



CONGREGATIO
PRO GENTIUM EVANGELIZATIONE

Prot. N. 4364/17

To the Most Eminent and Most Excellent Ordinaries

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

Dear Brothers in the Episcopacy,

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. Renewing the mission of the Gospel, as Pope Benedict stressed many years ago, on 20 November 1919, 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, above all, in 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. 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 life of the Church 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, who 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. 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

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

death (cf. Jn 6:48-51, 10:10), is made manifest and communicated to the world. In water and Spirit, Jesus Christ, through his Blood (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 the Lord.

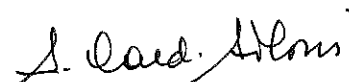
We are grateful to our Holy Father, Pope Francis, for leading us and entrusting us with a fitting theme on this journey toward the Extraordinary Missionary Month of October 2019. With this in mind and in a spirit of fraternal communion between the particular Churches served by the ministry of the Successor of Peter, the Universal Pastor, I would like to propose some initiatives for the celebration of this important ecclesial event. I am aware that I am writing over a year in advance, but I believe this will provide the necessary amount of time for each local Church to begin prayerfully reflecting on how to live out the Extraordinary Missionary Month. It is our hope, as the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and the Pontifical Mission Societies, that the following proposals will help stimulate the creativity of the local Churches entrusted to your care. These suggestions are not meant to be exhaustive, but rather are some ideas and examples that are intended to facilitate local celebrations, which are to accompany those that will take place on a universal level.

1. Organize a Diocesan or national celebration for the Opening of the Extraordinary Missionary Month of October 2019.
2. Celebrate the Missionary Vigil, focusing on the theme given to us by the Holy Father.
3. Celebrate the Most Holy Eucharist at the Diocesan level on World Mission Sunday.
4. Propose that small groups of people or families gather in each other's houses to pray the Holy Rosary for the missionary work of the Church, drawing inspiration from the original intuition of Venerable Pauline Jaricot, foundress of the Pontifical Society for the Propagation of the Faith.
5. Promote a pilgrimage to a Marian shrine or to that of a missionary saint or martyr.
6. Promote the collection of funds to support the apostolic work of the *missio ad gentes* and missionary formation.
7. Propose a public activity by which young people are involved in proclaiming the Gospel.
8. Organize a Diocesan or national celebration for the Closing of the Extraordinary Missionary Month of October 2019.

With regard to these suggestions, you should find in the National and Diocesan Directors of the Pontifical Mission Societies, present in your local Churches, helpful references for ideas and collaboration. In fact, with their help we are putting together important reflections to serve as an aid for local Churches. This Guide, which will be completed and distributed before the end of this year, is the fruit of the faith of many of our brothers and sisters from around the world. I am sincerely grateful to all those who are making generous and valuable contributions to help promote this important work of missionary animation.

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 remain united in prayer for a special outpouring of the gifts of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Please know of my gratitude and fraternal best wishes for you and your ministry.

Sincerely in Christ,



Fernando Cardinal Filoni
Prefect