I notify you otherwise. 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 Tax.

Date \_\_\_\_\_ **N.B. Please ensure the box is ticked.**

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**I enclose a donation of £** \_\_\_\_\_ *(please make cheques/postal orders payable to APF-Mill Hill)*. You can also give online at **missio.org.uk** or call us on 020 7821 9755 *(office hours)* or via credit card/direct debit – see over

I would like to make an **annual gift**, offering £30 or more a year

**I will collect a Red Box** from my parish Local Secretary or Parish Priest *(money from Red Boxes is collected by volunteers in your parish)*

I would like to become a **volunteer for the APF** in my parish

Please tick if you require a receipt

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

I would like to become a member of **Our Lady's Guild of the Sick**

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

**Intentions:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I enclose £ \_\_\_\_\_ *(the usual offering is £5 or more per Mass; please make cheques payable to Missio Mass a/c or see over to pay by card)*

Please tick if you require a receipt



## To donate via card

Please ensure you have filled in the front of this form first!

### Your details (PLEASE PRINT)

### \*Required fields

I would like to pay £ \_\_\_\_\_ by:

Visa/Mastercard     Maestro/Delta/Visa     CAF Charity Card

Name on card (PLEASE PRINT)\* \_\_\_\_\_

Card No\* \_\_\_\_\_

Issue No \_\_\_\_\_ Start date \_\_\_\_\_

Expiry date\* \_\_\_\_\_ Security code\* \_\_\_\_\_ Last three numbers on the signature strip on the back of your card

Please tick if you require a receipt

## To donate via Direct Debit

I wish to pay Missio the sum of (Please tick):

£30     £50     £100     Other £ \_\_\_\_\_

Monthly     Quarterly     Annually on the:

5th     15th     28th day of the month



Instruction to your bank or building society to pay Direct Debit



Please fill in the whole form using a ballpoint pen and send to:  
Missio, 23 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1NU

### Name and full postal address of your bank or building society

To: The Manager \_\_\_\_\_ Bank/building society \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Service user number

2 5 4 5 8 8

Reference (for office use)

Bank/building society account number \_\_\_\_\_

Branch sort code \_\_\_\_\_

Name of account holder(s) \_\_\_\_\_

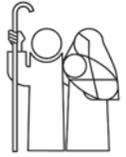
Instruction to your Bank/building society: Please pay Missio Direct Debits from the account detailed in this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Missio and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my bank/building society.

Signature of account holder \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Banks and building societies may not accept Direct Debit instructions for some types of account.





# Did you know?

**T**he Mill Hill Missionaries, also known as St Joseph's Missionary Society of Mill Hill, are an international fellowship of Catholic missionaries dedicated to announcing the Good News of Jesus Christ to people throughout the world. Founded in 1866, they are the only major missionary society to have been formed in England.

Since 1936 the Mill Hill Missionaries have been working in partnership with Missio's APF through the Red Box programme in parishes throughout England and Wales.

Mill Hill Missionaries are found in almost every continent of the world but more specifically in Africa, Asia, North and Latin America and in the home regions of Europe. Their charism is 'to love and to serve' and go where the need is greatest, to the people 'most abandoned and poorest in the means of grace', to share with them the kingdom where justice and peace reign and where God's creation is respected and valued as God's precious gift to all of us to share in.

There are currently 300 young men studying to become Mill Hill Missionaries throughout the world. In 2016, 6 Members were ordained Mill Hill Missionaries – 2 from India and 4 from Africa. We congratulate them and wish them every blessing in their ministry.

## Parishes where Mill Hill Missionaries are working:

### 19 Parishes in Africa:

**Uganda:** Loyoro, Panyangara, Mbikko

**Kenya:** Luanda, Shauri Moyo, Malindi, Nanga, Kisumu Ndogo, Witu, Kitale (specialised ministry)

**Cameroon:** Fundong, Ilung, Oku, Kembong, Mutengene

**South Africa:** Sasolburg Parish and Parys. Also helping in Vijoenskroon, and the Cathedral Parish

**Congo:** Basankusu

**South Sudan:** Juba

### 22 Parishes in Asia:

**Pakistan:** Kotri, Tando Adam, Tando Allahyar, Matli, Sargodha, Peshawar (specialised ministry), Rawalpindi

**India:** Pargi, Vikarabad, Nelikuduru, Baswar, Vishunpur

**Philippines:** Casay, Anini-y, Turda

**Malaysia:** Sarikie, Julao, Betangor, Kapit, Kanowit, Lapok, Miri

To find out more about the Mill Hill Missionaries, please visit: [millhillmissionaries.org.uk](http://millhillmissionaries.org.uk)



# Walking through a minefield in the dark



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In the Summer 2016 edition of *Mission Today* we brought you the story of Fr Francis and his vital work with youth in the Kenyan 'slum parish'. Here is an update from him and some of the young people you are supporting

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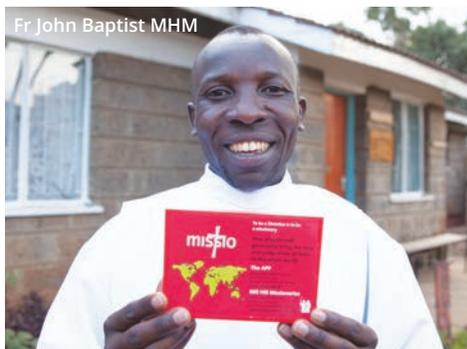
**F**or many people living in a city such as Nairobi, there isn't much to be joyful about. Of course, some people have the means to live in a nice house in a quiet suburb. But most people in the nation's capital don't have access to one of the many shopping malls springing up in the smarter areas of town.

Shauri Moyo is a very poor suburb of Nairobi. Fr Francis Makuba, a Kenyan and a Mill Hill Missionary, lives among and serves the people of the area where he leads the thriving parish of St Joseph. The parish was started 37 years ago by the Mill Hill Missionaries.

'Many people in the parish are without jobs and live from day to day. They are living in very basic conditions, without access to clean water, electricity and sanitation. Sometimes they are living without hope. The average age in the area must be about 20,' Fr Francis explains.

With poverty come the common ills of urban life, including crime, gang violence, drugs and alcohol abuse. There is also instability of family life and a high rate of teenage pregnancy. Fr Francis explains that growing up as a young person in this environment is 'like walking through a minefield in the dark'.

In this darkness, Fr Francis and his fellow Mill Hill Missionary, Fr John Baptist, are trying to offer a guiding light to the youth of the parish. They are providing the opportunity for young people to meet together to discuss their problems and encourage one another in their faith. As Pope Francis reminds us, it is through faith that we are enlightened by the 'God who revealed his immense love in the crucified and risen Christ.'



Watching Fr Francis interact with young people is a real lesson in youth ministry. Surrounded by dozens of energetic people, he plays the part of the elder brother, being able to relate to them and generate much-needed hope and joy. As their priest he provides spiritual guidance and pastoral support.

***Jemimah, one of the parish's young people, says the programmes have helped her 'acquire skills, have friends, feel loved and even noticed in society. They have helped me to escape bad companies.'***

Another of the parish's young people, James, shows all the signs of being a good missionary. He says that 'through this programme, we young Catholics come together to show our cooperation in spreading the Gospel.'

You have been helping Fr Francis and his co-workers to be a light in the darkness for the youth of Shauri Moyo. He knows first-hand how difficult it can be to enkindle the light of faith and hope in young people living among lights contrary to the Gospel. Fr Francis has the last word, 'Ours is an Easter faith. Christ is the Light of the world. He has overcome the darkness. He will lead the way!'

# A huge thank you...

**Where would we be without the thousands of volunteers who empty the Red Boxes and bank the money they contain year in, year out?**

**W**henever we can, we try to thank our volunteers for their time and effort, their witness and for living out their missionary calling in this special way. The role is not just about the money, but about handing on the faith to new generations.

On these pages are some of the many inspirational volunteers who have received awards for their tireless support of our global family.



(Above) Peter Adamson of North Walsham, with Deacon Christopher Brighten, accepting his Bronze Award



(Above) Derek Millard was recently presented with the Gold Award for 61 years' continuous service as Local Secretary for St Teresa's, Wolverhampton. He is pictured here with Fr Liam Durrant MHM

(Right) Here with some Red Box promoters are retiring Local Secretary, Louis Hannett (extreme right) and incumbent Local Secretary, Andrew Willett (on his left) at Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary parish, Charlton Kings, Cheltenham



# and congratulations!

Awards are usually presented in the context of the Red Box Appeal in parishes which takes place roughly every five years. People receive a certificate and unique badge to mark their service. A Bronze Award is for between 10 and 20 years' service, and a Silver Award for over 20 years' service. We have recently introduced a Gold Award for exceptional

Local Secretaries who have served for more than 45 years.

One such volunteer is Audrey Francis from St John the Baptist Parish, Andover, who recently retired, having been a Local Secretary for 46 years!

**Thank you to all our Local Secretaries and Promoters!**



(Above) Deacon Paul O'Connor was presented with a Silver Award at St George's Parish, Worcester, by Fr Paul F Mooney MHM



(Right) Deacon Christopher Brighten presented Renee Thomas with a Silver Award at Our Lady's Church in Kings Lynn



(Above) Joan Loveridge has been a Local Secretary since 1955 and was presented with the Gold Award by Fr Anthony Chantry (National Director of Missio) and Fr Michael Corcoran (General Superior of the Mill Hill Missionaries) at St Helen's Parish, Crosby, Liverpool



Children in Ecuador

# I swear I saw the face of God

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**Fr Jim O'Connell is an Irish Mill Hill Missionary who has dedicated his life to serving others. He has a wealth of missionary experience, having lived and worked in western Kenya for 12 years, in addition to being on the Mill Hill formation staff in both England and Holland. Here he talks about God's presence in our lives**

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**A** newspaper photographer was in Ecuador in 1987 covering the earthquake that devastated many areas of the country. In the midst of the catastrophe, he witnessed something that touched him deeply. There was a line of people at a food distribution point. While the line was long, it was moving briskly. And in that line, at the very end, stood a young girl about twelve years of age. She waited patiently as those at the front of the line received a little rice, some canned food or fruit. Slowly but surely, she was getting closer to the front of the line, closer to the food. She did not notice the growing concern on the faces of those distributing the food.

The food was running out. Their anxiety began to show, but she did not notice. Her attention seemed always to focus on three children under the trees across the street.

At long last she stepped forward to get her food. But the only thing left was a lonely banana. The workers were almost ashamed but she did not seem to mind. Quietly she took the banana and ran across the street where the three small children waited. Very deliberately, she peeled the banana and carefully divided it into three equal parts. Placing the precious food into the eager hands of the three younger ones, she then sat down and licked the inside of the banana peel. Reflecting on this scene, the photographer said: 'In that moment, I swear, I saw the face of God.'

'To see the face of God' is a very ancient phrase that occurs many times in the Bible. The psalmist prayed that he would see the face of God: "'Come," my heart says, "seek his face!" Your face, Lord, do I seek. Do not hide your face from me'

(Ps 27:8-9). And: 'Let the light of your face shine on us, O Lord' (Ps 4).

### Seeing God's face

The photographer's story reminds us that the presence of God is all around us in the most ordinary experiences; 'Where charity and love are found, God is present there.' We can 'see the face of God' in many precious moments of daily life. Such moments can be joyful and happy or they may be dark and lonely times. One can discover God in an act of kindness or in a hug. We can be aware of God in times of prayer and worship, or discover that God is present in an experience of hospitality, or in the support of family or friends that helps one to cope with the loss of a loved one.

***'May God let his face shine on you and be gracious to you. May God uncover his face to you and bring you peace'***

Numbers: 6:24-6

God can be present in that 'something' that helps a person to keep going when things are difficult. When someone says 'I got strength from somewhere. I could not have coped without it,' there is a touch of God's presence here in the person's life. Spiritual writers tell us this is often the way it is; this is God's way of coming to us. For most people there are no great shining lights and visions, but just a gentle touch of God that awakens our hearts to his abiding presence in the ordinary events and experiences of life.

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## Dear Editor

A few interesting lines caught my eye in an article in *Mission Today*. Pope Francis challenges us to 'open our eyes and see the wounds of our brothers and sisters who are denied their dignity. Let us heed their cry for help.'

We can offer that help with our prayers and through the famous Red Box. Apart from your regular contribution, whenever your wallet or purse gets heavier with too many loose coins, you could simply transfer some of them into the Red Box and you will feel lighter.

Whenever we have a celebration in the house such as a birthday, anniversary or passing an exam, we spend a good amount of money on a party. At this great moment we should think about others and contribute an appropriate amount into the Red Box. At Christmas, my 5-year-old grandson saw my Red Box and asked me what it was. I explained to him that there are so many children in the world who do not have enough food to eat and have no toys to play with so we help them through this Red Box. I gave him a box and told him whenever he gets pocket money to put a few coins in the box. He agreed. Children are really amazing!

It is so important to remember those who are less fortunate and do what we can to help. The Red Box is a simple way to achieve this. Let's come together and support this great project and lend a hand to our brothers and sisters.

**Joseph Jeyakumar – Reading**

*Editor: Thank you for your inspiring letter! Your ideas are a fantastic way of connecting children with those in need.*

## I am alive!

Earlier this year an Italian hotel was buried in an avalanche. Rescuers heard a woman crying out from the darkness, 'This is Giorgia and I am alive!' Afterwards she told reporters: 'Those were the most beautiful words I have ever said.'

One can only imagine her feelings of relief and joy. From that moment, I imagine she would cherish her life anew, seeing it even more as a precious gift from God, filling her with thanksgiving. Her life would be richer and fuller than before – a life transformed only because she had come through great pain and suffering, having been buried and trapped in what had become for her a tomb. Released from that tomb, she had risen to new life – a Resurrection experience. It's a dying and a rising experience which we must all go through in our own unique way if we are to know the fullness of life in Jesus. Then sharing in his Way of the Cross we can truly say those beautiful words: 'I am... and I am alive in Christ!'

*Father Peter*

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

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# Join us at a Mission Mass this Summer

Together with family and friends, you are invited to Mass and refreshments to thank you for your support and to provide you with an opportunity to hear how your Red Box donations sustain our work throughout the world.

The celebrations are a wonderful way to meet other APF-Mill Hill supporters and to join in prayer and solidarity for our Church overseas.

## Mission Masses 2017

### Hexham and Newcastle Diocese

Saturday 3 June at 11am  
St Joseph's Church,  
High West Street,  
Gateshead NE8 1LX

### Salford Diocese

Saturday 10 June at 3pm  
Salford Cathedral,  
3 Ford Street,  
Salford M3 6DP

### Liverpool Archdiocese

Sunday 18 June at 2pm  
Herbert House,  
41 Victoria Road, Formby,  
Liverpool L37 1LW

### Cardiff Archdiocese

Sunday 2 July at 3pm  
Llantarnam Abbey,  
Cwmbran NP44 3YJ

### Southwark Archdiocese

Saturday 8 July at 2pm  
Metropolitan Cathedral  
of St George, Westminster  
Bridge Road, London  
SE1 7HY

### Plymouth Diocese

Sunday 9 July at 3pm  
Plymouth Cathedral,  
45 Cecil Street,  
Plymouth PL1 5HW

### Birmingham Archdiocese

Sunday 23 July at 11am  
St Chad's Cathedral,  
Queensway,  
Birmingham B4 6EU

Visit our website for more details:

[missio.org.uk](http://missio.org.uk)

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