

The Extraordinary Missionary Month 2019 – An overview



In the decades following the ravages of the Napoleonic Wars, the Catholic Church developed a tremendous missionary dynamic and engaged in one of the most successful mission initiatives in church history. Many of the major missionary orders were

founded in the mid-19th century. They sent thousands of missionaries, men and women, to Asia and Africa, proclaiming the message of Jesus often under the most difficult conditions and establishing new churches. However, the context of colonization and the conviction of the superiority of European culture often stained and distorted the proclamation of the gospel.

After nationalist thinking had led Europe into the catastrophe of the First World War, Pope Benedict XV wrote in 1919 the missionary encyclical "Maximum Illud". He encouraged the Church to re-engage in a universal mission free of its historical burden of colonialism and of all expansionist ambitions.

100 years later, Pope Francis announces an "Extraordinary Mission Month". As Christians we live in a time when the world order is shaken and value systems are questioned, when our faith is challenged by a secular culture and in many places Christians face persecution. In this historical context we are invited to reflect together on the meaning and practice of mission today and to renew our missionary commitment.

With the Lenten impulses we want to invite you to enter into a personal and communal reflection on the different dimensions of the mission of the Church:

1. **A personal encounter with Jesus Christ** living in his Church: in the Eucharist, in the Word of God, and in personal and communal prayer.
2. **Testimony:** the witness of missionary saints, martyrs, and confessors of the faith as an expression of the Church throughout the world.
3. **Missionary formation:** biblical, catechetical, spiritual, and theological.
4. **Missionary charity:** The witness of selfless love and of lived solidarity with the poor and the suffering to make God's love for all people visible.

THE MEANING OF THE LOGO

The logo of the Extraordinary Missionary Month October 2019 depicts a missionary cross whose traditional colors recall the five continents.

The CROSS is the instrument and the efficacious sign of the communion between God and humanity for the universality of our mission. The Cross is luminous, full of color, a sign of victory and resurrection.

The world is transparent, because our action of evangelization has no barriers or boundaries; it is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Christian charity and the world transfigured in the Spirit overcome distances and open the gaze of our mind and heart.

The words **BAPTIZED AND SENT**, which accompany the image, indicate the two characteristics and inalienable elements of every Christian: baptism and proclamation.

The colors of the Cross are those traditionally attributed to the five continents: red for America, green for Africa, white for Europe, yellow for Asia, and blue for Oceania.

Red recalls the blood of the American martyrs, seeds of a new life in the Christian faith. Red recalls the earth and all that is terrestrial

Green is the color of Africa, of life, nature, and vegetation. It symbolizes growth, fertility, youth, and vitality. It is also the color of hope, one of the three theological virtues.

White is a symbol of joy, the beginning of new life in Christ. It is the challenge for an old Europe, that it might rediscover the evangelizing force that it generated thanks to so many Churches and so many saints.

Yellow is a color of light, which feeds on light by invoking the true Light. In Asia Jesus our light was born.

Blue is the color of Oceania, of the water of life that quenches us and restores us along the path to God. It is also the color of our sky, a sign of God's dwelling with us.

Questions for reflection

Let's take a look at the general chapters of our congregations, which have been struggling over the last decades to translate the missionary charisma of their founders into today's reality. What key points of our mission have emerged?

The Extraordinary Missionary Month 2019 – Papal documents

A historical overview of the most important papal pronouncements allows us realize, that the church does not only have a mission, but that she is missionary by her very nature. Each moment in history has its own challenges and it is up to us, from the joy of the Gospel, to respond to them.



1919 Pope Benedict XV: Maximum Illud - the Apostolic Letter, "on the activity of missionaries in the world" presents a changed understanding of mission. It calls for a good preparation of missionaries, an understanding of the culture of the people, a promotion of the local clergy, a right of autonomy of the mission churches and a clear cut separation between colonization and Christian mission. **"Remember that you not have to spread a human reign, but the reign of Christ."**^{ML}



1926 Pope Pius XI: Rerum Ecclesiae
Themes: the local clergy and hierarchy; to be 'beggars for Christ'; 'the salvation of souls'; an appeal to help the various organisations which support the missions; an invitation to contemplative orders to start foundations in mission countries. 1939: The first African bishop in modern times, Mgr. Josef Kiwanuka, is consecrated by the Pope. **"Experience... has proven that the inhabitants of those remote regions of the East and of the South are frequently not inferior to us at all, and are capable of holding their own with us, even in mental ability."** RE 26



1951 Pope Pius XII: Evangelii Praecones 'Heralds of the Gospel' offers a review of the successful missionary work in the 25 years since Rerum Ecclesiae and stresses that the mission churches are taking roots and becoming autonomous. **"The Church's aim is not the domination of peoples or the gaining of temporal dominions; she is eager only to bring the supernatural light of faith to all peoples, and to promote the interests of civilization and culture, and fraternal concord among nations.."** EP 23



1957 Pope Pius XII: Fidei Donum - 'The gift of faith':
Themes: The threefold duty to mission: prayer and works of charity; the temporary mission assignment of diocesan priests (FiDoPs); the danger of 'atheistic materialism'. **"How urgent it is to increase the number of missionaries to give a more adequate training to local leaders!"**^{FD 26.}



1959 Pope John XXII: Princeps Pastorum - 'The Prince of the Shepherds'
Themes: the importance of missionary work; the supporting role of the native clergy, as well as the laity. **"(The church in many mission countries) now governed by an ecclesiastical hierarchy of their own, have their own ecclesiastical organization, and are freely offering to other Church communities those very gifts, spiritual and material, which they formerly used to receive."** PP 10



1965 Pope Paul VI: Ad Gentes
"Divinely sent to the nations of the world to be unto them a universal sacrament... the pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature, since it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she draws her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father. This decree, however, 'flows from a fountain of love' or charity of God the Father". AG 1.2



1975 Pope Paul VI: Evangelii Nuntiandi
Written after the Synod of Bishops, the way to evangelize today is described. Christ is the author of all activities, all Christians are agents of evangelization; contents, ways and methods are discussed. **"The first (sign of love) is respect for the religious and spiritual situation of those being evangelized. Respect for their tempo and pace; no one has the right to force them excessively. ... Respect for their conscience and convictions which are not to be treated in a harsh manner."** EN 79



1990 Pope John Paul II: Redemptoris Missio The eight chapters describe the continuing validity and necessity of mission: **The Kingdom of God – The Holy Spirit Champion of mission - the unlimited fields of mission – missionary methods – the responsibilities of various pastoral workers - cooperation and missionary spirituality. "Faith is strengthened when it is given to others!"** RM 2



2013 Pope Francis: Evangelii Gaudium
"The joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus." EG 1
With an impressive analysis of the current situation, Pope Francis presents to us in a clear and refreshing language a spiritual vision of what a new missionary departure of the churches would entail. **"From the point of view of evangelization, neither mystical approaches without a strong social and missionary commitment nor social or pastoral talk and action without a spirituality that transforms the heart are useful."** R. Zollitsch, at the closing of the year of faith

Questions for reflection

- ✚ How has my / our understanding of mission changed over the years?
- ✚ How could I tell someone in a few words how I live my missionary vocation today?



The Extraordinary Missionary Month 2019 – Resources

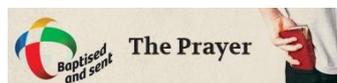
"The church is missionary by nature", all papal pronouncements on mission illustrate this paradigm: starting with *Maximum Illud* (Pope Benedict XV); the Council document *Ad Gentes*; by *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (Paul VI) and *Redemptoris Missio* (John Paul II) confirm it. Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium*, even says: "I dream of a 'missionary option', that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelization of today's world rather than for her self-preservation." EG 27

- The **Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and the Pontifical Mission Societies** have launched various initiatives since the proclamation of the Extraordinary Missionary Month (EMM) on 22 October 2017. Especially the website <http://www.october2019.va/en.html> serves as the best source of information, yet is available only in English and Italian. The page is divided into several sections: [EMMOCT2019](#) (the month) - [Witnesses](#) - [World](#) - [Formation](#) - [Multimedia](#). Latest information from all over the world is recorded; the topics are illustrated with information, pictures and multimedia. The [Logo](#), with the colors of the 5 continents, the transparent earth and the words 'Baptized - Sent' are further explained. The prayer is available, in [English](#), [French](#), [Italian](#) und [Portuguese](#).
- **Missio Switzerland** - has set up its own coordination office and posts on the special [Website](#) up-to-date information and important documents in German.
- **Missio Aachen** presents an exhibition based on *Evangelii Gaudium* "You are a mission" - [„Du bist Mission“](#)
- Individual mission **associations and dioceses** have also set up their own websites, e.g. [United States Catholic Mission Association](#), [Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne](#), [Diocese of Westminster](#); most of the activities and information have been published in English.
- **In Africa**, the Bishops' Conferences of Zambia and Malawi have set up a coordination team to develop programmes and coordinate activities. The South African Bishops Conference (SACBC) has informed in detail and [published](#) an extra calendar.
- Some **Congregations** have set up special pages on their websites, such as the [Claretians](#).

Heavenly Father,
 when your only begotten Son Jesus Christ
 rose from the dead,
 he commissioned his followers
 to "go and make disciples of all nations"
 and you remind us
 that through our Baptism
 we are made sharers
 in the mission of the Church.
 Empower us by the gifts of the Holy Spirit
 to be courageous and zealous
 in bearing witness to the Gospel,
 so that the mission
 entrusted to the Church,
 which is still very far from completion,
 may find new and efficacious expressions
 that bring life and light to the world.
 Help us make it possible for all peoples
 to experience the saving love
 and mercy of Jesus Christ,
 who lives and reigns with you
 in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
 One God, forever and ever. **Amen.**

Questions for reflection

- How do we deal with all this information?
- How important are the activities of the Catholic Church worldwide to us, and how can we / I express our solidarity with them?





The heart of mission: the encounter with Jesus Christ

*The Second Vatican Council has given us a deeper theological understanding of the mission of the Church and of every Christian. To have a mission means to have been sent in order to accomplish a specific task. Missionaries are people who have been entrusted with a mandate to fulfil. The mission entrusted to us as Christians is part of a great love story. It starts within **God Himself**, in the loving relationships between Father, Son and Holy Spirit, called by theologians "missions".*

*The love, which is the inner life of God, flows over into his **creation**, which is an expression of the "tenderness of God" and has a trinitarian character. (LS 239) Because we are created in the image of God we carry within us a deep longing for unlimited love. In our God-given freedom, we seek in vain fulfillment of love in ourselves or in material things. When we chose to live without God (god-less), we deprive ourselves and others of the deepest experience of love.*

Our longing is truly fulfilled when we encounter Jesus Christ, the incarnate love of God, a love that is stronger than death. Those who are touched by the love of Christ and entrust themselves to the guidance of his Spirit are enabled to break out of the prison of an egoistic self-love (sin) experience something of the joy and freedom of the children of God, and then feel the great desire to pass on this great gift to others.

***Baptism** is the sign of our union with Christ the Lord in the community of the disciples of Jesus, the Church. Through our baptism we are sent on mission into the world to proclaim the love of God and give witness through the example of a holy life.*



Texts

The Bible is full of vocation stories. The Old Testament tells of people who have a deep experience of God and are sent as prophets, as God's messengers, to His people:

Moses (Ex 3); Samuel (1 Sam 3); David (1 Sam 16); Isaiah (Is 6); Jeremiah (Jer 1); Ezekiel (Ez 1)

The disciples of Jesus become apostles through their encounter with Jesus: Peter (Mark 1:17); Saul, Apostle of the Gentiles (Acts 22); Nathanael (Jn 1, 35-39); Mary of Magdala, first witness of the resurrection (Jn 20: 11-18).

- **The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature**, since it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she draws her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father. This decree, however, flows from the "fount-like love" or charity of God the Father... (Ad Gentes 2)
- I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to **a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ**, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unflinchingly each day. (Evangelii Gaudium 3)
- Christ is the "eternal Gospel" (Rev 14:6); he "is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb 13:8), yet his riches and beauty are inexhaustible. He is for ever young and **a constant source of newness**. (EG 11)
- Those who enjoy life most are those who leave security on the shore and become excited by the mission of **communicating life to others**... Here we discover a profound law of reality: that life is attained and matures in the measure that it is offered up in order to give life to others. This is what mission means. (EG 10)
- In virtue of their baptism, **all the members** of the People of God have **become missionary disciples** (cf. Mt 28:19). All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization... The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized. (EG 120)

Questions for reflection

- ✚ What spiritual experience moved our founder to his missionary commitment?
- ✚ What attracted me to the person of Jesus? Which of his words inspired me most?

Mission through witness of life

The missionary dynamism and attraction of the early church in Jerusalem rested on the fearless proclamation of the apostles, the heroic courage of the martyrs and the intense prayer life and solidarity among the early Christians. (cf. Ac 2:4,7)

In the history of the Christian mission, it was the testimony of the life of individual Christians and the community of believers who drew people to Jesus and his message. It was especially the willingness of martyrs to suffer and die for their faith that convinced people of the power and truth of the message of Jesus Christ. "The blood of the martyrs is seed of Christians", this saying of the theologian Tertullian, applies not only to the origins of the Church, but also to our time. Never in the history or the church have so many Christians been subjected to discrimination and persecution as today.

Religious wars and crimes committed in the name of religion throughout history as well as the current worldwide abuse scandals by her representatives have undermined the credibility of the Church's mission. Explanations and apologies will not undo the damage. Only an authentic witness of living radically the message of Gospel in our personal lives and in our christian communities will make the message of Jesus credible again.

What such a testimony can look like becomes visible in the life and death of christians who have lived their faith and their missionary vocation in an exemplary manner. The Vatican document for the Extraordinary Missionary Month presents the life stories of 25 women and men who can inspire us. Eight of them are from Africa. To read their lifestories in English [click here](#) - in French [click here](#).



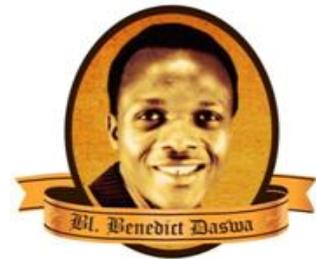
Blessed VICTOIRE RASOAMANARIVO
(1848-1894) *Madagascar*
A heroic lay apostle



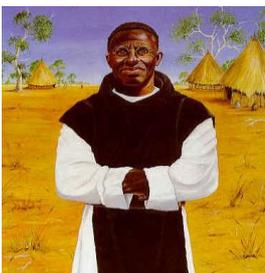
VIVIAN UCHECHI OGU
(1995-2009)
Nigeria
Africa's Maria Goretti



WANDA BŁEŃSKA
(1911-2014)
Poland / Uganda
In the service of lepers



Blessed BENEDICT DASWA
(1946-1990)
South Africa
Fighting superstition



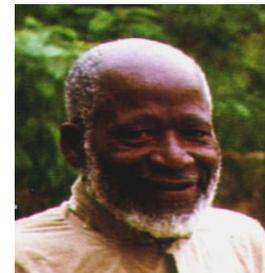
Blessed CYPRIAN MICHAEL IWENE TANSI
(1903-1964)
Nigeria
Called to contemplation



Blessed LUCIEN BOTOVASOA
(1908-1947)
Madagascar
A heroic martyr



Blessed PIERRE CLAVERIE
(1938-1996)
Algeria
Dialogue with muslims



SIMON MPECKE
(1906-1975)
Cameroon
A Fidei Donum priest

Questions for reflection

- ✚ How can I be a witness of the Gospel in my everyday life? in my own community and for people I meet?
- ✚ Which examples of missionaries in the history of my community have inspired me?

Mission at the service of people

A faith that does not go beyond pious words and theological thoughts is dead. Jesus warns disciples who cry "Lord, Lord," but do not do His Father's will". (Mt 7, 21-23) The letter of St. James condemns Christians who "dishonour the poor" and refuse to give them what they need to live. "Faith without works is dead." (Jm 2)

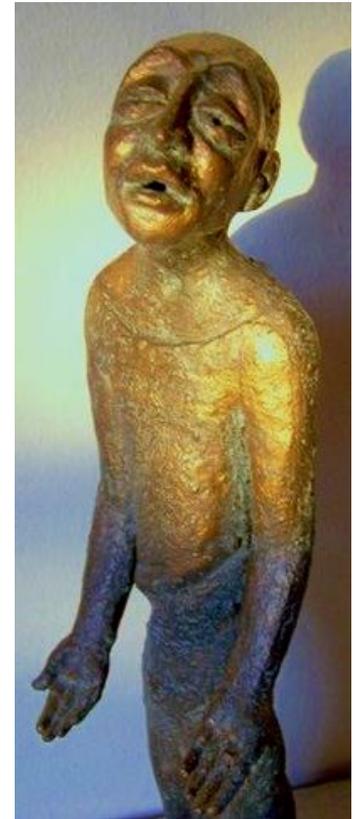
The mission of the Church has always the whole person in view: body, mind and soul. Wherever mission stations were established, health centres, schools and other social services followed. This was not a trick to attract people, but an expression of the will to follow the example of Jesus. His mission was to announce good news to the poor, give sight to the blind and set prisoners and the oppressed free. (cf. Luke 4: 18-19)

The council has given us a deeper insight of Christian responsibility for the world. Evangelisation is not just about converting individuals. The Gospel is meant to penetrate and change cultures and social structures and the whole of human reality. The commitment to a holistic development and to social justice, to peace and the integrity of creation is part of the mission of the Church and of all the disciples of Jesus.

One way to contribute to the mission of the Church is by supporting the Pontifical Mission Societies and Church Aid agencies. They enable local churches worldwide in spreading the message of Jesus, caring for the poor and working for greater social justice.

Texts

- Since this mission goes on and in the course of history unfolds the mission of Christ Himself, who was sent to preach the Gospel to the poor, the Church, prompted by the Holy Spirit, must walk in the same path on which Christ walked: **a path of poverty and obedience, of service and self - sacrifice** to the death, from which death He came forth a victor by His resurrection. (Ad Gentes 5)
- **Development...** cannot be restricted to economic growth alone. To be authentic, it must be well rounded; it must foster the development of each man and of the whole man... What counts for us is the human being—each individual, each human group and humanity as a whole. (Populorum Progressio 14)
Our faith in Christ, who became poor and was always close to the poor and the outcast, is the basis of our concern for the integral development of society's most neglected members. Each individual Christian and every community is called **to be an instrument of God for the liberation** and promotion of the poor... It means working to **eliminate the structural causes of poverty** and to promote the integral development of the poor, as well as **small daily acts of solidarity** in meeting the real needs which we encounter... I want a **Church which is poor and for the poor**. They have much to teach us. (EG 186.187.188.198)
- Any Church community, if it thinks it can comfortably go its own way **without creative concern and effective cooperation in helping the poor to live with dignity** and reaching out to everyone, will also risk breaking down, however much it may talk about social issues or criticize governments. It will easily drift into a spiritual worldliness camouflaged by religious practices, unproductive meetings and empty talk. (EG 207)



Questions for reflection

- ✚ Where in my environment are poor, sick or lonely people who need my affection?
- ✚ How do we live in our community our responsibility to create a more just, peaceful and sustainable world?

Mission needs ongoing formation

The word “mission” has a negative connotation. It suggests the idea of proselytizing, forced conversion, imposing personal convictions on other people, or worse, destroying other cultures. Some episodes in history of mission have led to this prejudice. Missionaries are accused of despising the cultures of other peoples. Often they were convinced of the superiority of their own European culture and ignored or misunderstood the values and expressions of African cultures and religions. Already 100 years ago, Pope Benedict XV. in his Encyclical ‘Maximum Illud’, made a clear distinction between colonization and christian mission and demanded respect for the cultural peculiarities of peoples. The great challenge of the young churches of Africa today is to root the message of Jesus in the cultures and ways of living of the people.

Christians in Europe are facing similar challenges. Science and technology, globalization and secularization, radically and rapidly change our culture and our ways of speaking, thinking and living. How can we bring the message of Jesus to this everchanging world? This requires continuous reflection and formation of all actors of mission, who need to become familiar with the language and the culture of people today.

In his first apostolic letter ‘Evangelii Gaudium’, Pope Francis gave the church some guidelines as to how this process might look like. Important elements are:

- *To live a deep relationship with Jesus and be ready to face the radical challenge of his Word;*
- *To live close to the realities of the life of ordinary people and share their worries and hopes;*
- *To show in preaching and catechesis the relevance of the Gospel in the context of life today;*
- *To build a synodal church where bishops, priests and laity seek new answers to new developments and challenges in the spirit of Jesus.*

Texts

- All **Christian formation** consists of entering more deeply into the *kerygma* ... the first proclamation must ring out over and over: “Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you.” (Evangelii Gaudium 165)
Whenever we make the effort to **return to the source and to recover the original freshness of the Gospel**, new avenues arise, new paths of creativity open up, with different forms of expression, more eloquent signs and words with new meaning for today’s world. (EG 11)
- The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. (Gaudium et Spes 1)
An evangelizing community gets **involved by word and deed in people’s daily lives**... It embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others. Evangelizers take on the **“smell of the sheep”**. (EG 24)
- Today’s **vast and rapid cultural changes** demand that we constantly seek ways of expressing unchanging truths in a language which brings out their abiding. (EG 41)
It is imperative to evangelize cultures in order to inculturate the Gospel. (EG 69)
- It is **the task of the entire People of God**, especially pastors and theologians, to hear, distinguish and interpret the many voices of our age, and to judge them in the light of the divine word, so that revealed truth can always be more deeply penetrated, better understood and set forth to greater advantage. (Gaudium et Spes 44) The bishop must always foster... a dynamic, open and missionary communion... Yet the principal aim of these participatory processes should not be ecclesiastical organization but rather **the missionary aspiration of reaching everyone**. (EG 31)



Questions for reflection

- ✚ Which modern expressions of the faith (texts, songs, pictures ...) appeal to me?
What in our traditional religious language is foreign and incomprehensible to me?
- ✚ Where are places where priests and lay people, young and old look for new spiritual forms?