



CONGREGATIO
PRO GENTIUM EVANGELIZATIONE

Prot. N. 4364/17

Vatican City State, 8 April 2018
2nd Sunday of Easter

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
International Leaders
of Ecclesial Movements, New Communities,
and Lay Associations,

May the Peace of the Risen Lord be our hope!

Following my letter of 3 December 2017, which was sent to all Bishops, I now write to each of you directly with regard to the missionary initiative that our Holy Father, Pope Francis, announced to the entire Church on Sunday, 22 October 2017. The Extraordinary Missionary Month of October 2019 is truly a unique opportunity for all of us; the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Apostolic Letter *Maximum Illud* of Pope Benedict XV helps us to reignite our ardor and passion for the mission of Jesus Christ. As Pope Benedict XV stressed many years ago, on 20 November 1919, renewing the mission of the Gospel is still relevant today if we consider the current state of the world and the Church.

The spiritual, pastoral, and theological goal of this extraordinary missionary month consists in first recognizing that this mission is and must become more fully the paradigm of life and work for the whole Church, and thus of every Christian, so that we can then live it out with conviction and joy. Converting our hearts and minds, as missionary disciples, the Spirit urges us to go out into the world and announce Christ, Crucified and Risen. Placing the *missio ad gentes*, with its various facets, at the center of the Church's life and recognizing the mission of Jesus as Her heart and identity helps us to rediscover the genuine, yet challenging relationship that God establishes with the world that He created, redeemed, and loves (*cf.* Jn 17, Eph 1).

Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, has shared with us the theme for October 2019:

BAPTIZED AND SENT: THE CHURCH OF CHRIST ON MISSION IN THE WORLD

Prayer, reflection, and action will help us to live this dimension of the Extraordinary Missionary Month. In fact, "We, by Baptism, are immersed in that inexhaustible source of life which is the death of Jesus, the greatest act of love in all of history; and thanks to this love we can live a new life, no longer at the mercy of evil, of sin and of death, but in communion with God and with our brothers and sisters."¹ We are invited to confirm our baptismal identity in a personal encounter with the living person of Jesus Christ. He invites us to be his witnesses in the world.

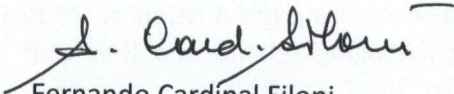
¹ Pope Francis, General Audience, Wednesday, 8 January 2014

The Church carries on the mission that Jesus received from the Father in the Spirit. By announcing Jesus Christ, in Word and Sacrament, the Church responds to the thirst for an authentic life and a sense of purpose that resides in the heart of every woman and man. By offering Baptism in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (*cf.* Mt 28:19) to the inhabitants of this world and in breaking the bread of the Eucharist with them, the very life of God, which saves us from evil and death (*cf.* Jn 6:48-51, 10:10), is made manifest and communicated to the world. In water and Spirit, the Blood of Christ (*cf.* 1 Jn 5:1-13) redeems us, gives us faith, and offers us to the world for the salvation of souls. The grace that frees and saves is truly announced to the poor and to those of us imprisoned by sin (*cf.* Lk 4:14-22). Nothing and no one is excluded from the merciful love of God, who invites us to go on mission, so that all may be drawn to Him.

We are grateful to our Holy Father, Pope Francis, for leading us and entrusting us with a fitting theme on this journey toward the Extraordinary Missionary Month of October 2019. It is particularly relevant that our Holy Father emphasized Baptism as the point of departure of our common mission. In the wake of the Second Vatican Council, many movements and new communities within the Church have emerged, with particular charisms, for the renewal of our unity with Christ through Baptism. With this perspective and in a spirit of communion, I invite each of you to take part in this initiative of Pope Francis by reflecting on the ways that you can live the Extraordinary Missionary Month of October 2019, so that it may be a font of new missionary activity within your ecclesial realities and in service to the whole Church.

As the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and the Pontifical Mission Societies, we would be delighted if you could share your thoughts and experiences with us. I have asked Father Fabrizio Meroni, General Secretary of the Pontifical Mission Union (PUM) and Director of the International Center for Missionary Animation (CIAM), to make himself available to receive any responses and inquiries about the aforementioned proposal (email: fabrizio.meroni@ppoomm.va; PUM +39 0669880228; CIAM +39 0669882484). Also, the National and Diocesan Directors of the Pontifical Mission Societies, present in your local Churches, can be a possible reference for collaboration. Thanks to them, we are gathering important reflections for the publication of a Guide that will be sent to you upon completion.

I hope and pray that all we are called to live and prayerfully reflect upon in preparation for the Extraordinary Missionary Month of October 2019 will contribute to a genuine, missionary conversion to Christ. With Mary, Queen of the Apostles, united in the Upper Room, we pray for a special outpouring of the gifts of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. I cordially greet you and thank you,


Fernando Cardinal Filoni
Prefect