

An assembly reflection: Solidarity with God's Family



This reflection was created to help schools celebrate the Extraordinary Month of Mission (Oct'19). It focuses on one of four EMM aims: to increase support of worldwide mission.

Today we're going to think about family. To begin I'd like you to raise your hand if you have family members: in this school? In this town/city? In this country? In other parts of the world?

Just with this little exercise we can see that families are made up of multiple connections. Family is where most of us learn that life isn't just about me. It's where we realise that we belong to each other.

Families also teach us from an early age that we belong to a group of individuals who love each other - even though they are different. Family members have different interests and views. Some might be of a different race or follow a different religion.

As we grow from childhood to adolescence, our sense of family begins to widen. It starts to include close friends and sometimes communities - like school or church - where we feel accepted, looked after and supported, and where we accept, look after and support others too.

This sense of responsibility and attention to each other takes us closer to the original meaning of the word *family*. *Family* comes from an ancient Latin word *famulus*, which meant servant.

This ancient definition reminds us that being part of a family means accepting our responsibility to serve one another. It means being attentive to the needs of each member, so that everyone has what they need to flourish.

So far, we've been thinking about families we know well, but there's one we haven't mentioned. It's one we sometimes forget to notice, which is ironic as we all belong to it and it's huge!

- What family might this be?

God's Universal Family - to which everyone on earth belongs.

This mention of God's universal family provides a good introduction to the importance of mission and the work of the Catholic charity Missio.

- What do you think the word *mission* means?

Possible answers: an important task, a goal, a difficult aim.

One way to understand *mission* is by going back to the original meaning.

Mission comes from another ancient Latin word, *mittere*, meaning to send.

During his time on earth and before he returned to God, his Father, Jesus sent his followers into the world to share his teaching and share God's love. This remains the mission of Jesus' followers today. We - you - are sent into the world to, as Pope Francis says;

'Build a better world, a world of brothers and sisters, a world of justice, of love, of peace, of brotherhood, of solidarity.'

Making the world a better place is an impossible mission to undertake on our own, but as children of God we don't work alone. We act in solidarity.

Solidarity comes from the same root as the word solid. Solidarity reminds us that we are not separate from one another, but all of us, wherever we are in the world, are bonded together and dependent on each other, just like in our own families.

This solidarity is made clear in one of St Paul's letters, found in the New Testament. St Paul wrote:

For as with the human body which is a unity although it has many parts - all the parts of the body, though many, still making up one single body - so it is with Christ....

The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' and nor can the head say to the feet, 'I have no need of you.'

If one part is hurt, all the parts share its pain. And if one part is honoured, all the parts share its joy. Now Christ's body is yourselves, each of you with a part to play in the whole.

1 Corinthians 12:12-27 (abridged)

Missio asks Catholics and Catholic communities like ours, to stand in solidarity with their brothers and sisters around the world who are struggling because of poverty or conflict.

- How do you think Missio encourages us to do this?

Answer: Missio encourages us to stand in solidarity with those struggling by always remembering that we all belong to one family - God's family, to be there for our brothers and sisters by praying for one another and by sharing what we can.

Missio works alongside thousands of overseas missionaries who dedicate their lives to sharing the message of God's love in places of poverty and conflict. Thanks to prayers offered and money shared, Missio supports these missionaries as they run health and education projects, feeding programmes, orphanages, counselling services, community centres and churches in some of the most difficult and dangerous places in the world.

By supporting these missionaries through Missio, we are doing what St Paul asked us to do. We are recognising that through Christ we are connected to each other and - as with our own families - in spite of differences and distances, we are playing our part in building a better world for all.

Let's pray for these missionaries and those they serve as we close with words that remind us that we are all children one of Father, *Our Father*.

Fundraising is a brilliant way to involve everyone in raising money for Missio. Your support will enable missionaries to work alongside communities globally that are poor or in need, regardless of their background or belief. Below are just a couple of ideas:

Baby face fun: Appeal for staff (or students if this is a form fundraiser) to bring in photos of themselves as a baby. Create a quiz sheet and sell for a small donation. Allow a limited time for completed sheets to be returned. If there is more than one winner, draw names out of the hat for a mystery prize – we suggest the winner has a framed photo taken with some of the grown-up babies!

Service with a smile: Encourage students to take on extra chores at home for a donation to Missio. Hosting this drive in a *Service with a Smile* week can help to focus efforts.

Please *share your fundraising events with us @missioUK adding the hashtag #missiontocare*