Good morning / evening. My name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and I’m excited to share with you a vital part of the work of Missio, the Pope’s official charity for world mission.

You probably know Missio through the Red Box – which is a wonderful way to support missionaries and the spread of the Gospel in the world. But did you know that, as well as supporting the Church in areas of great poverty, the Holy Father asks Missio to help train future Priests and Sisters overseas?

In fact, Missio is unique in its commitment to supporting each and every seminary in the missionary world, helping to train over 25,000 future Priests as well as 11,000 religious Sisters every year.

Missio believes that caring for the physical and spiritual wellbeing of our sisters and brothers in the poorest and most troubled parts of the world is essential. We are called upon to share our faith and our hope with them; igniting God’s love in every community and letting each and every person know that they are loved and valued – by God and by us.

In mission countries, which are often struggling with poverty, conflict, and very little infrastructure or social care, the Catholic Church is sometimes the only organisation providing both practical help and hope to people in great need. Often, parish and mission stations are the only providers of education, medicine, community, and pastoral care and support in an area. Priests in these dioceses often cover areas of hundreds of miles, visiting communities in remote and hard-to-reach areas, to administer the Sacraments, caring for those who are sick, and letting people know that they are not forgotten.

Seeing Priests and Sisters from their own communities is especially precious in areas of the world where Christians are minority populations, or even discriminated against or persecuted. Being able to celebrate Mass together, and seeing young men and women dedicating their lives under such difficult circumstances helps to bring communities fresh hope and strength – a sense of belonging through shared faith and communion, which enables them to face the challenges of their circumstances with renewed strength.

So, we rejoice in the vocations we see across the missionary world, and for the work of Missio in supporting them. These Priests and Sisters are building the Church of tomorrow, ensuring the gift of faith is passed on to future generations worldwide.

But ensuring that no vocation is turned away through lack of funds has its challenges.

In mission dioceses in Africa and Asia, it costs at least £700 a year to train a student for the priesthood. Despite the sacrifices made by their families and parish communities, and the Seminaries’ efforts to grow their own food, it is a struggle for them to cover the full costs of Seminary training.

Missio believes no vocation should be turned away through lack of funds. That’s why it is asking supporters in England and Wales to help fund priestly vocations in five countries – India, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Kenya, and Malawi - where it has a special arrangement with seminary partners to sponsor students directly.

Missio is asking parish communities to raise £42 a month (that’s £500 a year or £1.37 per day) for four years. As a parish, we can work together to fund a young man in one of these countries, and in return we will receive the name of our seminarian, as he enters the final four years of Theology studies. He will keep us updated about his studies and will receive our names so that he can hold us in prayer, if we so choose. We also have the opportunity to correspond with him via Missio. It’s not compulsory, but it does mean we can form a more personal relationship with our seminarian, and journey with him on the road to Priesthood.

Teresa from Bury St Edmunds was Fr Vincent’s sponsor, he is now a Bishop in Malawi.

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

We have a wonderful opportunity to be part of building the Church of the future, and I hope you’ll join me in signing up to sponsor the training of a future Priest in a mission country.

Together we can help ignite God’s love and build a strong and vibrant global Church for tomorrow. And the more of us who are involved, the better! If you would like to take part, please let me know after Mass or you can take a leaflet and let me know next week. Simply add your name and contact details to the form [XXX give details of where the form is] before you leave Mass today.

Thank you so much for your time, and God bless you.