



CONGREGATIO
PRO GENTIUM EVANGELIZATIONE

Prot. N. 4364/17

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

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
General Superiors
of Institutes of Consecrated Life
and Societies of Apostolic Life,

May the Peace of the Risen Lord be our hope!

Following my letter of 3 December 2017, I am once again writing 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 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 recognizing, living, and convincing ourselves that this mission is and must become more fully the paradigm of life and work for the whole Church, and thus of every Christian. 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 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.

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. To offer 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 to break the bread of the Eucharist with them signifies the giving of the very life of God that saves us from evil and death (*cf.* Jn 6:48-51, 10:10). 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

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

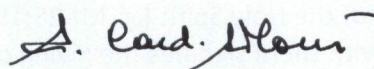
excluded from the merciful love of God, who invites us to go on mission, so that all may be drawn to Him.

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. With this perspective and in a spirit of communion, I would like to propose a way to grow in greater awareness of our baptismal missionary vocation. In addition to any initiatives that may be implemented by the Bishops in the particular Churches of which you are members, I would like to propose that each of you initiate a process of reciprocal listening, in such a way that all may be able to cooperate in the missionary conversion of the entire ecclesial team so often insisted upon and hoped for by Pope Francis (*cf.* EG 25, 27, 30, 32 and 33). Listening to one another in the Spirit converts us and helps us grow in the very communion that comes from and is necessary for authentic missionary activity.

Through their different charismatic forms, consecrated virginity and ordained ministry in service to Christ and his Church can be sources of communication, through listening and sharing, which develop from your experiences of the Christian life and your missionary apostolate in the Spirit. Therefore, we are called to be more aware of the gifts of Baptism, the Eucharist, and the Church, while striving to better realize our specific call to live the *missio ad gentes*. In order to build toward the theme given to us by Pope Francis, I propose that we begin reflecting on the following: "Proclamation, Sacrament and Christian Witness in the Missio Ad Gentes". The tenor of the reflection, which is both the fruit of prayer and lived experience, could be of a theological-experiential type. It would involve coming together to recount individual missionary experiences with a robust theological and spiritual base. Jesus Christ and the Church, in the Scriptures, in the Sacraments, in charity, and in dialogue with the world and its cultures and religions, represent the heart of that which we would like to communicate, listening to one another, discerning and sharing. It is our hope that each of your Institutes would organize this reciprocal listening, prayer, and reflection, according to your particular means, circumstances, and needs.

As the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and the Pontifical Mission Societies, we propose that some members of your Community be designated to organize this process of listening, spiritual discernment, and sharing, together with our missionary formation organizations, the International Secretariat of the Pontifical Mission Union (PUM) and the International Center for Missionary Animation (CIAM). One concrete proposal would be to arrange a meeting at the CIAM for shared reflection between members of the same or different Institutes, depending on what is most opportune. The fruit of this work of faith and discernment about the *missio ad gentes* will help all of us to breathe new life into the missions, starting with that which the Spirit provides for us according to our various roles within the one Church of Christ. I have asked Father Fabrizio Meroni, General Secretary of the PUM and Director of 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, our 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 our preparation for the Extraordinary Mission 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