PROCLAIM

A Magazine for Missionary Animation

VOL 49. NO. 5 SEPT - OCT 2026



ONE IN CHRIST UNITED IN PROCLAMATION

PONTIFICAL MISSION ORGANIZATIONS INDIA

100 YEARS OF WORLD MISSION DAY

100 YEARS
WORLD MISSION DAY

1926 – 2026



A century of prayer, solidarity and Gospel witness



PRAY
For the Church's mission



PROCLAIM
Share the joy of the Gospel



SERVE
Witness through love



SHARE
Support mission communities

Established by Pope Pius XI in 1926

Every baptised person is called to mission.



CONTENTS

- From The Director's Desk 02
- One in Christ, United in Mission 04
- The Church is missionary 07
- Hundred Years of Memory, Gratitude and Renewal 10
- A Century of Sharing the Gospel 12
- Marian, Franciscan and Theresian Paths for Today 15
- Mary's Fiat 19
- Mission Through Poverty, Peace and Fraternity 22
- Patroness of Missions Without Leaving the Cloister 24
- SAINT OF THE MONTH
  - St Lawrence Giustiniani 27
  - St Remigius 28
- STORY CORNER
  - A Teenager God Story! 30

PROCLAIM

Editor & Publisher
Rt Rev Dr Ambrose Pitchaimuthu
National Director
Pontifical Mission Organizations

Editorial Board
Dr Thomas J DSouza
Mahesh Lobo

Printers
James Arts Crafts
Sivakasi 626 189
9789774520

Subscription Rates (six issues/year)
Inclusive of postal charges for Subscribers in India.
Annual:₹ 150
3 years:₹ 400
Annual bulk subscription (i.e., 20 or more copies):₹ 125
DONORS: ₹5000 (for 15 years)

Disclaimer
The views expressed in this magazine by writers do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of Pontifical Mission Organizations.

For private circulation only.

Content and Pictures used may have been sourced from the internet and from the public domain. In case of an inadvertent copyright issue, kindly contact the National Director, Pontifical Mission Organizations at the contact information published.

PONTIFICAL MISSION ORGANIZATIONS
PB 4216, No. 44, 3rd Cross,
Ulsoor Road, Bengaluru – 560042,
Karnataka, INDIA.
Tel: +91 79758 31942
Email: secretariat@indiapms.com
Website: www.pmoinindia.org

A Centenary of Missionary Solidarity

World Mission Day completes one hundred years in 2026. Established by Pope Pius XI in 1926, this annual observance invites Catholics everywhere to pray, share their resources, and assume responsibility for the universal mission of the Church. The centenary is an occasion to thank God for generations of missionaries, benefactors, catechists, families, and children whose sacrifices have carried the Gospel across the world. More importantly, it asks whether every baptised person has truly embraced a missionary vocation.

Pope Leo XIV's centenary theme, "One in Christ, United in Mission," offers a clear direction. Mission is not simply an activity undertaken by certain institutions. It arises from communion with Jesus Christ and becomes credible through the unity, generosity, and witness of His disciples.



The Vision Behind World Mission Day

The origins of World Mission Day are rooted in a wider renewal of missionary thinking. In *Maximum Illud* (1919), Pope Benedict XV insisted that the proclamation of the Gospel must rise above political interests and national loyalties. In 1922, Pope Pius XI accorded pontifical status to three missionary societies. His encyclical *Rerum Ecclesiae* (1926) stressed missionary cooperation, the formation of local clergy, and the growth of local Churches.

On 14 April 1926, Pope Pius XI approved the institution of World Mission Day. His intention was that prayer and practical support for the missions should become part of ordinary Catholic life, from dioceses and parishes to families and schools.

The Second Vatican Council later affirmed that the Church is missionary by her very nature (*Ad Gentes*, 2). Subsequent papal teaching has consistently reinforced this truth: evangelisation belongs to the whole People of God.

One in Christ, United in Mission

The centenary theme echoes Jesus' prayer: "That they may all be one ... so that the world may believe" (Jn 17:21). Our unity is rooted not in uniformity but in the love of the Father and the Son, into which the Holy Spirit draws us. The Word of God, prayer, and the Eucharist nourish this communion.

Unity also has a missionary purpose. We cannot preach reconciliation convincingly while tolerating division within our communities. In India, differences of caste, language, economic status, and social background challenge us to practise the fraternity we proclaim. Communion is not merely an ideal to discuss; it must become a way of living and serving together.

Four Hands, One Missionary Heart

The four Pontifical Mission Societies may be described as four hands serving the one missionary heart of the Church.

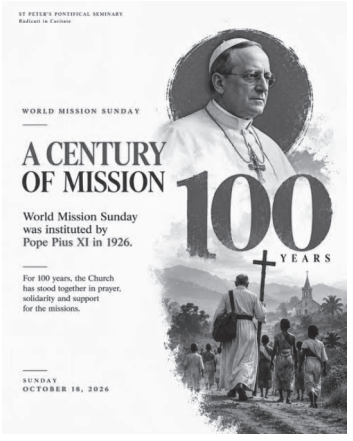
The Society for the Propagation of the Faith, founded in 1822 through the efforts of Blessed Pauline Marie Jaricot, encourages every Catholic to share in evangelisation through prayer and contributions. Its work supports young Churches and their pastoral needs.

The Society of the Holy Childhood, founded in 1843 by Bishop Charles de Forbin-Janson, follows the principle of "children helping children." It forms young hearts in prayer, friendship, sharing, and missionary generosity.

The Society of Saint Peter the Apostle, founded in 1889 through the efforts of Jeanne and Stéphanie Bigard, supports the formation of local clergy and religious. By sustaining vocations, it strengthens the leadership and future of young Churches.

The Pontifical Missionary Union, founded in 1916 by Blessed Paolo Manna, promotes missionary spirituality and formation among clergy, religious, seminarians, and the lay faithful. It reminds us that effective mission requires missionary hearts.

These Societies do not pursue four separate missions. Together, they promote prayer, formation, vocations, and solidarity in service of the Church's one evangelising mandate.

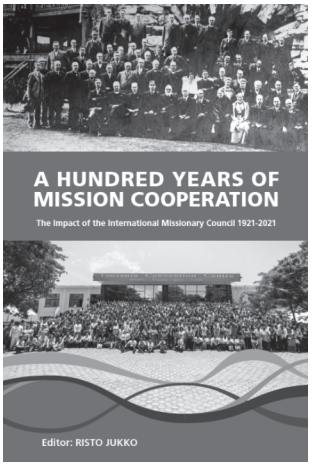


Solidarity with Churches in Need

World Mission Day unites the universal Church in a concrete commitment to Churches with limited resources. Its annual offerings, channelled through the Pontifical Mission Societies, help sustain pastoral ministry, catechesis, formation, and essential Church infrastructure in mission territories.

Behind every allocation are people: a catechist travelling to a distant village, a seminarian preparing for ministry, or a small parish seeking to gather for worship. A modest gift offered by a family can therefore become part of a worldwide movement of care.

This is more than financial assistance. It is ecclesial communion made tangible. The earliest Christians were "of one heart and soul" and shared what they possessed (Acts 4:32). World Mission Day continues that spirit.



Nor is solidarity a one-way process. Churches receiving material assistance enrich the whole Church through their faith, vocations, prayer, and witness. Every local Church is called both to receive and to give.

India's Missionary Responsibility

India remembers with gratitude the apostolic tradition of Saint Thomas, the witness of Saint Francis Xavier, and the countless missionaries, catechists, religious, and lay faithful who have served the Church. The Church in India has also benefited from the generosity of Catholics elsewhere. Today, Indian missionaries serve throughout the world, making our Church both a recipient and a contributor to the universal mission.

Yet the missionary task at home remains urgent. Poverty, social exclusion, migration, religious diversity, and rapid cultural change call for faithful proclamation, service, dialogue, and the defence of human dignity. Evangelisation must always respect freedom of conscience and find its strongest expression in credible Christian lives.

Five commitments can guide our renewal: deepening communion with Christ through prayer and the sacraments; strengthening missionary formation; nurturing missionary awareness among children and young people; explaining the importance of World Mission Day and encouraging generous participation; and promoting collaboration among dioceses, congregations, institutions, and lay communities.

A Mission Renewed

After a century, the Church continues to hear Christ's command to proclaim the Gospel (Mk 16:15) and His prayer for unity (Jn 17:21). These belong together. The centenary will bear fruit when remembrance leads to conversion, cooperation, and generous witness.

May Mary, Queen of Missions, and Saints Francis Xavier and Thérèse of the Child Jesus accompany our missionaries and young Churches.

One in Christ, united in mission: this is our identity, our responsibility, and our hope.

+ Ambrose Pitchaimuthu
Bishop of Vellore Diocese
Director, PMO – India

One in Christ, United in Mission

Pope Leo's message for the World Mission Day 2026

Dear brothers and sisters,

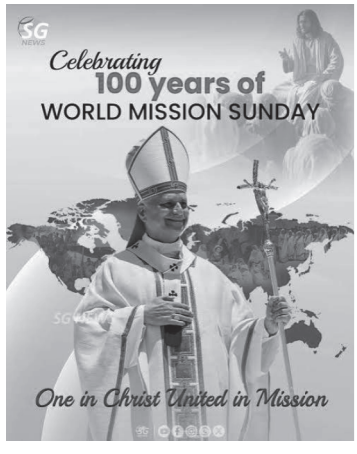


For World Mission Day 2026, which marks the centenary of a celebration established by *Pius XI* that is very dear to the Church, I have chosen the theme "One in Christ, united in mission." Following the Jubilee Year, I wish to encourage the whole Church to continue its missionary journey with joy and zeal in the Holy Spirit. This requires hearts united in Christ, reconciled communities and, in everyone, a willingness to cooperate with generosity and trust.

As we reflect on being one in Christ and united in mission, let us allow ourselves to be guided and inspired by divine grace, "to renew in ourselves the fire of our missionary vocation" and advance together in the commitment to evangelization, in this "new missionary age" in the history of the Church *(Homily,Jubilee of the Missionary World and of Migrants, 5 October 2025).*

1. One in Christ – Missionary disciples united in him and with our brothers and sisters

The mystery of union with Christ lies at the heart of mission. Before his Passion, Jesus prayed to the Father, "that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us" (*Jn* 17:21). These words reveal Jesus' deepest desire, as well as the identity of the Church as a community of his disciples. That is, a communion that flows from the Trinity, and continues to be sustained by the Trinity. A communion at the service of fraternity among all human beings and harmony with all creation.



Being a Christian is not primarily about practices or ideas; it is a life in union with Christ, in which we share in his filial relationship with the Father in the Holy Spirit. It means abiding in Christ, like branches on the vine (cf. *Jn* 15:4), immersed in the life of the Trinity. This union gives rise to mutual communion among believers and is the source of all missionary fruitfulness. Indeed, just as *Saint John Paul II* taught, "communion represents both the source and the fruit of mission" (Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, 32).

In this context, the Church's primary missionary responsibility is to renew and sustain spiritual and fraternal unity among its members. In many situations, we encounter conflicts, polarization, misunderstandings and a lack of mutual trust. When this occurs even within our communities, it undermines our witness. The evangelizing mission that Christ entrusted to his disciples requires, above all, hearts that are reconciled and eager for communion. Consequently, it is important to intensify ecumenical efforts with all Christian Churches, building upon the opportunities arising from the *joint celebration of the 1700thanniversary of the Council of Nicaea.*

Last but not least, being "one in Christ" calls us to keep our gaze fixed on the Lord, so that he may truly be at the center of our lives and communities, the center of every word, action and interpersonal relationship, leading us to say with amazement: "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me" (*Gal* 2:20). By constantly listening to his word and through the grace of the Sacraments, it will be possible for us to become living stones in the Church. Today, the Church is called to take up the fundamental themes of the *Second Vatican Council* and the subsequent Papal Magisterium, in particular that of *Pope Francis*. In fact, as Saint Paul says, "we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord" (2 *Cor* 4:5). For this reason, I reiterate the words of *Saint Paul VI*:

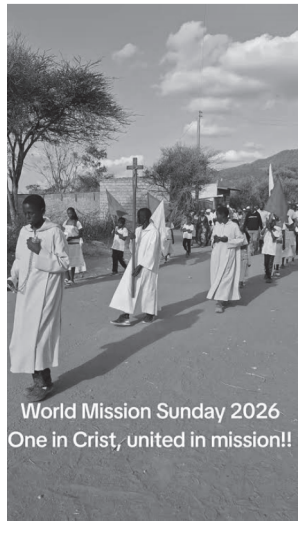
"There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God are not proclaimed" (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 22). This process of genuine evangelization begins in the heart of every Christian in order to reach all of humanity.



Therefore, the more united we are in Christ, the better able we will be to carry out together the mission that he entrusts to us.

2. United in mission – That the world may believe in Christ the Lord

The unity of disciples is not an end in itself; it is directed towards mission. Jesus states this clearly: "So that the world may believe that you have sent me" (*Jn* 17:21). It is through the witness of a reconciled, fraternal and united community that the proclamation of the Gospel acquires its full communicative power.



From this perspective, it is worth recalling the motto of Blessed Paolo Manna, "The entire Church for the conversion of the whole world," which succinctly expresses the ideal that inspired the establishment of the *Pontifical Missionary Union* in 1916. On its 110th anniversary, I convey my gratitude and my blessing for its commitment to inspiring and forming the missionary spirit of priests, consecrated persons and lay faithful, promoting the unity of all evangelizing efforts. In fact, no baptized person is exempt from or indifferent to mission: everyone, each according to their own vocation and condition of life, participates in the great work that Christ has entrusted to his Church. As *Pope Francis* repeatedly reminded us, proclaiming the Gospel is an action that is always harmonious, communal and synodal.

For this reason, unity in mission means safeguarding and nurturing the spirituality of communion and missionary cooperation. By daily fostering this attitude, divine grace gradually teaches us to see our brothers and sisters through the eyes of faith. We also learn to recognize joyfully the good that the Spirit inspires in each person, to embrace diversity as a treasure, to bear one another's burdens and always to seek the unity that comes from above. Indeed, we all share in one mission in "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all" (*Eph* 4:5-6). This spirituality constitutes the daily expression of missionary discipleship. It helps us to recover a universal vision of the Church's evangelizing mission, and to overcome a lack of coordinated efforts and the creation of factions among the followers of the one Lord — such as "I belong to Paul," "I to Apollos" (cf. 1 *Cor* 1:10-12).

Needless to say, missionary unity should not be understood as uniformity, but rather as the convergence of different charisms for the same purpose, namely to make Christ's love visible and to invite everyone to encounter him. Evangelization is achieved when local communities cooperate with one another and when cultural, spiritual and liturgical differences are fully and harmoniously expressed in the same faith. I therefore encourage all institutions in the Church to strengthen their sense of ecclesial missionary communion and to develop creative and concrete ways of cooperating with one another for and in the mission.

In this regard, I would like to thank the *Pontifical Mission Societies* for their service to missionary cooperation, which I experienced with gratitude during my ministry in Peru. These Societies — *Propagation of the Faith, Holy Childhood, Saint Peter the Apostle*, Saint Peter the Apostle and *Pontifical Missionary Union* — continue to nurture and form missionary awareness for the faithful of all ages, and to promote a network of prayer and charity that connects communities throughout the world. Here, it is worth noting that the founder of the *Society of the Propagation of the Faith*, Blessed

Pauline Marie Jaricot, established the Living Rosary two hundred years ago. Even today it continues to bring together many of the faithful throughout the world to pray for every spiritual and missionary need. It is also worth remembering that, following a proposal from the *Society of the Propagation of the Faith, Pius XI* established World Mission Day in 1926. The annual offerings collected on this day are distributed by the Society, on behalf of the Pope, to support the various needs of the Church's mission. The four Societies, therefore, as a whole and each in its own specificity, still play a valuable role for the entire Church. They are a living sign of unity and ecclesial missionary communion. I invite everyone to work with them in a spirit of gratitude.



3. Mission to love – Proclaiming, living and sharing God's faithful love

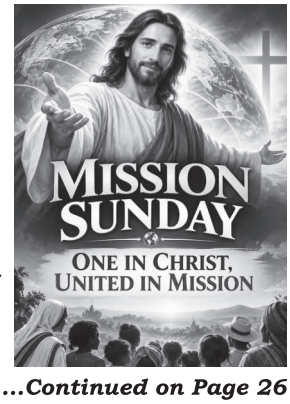
If unity is the condition of mission, love is its essence. The Good News that we are sent to proclaim to the world is not an abstract ideal; it is the Gospel of God's faithful love, which became flesh in the face and life of Jesus Christ.



The mission of the disciples and the Church as a whole is to continue the mission of Christ in the Holy Spirit: a mission born of love, lived in love, and leading to love. In fact, the Lord himself, in his great prayer to the Father before his Passion, after invoking unity among his disciples, concludes: "so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them" (*Jn* 17:26). Impelled by the love of Christ, the Apostles then went out to evangelize for Christ (cf. 2 *Cor* 5:14). In the same way, throughout the centuries, multitudes of Christians — martyrs, confessors and missionaries — have given their lives to make this divine love known to the world. Thus, guided by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of love, the Church's evangelizing mission will continue until the end of time.

I would like to express my special gratitude to today's *ad gentes missionaries*. Like Saint Francis Xavier, they have left their homeland, their families and all sense of security in order to proclaim the Gospel and bring Christ and his love to places that are often challenging, poor, conflict-ridden or culturally distant. Despite adversity and human limitations, they continue to give themselves joyfully, because they know that Christ himself, and his Gospel, are the greatest treasures we can offer. Through their perseverance, they demonstrate that God's love transcends all barriers. The world still needs these courageous witnesses of Christ, and ecclesial communities still need new missionary vocations. We must always keep them close to our hearts and continually pray to the Father for them. May he grant us the gift of young people and adults who are willing to leave everything behind to follow Christ on the path of evangelization even to the ends of the earth!

Filled with admiration for men and women missionaries, I make a special appeal to the whole Church to join them in the mission of evangelization through the witness of our lives in Christ, through prayer and through our contributions to the missions. As Saint Francis of Assisi said, "Love is not loved," and we look to him in a special way on the eight hundredth anniversary of his passing to heaven. Let us find inspiration in his desire to live in the love of the Lord and to transmit it to those both near and far, because, as he said, "this love Who hath loved us much is much to be loved" (Saint Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, *The Life of Saint Francis*, chap. IX, 1; *Fonti Francescane*, 1161). Let us also draw inspiration from the zeal of Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus, who declared that she would continue her mission even after death: "I shall desire in heaven the same thing as I do now on earth: to love Jesus and to make him loved" (*Letter 220 to l'Abbé Bellière*, 24 February 1897).



...Continued on Page 26

The Church is missionary

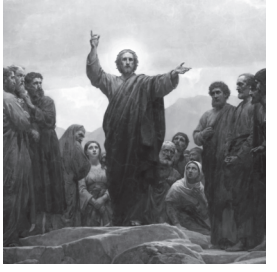
because she belongs to Christ

*Fr Dr Yesu Karunanidhi**

1. Mission Begins in Christ

The theme "One in Christ, United in Mission" invites the Church to return to the very heart of her identity. Mission is not primarily a programme, strategy, campaign, or geographical movement; it is participation in the life and love of Christ. The Church is missionary because she belongs to Christ and because Christ himself is the One sent by the Father for the life of the world.

The Second Vatican Council teaches that "the pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature," since she originates in the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit, according to the plan of God the Father (*Ad Gentes*, 2). Mission, therefore, is not an optional activity added to the Church's life; it is an expression of her deepest identity.



To be "one in Christ" means recognizing that Christ is more than the content of our proclamation. He is the source of our communion, the centre of our identity, and the model of our service. Without communion with him, mission risks becoming mere activism. Without the guidance of his Spirit, evangelization can be reduced to organization and planning. In communion with Christ, however, mission becomes a living witness to the Gospel through service, reconciliation, and joy.

2. The Church Exists to Evangelize

Saint Paul VI gave a classic expression to the Church's missionary identity in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*: evangelization is the Church's grace, vocation, and deepest identity; she "exists in order to evangelize" (EN, 14). This conviction remains decisive for every generation. The Church does not exist merely for self-preservation, institutional prestige, or internal comfort. She exists to proclaim Christ, communicate grace, reconcile humanity with God, and make Christ's saving presence known in history.



This mission is entrusted not merely to a select few but to the entire People of God. Bishops, priests, religious, catechists, families, young people, children, lay professionals, the elderly, and those who suffer all participate in the Church's mission in different ways. The missionary Church is not a community of spectators served by a few specialists; she is a communion of disciples sent into the world.

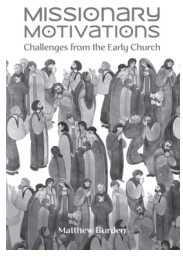
The Pontifical Mission Societies play a distinctive role in nurturing and sustaining this universal missionary consciousness. They remind every local Church that mission is never confined to the local community, nor is it merely an outward activity. Every Church receives and gives; every Church is evangelized and called to evangelize. Every baptized person is called to be both a disciple of Christ and a missionary witness to his Gospel.

3. Unity Is the Soul of Mission

The expression "United in Mission" reminds us that mission cannot be separated from communion. A divided Church cannot credibly proclaim reconciliation. A Church marked by rivalry, clericalism, caste prejudice, indifference to the poor, or a lack of collaboration weakens her missionary witness. Communion is not merely a matter of good administration; it is essential to the credibility of the Gospel.

Christian unity, however, does not mean uniformity. The Church is one Body with many members. Her unity embraces different rites, languages, cultures, vocations, charisms, and pastoral traditions. Mission becomes fruitful and beautiful when this diversity is gathered into the unity of Christ and placed at the service of the Gospel.

This vision has particular relevance in India, where the Church lives amid immense cultural, linguistic, religious, and social diversity. The Church in India is called to be a sign that communion is possible without domination and that diversity can flourish without fragmentation. Collaboration among different rites, dioceses, religious congregations, lay movements, families, catechists, and ecclesial institutions is not merely a practical necessity; it is itself a missionary witness.



4. Mission Renews the Church

Saint John Paul II emphasizes in *Redemptoris Missio* that missionary activity renews the Church, strengthens faith, revitalizes Christian identity, and generates fresh enthusiasm. Mission is not simply a burden that exhausts the Church; it is a grace that renews her. When the Church goes beyond herself in service to the world, she rediscovers the vitality of her own identity.



For this reason, missionary renewal must not be postponed until every internal problem has been resolved. The Church becomes more fully herself by embracing her missionary calling. A parish comes alive when it looks beyond its own needs. A family becomes missionary when it opens its doors to prayer, service, hospitality, and compassion. A young person grows in faith when that faith becomes a visible witness. A diocese becomes missionary when all its pastoral structures serve the proclamation of the Gospel and the building up of the Kingdom of God.

Mission also protects the Church from becoming self-referential. When she loses sight of her missionary calling, she turns inward and begins to measure herself by numbers, institutions, influence, and security. Mission restores evangelical simplicity and renews the Church's fundamental purpose: that Christ may be known, loved, followed, and proclaimed to all.



5. Baptismal Missionary Discipleship

Pope Francis develops this vision in *Evangelii Gaudium*, affirming that, by virtue of baptism, every member of the People of God becomes a missionary disciple. We are not first disciples and only later missionaries; we are called to live as missionary disciples from the beginning of our Christian life.

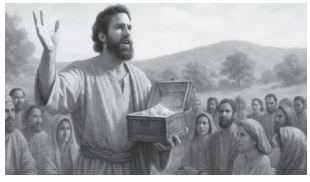
This understanding has profound pastoral implications. Mission begins in the ordinary circumstances of daily life. Parents who teach their children to pray are missionaries. Teachers who form consciences and nurture truth are missionaries. Healthcare workers who serve the sick with compassion are missionaries. Young people who bear witness to truth, justice, and kindness in digital spaces are missionaries. Children who pray and share through the Pontifical Society of the Holy Childhood are missionaries. The poor who live their faith with courage and hope are also missionaries through their witness.

The missionary vocation, therefore, is measured not merely by the distance travelled but by the love offered and the fidelity with which the Gospel is lived. Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, patroness of the missions, reminds us that missionary zeal is rooted not primarily in geography but in love. The heart that loves Christ and offers itself for others stands at the very centre of the Church's mission.

6. Mission as Witness, Service, and Dialogue

In today's world, mission must be clear in its proclamation, humble in its approach, and compassionate in its witness. The Church cannot abandon the proclamation of Christ, who is at the heart of her faith and mission. At the same time, she must proclaim him in ways that respect human dignity, honour freedom of conscience, and foster peace. Mission is not conquest but witness; it is not coercion but invitation; it is not an

expression of superiority but an act of service rooted in truth and love.



This is especially important in pluralistic societies. In India, the Church's mission is expressed through schools, hospitals, service to the poor, the protection of children, care for migrants, the promotion of women's dignity, interreligious friendship, ecological responsibility, and the everyday holiness of Christian families. Such witness does not replace the proclamation of the Gospel; it gives that proclamation credibility and makes Christ's love visible.

The Gospel is proclaimed not only from pulpits but also through the wounds the Church is willing to touch and the burdens she is willing to share. Wherever the poor are served, the lonely are accompanied, children are protected, families are strengthened, and divisions are overcome through reconciliation, missionary communion becomes visible. In this way, the Church bears witness to Christ through both word and deed.

7. Eucharistic Communion and Missionary Sending

The Eucharist is the sacrament of unity and the source and summit of the Church's life and mission. Around the altar, the many become one Body in Christ. Yet this communion is never closed in upon itself. At the conclusion of the Eucharistic celebration, the faithful are sent forth to carry the Gospel into the world. The Eucharist gathers the Church so that she may be strengthened and sent on mission.

A Eucharistic Church must therefore become a missionary Church. The Body of Christ received in worship must be recognized and served in the poor, the wounded, the stranger, and the forgotten. If the Eucharist forms us in the self-giving love of Christ, every celebration must bear fruit in concrete acts of service, reconciliation, and evangelization.

The movement from the altar to the world expresses the very rhythm of Christian life: gathered in Christ, transformed by his grace, and sent forth to bear witness to his love.

8. Conclusion: From Communion to Mission

"One in Christ, United in Mission" is both a confession of faith and a pastoral programme. It reminds us of who we are and what we are called to become. We are one because Christ has made us members of his Body. We are sent because Christ loves the world and desires that all may encounter the saving love of God. We are united not merely for our own comfort or security, but for the sake of the Gospel and the service of humanity.

As the Church celebrates the 100th World Mission Day in 2026, she is invited to give thanks for a century of missionary prayer, cooperation, generosity, and witness. Over these hundred years, countless missionaries, priests, religious, catechists, families, children, benefactors, martyrs, and ordinary believers have contributed, often in hidden and unrecognized ways, to the Church's evangelizing mission. Their fidelity is a gift to be celebrated, a legacy to be cherished, and a responsibility to be carried forward into the future.

The centenary is not merely an occasion to look back with gratitude; it is also a call to move forward with renewed missionary commitment. The Church is invited to deepen her communion with Christ, strengthen solidarity among local Churches, awaken missionary responsibility in every baptized person, and reach out with renewed love to those who have yet to encounter the Gospel.

The future of mission will not be built on power or prestige. It will grow from communion with Christ, communion within the Church, solidarity with the poor, and genuine encounter with all humanity. To be one in Christ is to be sent together. To be united in mission is to become, in the midst of the world, a living sign of the Gospel.

Communion in Christ becomes credible when it becomes mission for the world.

*** The writer is a priest of the Archdiocese of Madurai, currently serving at the Pontifical Academy of Theology, Vatican City. ◆**

Hundred Years of Memory, Gratitude and Renewal

*Fr Dr J Antony**

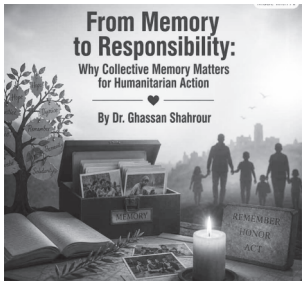
1. Memory to Responsibility

The completion of a hundred years of World Mission Day offers an opportunity to look back on the Church's missionary journey, thank God for His guidance, and appreciate the generous contributions of all those who have supported this important mission. At the request of the Pontifical Society for the Propagation of the Faith, Pope Pius XI instituted World Mission Day in 1926. He set aside a day when the entire Catholic Church would unite in prayer for the missions and make special offerings to support missionary work. In the aftermath of the First World War, the world was divided by hatred and hostility. Pope Pius XI called for renewed missionary zeal and greater solidarity among people. He invited every baptised person to contribute whatever they could towards the work of the missions.



In his message for the 100th World Mission Day, Pope Leo XIV reminds us that we are one in Christ and that our missionary work must be rooted in this unity. He emphasises that all missionary work begins with Christ and grows out of our close relationship with Him. Mission is not simply a series of activities or administrative tasks. It is a response to Christ's command to go forth and proclaim the Gospel.





A hundred years of World Mission Day reminds us that mission grows out of our relationship with Christ and our unity with the universal Church and local Churches throughout the world. Mission is for everyone, everywhere. No person or place is excluded from the Church's mission. For a hundred years, generous contributions through the Pontifical Mission Societies have supported the spread of the Gospel in places where the Church is still taking root and helped new local Churches grow.

This history reminds us how the faith reached even the most distant villages through the dedication of missionaries and catechists. They often walked long distances to reach people and faced many difficulties in their work. Remembering their efforts is not merely looking back at the past. These stories can inspire the younger generation, help them understand their responsibility, and prepare them to continue the missionary work of the Church.

2. Gratitude to Be Sent Forth

The hundredth year of World Mission Day invites us to thank God and renew our commitment to missionary work. It honours the sacrifices of missionaries who brought the faith to distant lands and worked hard to establish Christian communities and Churches. Through their presence and dedication, they proclaimed the Gospel not only through their words but, above all, through the way they lived together and served others.

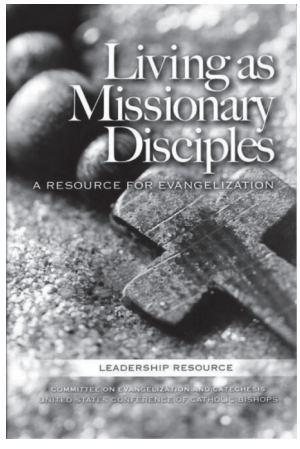
We must be grateful to all those who brought us the faith. For a hundred years, World Mission Day has inspired parishes, religious communities, seminaries and diocesan institutions to support the missions. It reminds us that every baptised person has a responsibility to share in the Church's mission. We can do this through prayer, financial contributions, practical help, and support for Church leaders, catechists, religious and lay faithful who serve the people.

The generosity of the faithful, expressed through even the smallest offerings collected in parishes, seminaries, schools and other institutions, has helped new Churches grow and the Gospel reach more people. As a parish priest in a remote village, I remember how enthusiastically and joyfully the farming communities took part in activities organised for Mission Sunday. Offerings, stalls selling homemade food, auctions, fun-filled games and housie-housie all added to the excitement of the day.



These experiences remind us of a simple but important truth: mission is not the responsibility of a few missionaries alone. It is the shared responsibility of every baptised person. Churches that once received help from others are now increasingly able to support the missions themselves and send missionaries to serve in other places.

A Church that remembers the past with gratitude will become more willing to give and support missionary work. Gratitude leads to generosity. A Church that cannot say “thank you” cannot truly become a Church that goes forth to serve others.



3. Renewal: Beneficiaries into Missionary Disciples in a New Missionary Age

The Church document *Ad Gentes*, no. 35, teaches that spreading the Gospel is not the responsibility of missionaries alone. It is the duty of the whole People of God. Above all, we fulfil this duty by the way we live. When the faithful recognise their responsibility to share the Gospel, each person must do their part rather than leave the task to others.

Canon 211 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law states that all the faithful have “the obligation and the right to strive so that the divine message of salvation may more and more reach all people of all times and all places.” This means that every baptised person has both the right and the responsibility to help spread the Good News. Although people have different gifts and responsibilities, everyone has a part to play in the Church's mission.

Pope Francis, in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), reminds us that the Church is called to go out and bring the Gospel to others. The laity, too, must actively participate in the life and mission of the Church, according to their gifts and abilities.

Working together in the Church also means listening to one another and speaking openly. A Church that listens encourages dialogue, helps people reflect together, and seeks agreement through mutual understanding. Pastors have an important role in encouraging this spirit of fellowship and unity.

The hundredth year of World Mission Day should awaken in every baptised person the awareness that we are all called to share the Gospel. We can do this by accompanying others in their difficulties, praying for them, showing compassion, serving those in need and sharing our resources. The Final Document of the Synod on Synodality also stresses the need to give laypeople, both men and women, greater opportunities to serve and participate in the Church's mission. It calls for new forms of service that respond to the needs of our time, with everyone working together and taking responsibility according to their gifts (no. 77).

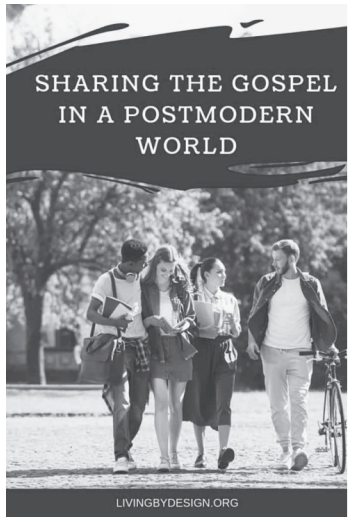
Missionary work must go beyond the activities of individual parishes and communities. It requires cooperation among the Pontifical Mission Societies, Churches in different continents, bishops' conferences, dioceses, parishes, associations, lay movements and families. The hundredth year of World Mission Day challenges every Christian, parish, diocese, religious community and Church institution to rediscover the Lord's call to be His witnesses. Pope Leo XIV also emphasises this call in his message for World Mission Day.

...Continued on Page 18

A Century of Sharing the Gospel

*Dr Thomas John DSouza**

In 1926, Pope Pius XI asked Catholics everywhere to share responsibility for the missionary work of the Church. A hundred years later, in 2026, the Church celebrates the 100th World Mission Sunday. It is a moment of gratitude, and also a moment to ask what this day was always meant to teach us.



Pope Leo XIV has chosen a theme for this centenary that is simple and demanding: "One in Christ, United in Mission."

The woman who began it: Pauline Jaricot

Any account of World Mission Sunday must begin with a woman who never saw it. Pauline Jaricot, a young lay woman from Lyon, France, was moved by the plight of the missions and by letters from missionaries asking for help. In 1822 she had a simple idea: ordinary people, gathered in small groups of ten, could each offer a small weekly sum and a daily prayer for the missions. Each member would recruit others, and the offering would multiply. It was humble, practical and entirely lay-led.

From that small seed grew the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, which became a worldwide network of prayer and giving. When Pope Pius XI established World Mission Sunday in 1926, he was building on the foundation she had laid more than a century earlier.

Pauline herself paid a heavy price. She spent her life and her fortune on works of faith and charity, was cheated by others, and died in 1862 in poverty, largely unrecognized. Yet the Church has since honored her: Pope Francis beatified her in 2022. Her story carries the theme of this centenary. One woman, one small circle of prayer and a few coins given in faith became a worldwide communion, one in Christ and united in mission.



A theme rooted in a motto

The first half of the theme echoes the motto Pope Leo chose for his pontificate, In Illo uno unum, which can be rendered "In the One, we are one." The phrase comes from Saint Augustine, a saint dear to the Augustinian pope. It makes a quiet but radical claim: our unity is not something we manufacture. It is given to us in Christ. We do not become one by agreeing on everything, or by sharing the same culture, language or politics. We are one because we are in him.

The Vatican explained that the theme highlights the unity of believers in faith, founded on the unity of Christ with the Father, and the shared mission of evangelization that follows from it. That order matters. Unity comes first, and mission flows from it. We are not sent out to build a unity that does not yet exist. We are sent out because we already belong to the One who gathers all things to himself.

This is the heart of Jesus' prayer at the Last Supper: "that they may all be one... so that the world may believe" (John 17:21). Unity and mission are bound together in that single sentence. A divided Church struggles to witness to the reconciling love of God. A Church that lives as

one body, across every border, becomes a sign the world can read.

What a hundred years teaches us

When Pius XI established World Mission Sunday, the aim was practical as well as spiritual. He wanted every Catholic, wherever they lived, to feel a share in the Church's missionary task. Not only missionaries, religious orders and far-off dioceses, but the ordinary faithful in ordinary parishes: the child with a few coins, the widow with her prayers, the family at Sunday Mass.

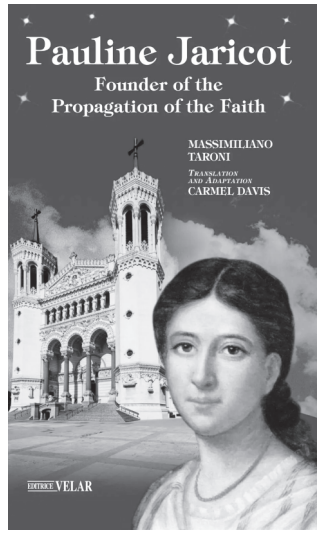
That vision has proved remarkably durable. Each year, Catholics around the world learn about the missions, pray for missionaries and give to support the Church in mission lands. The gifts are often modest. But gathered into a common fund and distributed according to need, they sustain catechists, build chapels, train seminarians and sisters, support schools and clinics, and strengthen young Churches that would otherwise struggle to stand.

There is something profoundly Catholic in this arrangement. The offering of a small parish in one country becomes bread, a classroom or a roof in another. No community is so poor that it has nothing to give, and no community is so rich that it has nothing to receive. Mission, rightly understood, moves in both directions. The Churches of Africa, Asia and Latin America now send missionaries, priests and sisters to the lands that once sent missionaries to them. The "mission field" is no longer somewhere else. It is everywhere, and so is the missionary.

A pope who has lived it



Pope Leo XIV does not speak of mission as an abstraction. He served as a missionary priest in Peru from 1985 to 1999, and later as bishop of Chiclayo from 2014 to 2023. Ahead of the 2025 celebration, he said that he had seen first-hand how the faith, prayer and generosity shown on World Mission Sunday can transform entire communities.



That testimony deserves attention. It reminds us that the collection basket, the prayer card and the mission appeal are not routine. They connect to real villages, real catechists walking long distances, and real families who first heard the Gospel because someone, somewhere, gave and prayed. The pope's own life is evidence that the work of this day bears fruit.

Unity in a divided world

This year's theme also speaks directly to the moment we live in. We inhabit a world marked by polarization, mistrust and isolation. Digital life connects us constantly and yet often leaves us lonelier. Wars and displacement scatter whole peoples. Even within the Church, differences of temperament, tradition and opinion can harden into suspicion.

Into this fragmented landscape, the Church offers a different logic. Mission invites us to build bridges of compassion, solidarity and hope. It asks us to look past what divides us and to recognize in every person someone for whom Christ lived, died and rose.

This does not mean pretending that differences are unimportant, or that every disagreement dissolves into easy harmony. It means that our deepest identity is not found in our factions but in our baptism. A Catholic in Lima, a Catholic in Lagos, a Catholic in Manila and a Catholic in the next pew are not strangers. They

are family, one in Christ, however far apart they live or however differently they pray.



Unity is a mission in itself

There is a subtle point in the theme that is easy to miss. "United in mission" does not only mean that we work together on a project. It means that our very unity is part of the message. When Catholics of different nations, languages and circumstances stand together in prayer and shared purpose, the world sees something it cannot produce on its own: a communion not built on power, profit or tribe.

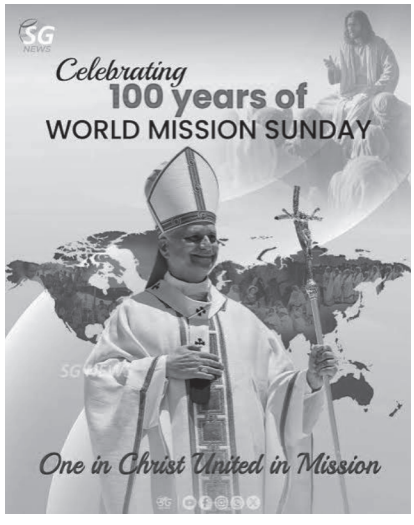
That is why mission is not the work of specialists alone. Every baptized person is called to it. A mother who teaches her children to pray is on mission. So is a nurse who treats patients with tenderness, a teacher who cares for the struggling student, a neighbor who reaches out to someone alone, and a parishioner who quietly funds a mission appeal. None of this is small in the economy of grace.

Three invitations for this centenary

As we mark this milestone, the theme offers three simple invitations.

First, to pray. Mission begins on our knees. Pray for missionaries, for catechists, for the young Churches, and for those who have not yet heard the Gospel. Prayer is not a lesser contribution. It is the foundation of all the others.

Second, to give. Generosity on World Mission Sunday is an act of communion. It says that we belong to a Church larger than our own parish, and that we accept our share of responsibility for it. Whatever we offer, small or large, joins a worldwide river of sharing.



Third, to go, in whatever way we can. For some, that means traveling far and serving abroad. For most, it means living the Gospel openly and joyfully where we already are, and being willing to speak of the hope we have received.

Gratitude and renewal

A centenary invites us to look back, and also forward. We give thanks for the countless missionaries, known and unknown, who carried the Gospel across oceans and mountains, often at great cost. We give thanks for the faithful who, for a hundred years, have prayed and given without ever seeing the results. And we ask for renewed joy, zeal and hope as the Church continues its journey.

The mission is not finished. There are still people who have never heard the name of Jesus, and many more who have heard it but have not met him in the witness of a community that loves. The task is large. But the theme reminds us where our strength lies: not in our numbers, our resources or our cleverness, but in the One in whom we are one.

"One in Christ, United in Mission." It is a sentence a child can remember, and a vocation that can fill a lifetime. May this hundredth World Mission Sunday renew in each of us the desire to belong more deeply to Christ, and, because of that belonging, to carry his light to the ends of the earth.

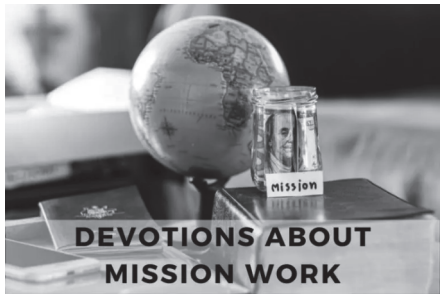
***The writer is a former General Manager, Janavahini (Bangalore); News Editor, Deccan Herald (Bangalore); Assistant Editor, Northern India Patrika (Lucknow); Principal, St Joseph's College (Allahabad); and Professor of Philosophy, St Joseph's Regional Seminary (Allahabad). ◆**

From Devotion to Mission

Marian, Franciscan and Theresian Paths for Today

*Fr Dr Merlin Rengith Ambrose**

Devotion is beautiful. Mission is necessary. Hence, Christian spirituality becomes truly fruitful when devotion becomes mission.



The Church has always venerated the saints and the Blessed Virgin Mary not simply because they are holy figures of the past, but because their lives continue to show us how the Gospel can become flesh in every generation. Mary, St. Francis of Assisi and St. Teresa of Jesus belong to different moments and traditions, yet they converge on one essential point: an encounter with God cannot leave a person unchanged or closed within oneself. It sends us towards others.

This is particularly important today. Many people still pray, light candles, attend pilgrimages, wear medals, recite the Rosary, place a statue of St. Thérèse of Lisieux on a desk and celebrate the feasts of the saints. These practices are precious expressions of popular piety. But the decisive question is: Does devotion make us more compassionate? More available to the poor? More attentive to the lonely? More committed to the Church? More courageous in witnessing to Christ?

Too often in Catholic life, devotion is treated as a spiritual endpoint: a cosy shelter built to protect us from the stormy realities, signs of the times, and needs of the hour. Yet, when understood through the lens of the Catholic Church's rich magisterial tradition, genuine devotion is never a dead end or a mere quiet retreat. Authentic piety is an engine room. It is a launchpad that transforms interior affection into outward, apostolic momentum. The challenge before us is therefore not to abandon devotion, but to deepen it until it becomes mission.



1. Mary: From "Yes" to "Service"

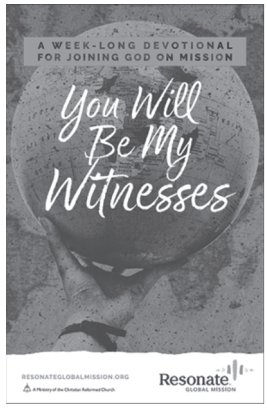
Mary is perhaps the clearest biblical example of devotion becoming mission.

Her journey begins with a "yes": *"Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word"* (Lk 1:38). Yet Mary's "yes" does not remain inside her heart. Immediately afterwards, she sets out in haste to visit Elizabeth (cf. Lk 1:39). The woman who has received Christ becomes a woman who carries Christ to another. This is the missionary meaning of Marian devotion.

The Second Vatican Council teaches that true devotion to Mary is not "sterile or transitory affection" or empty credulity. Rather, it leads the faithful to faith, filial love and imitation of her virtues (*Lumen Gentium*, 67). Pope Paul VI similarly emphasised in Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus* (1974) that authentic Marian devotion leads to Christ and possesses a genuine pastoral and renewing power in Christian life. Pope Francis takes this further in *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013): Mary is "the missionary who draws near to us and accompanies us throughout life," opening hearts to faith through her maternal love. He presents her as the Mother of evangelisation and the woman whose journey of faith leads to service and fruitfulness.

Therefore, the Rosary should not end with the last Hail Mary. It should lead us to ask: Whom can I visit? Whom can I comfort? Whom can I forgive? Whom can I bring closer to Christ? A parish Marian group could adopt one concrete apostolate: visiting the sick, accompanying elderly persons, supporting struggling mothers, helping children in need, or reaching out to families who have stopped coming to church.

Marian devotion becomes mission when Mary's "yes" becomes our "yes" to people.



2. Francis of Assisi: From Love of Christ to Care for Creation and the Poor

St. Francis of Assisi, whose 800th anniversary we just celebrated, offers another powerful missionary path: from love of Christ to fraternity with creation and solidarity with the poor. St Francis did not discover a spirituality of escape from the world. He discovered Christ among the poor, the lepers, the excluded and creation itself. His poverty was not an aesthetic lifestyle. It was a radical freedom from possessing and controlling everything.

Pope Francis highlights this profoundly in his second Encyclical *Laudato Si'*. St. Francis saw creation not merely as an object of scientific study or economic calculation, but as a community of brothers and sisters. His poverty and austerity represented a refusal to turn reality into something simply to be used and controlled. This Franciscan vision has enormous missionary relevance today.



A devotion to St. Francis that does not touch our relationship with the poor and the earth remains incomplete. His spirituality challenges us to ask:

Do I see creation as a gift or merely as a commodity?

Do I see the poor as a problem or as brothers and sisters?

Do I consume without thinking about those who lack basic necessities?

In a parish, Franciscan devotion can take the form of a "Care for Creation Sunday," a tree-planting initiative, a plastic-free parish celebration, a food-sharing programme, or a ministry for migrants and the homeless. In schools, children can be taught that environmental responsibility is not merely a secular concern but part of Christian discipleship. In families, the Franciscan path can mean simpler living, avoiding unnecessary consumption and sharing resources with those in need. In youth groups, it can become a practical "faith in action" project: cleaning a public space, visiting a shelter, helping a poor family or organising an ecological campaign.

Franciscan devotion becomes mission when love of God becomes love of the poor, creation and the common home.

3. St Teresa of Ávila: From Prayer to Mission

St. Teresa of Jesus offers perhaps the most important lesson for a Church tempted by activism: mission must come from prayer.

St. Teresa was a woman of extraordinary interior life, but she was never an escapist mystic. Her prayer made her more courageous, more realistic and more committed to the renewal of the Church. Pope Francis, writing on the 500th anniversary of St. Teresa's birth, beautifully captured this relationship between contemplation and mission. He noted that her encounter with Jesus and her experience of prayer did not close her within herself; rather, she became an "authentic school" of love of God and neighbour and an energetic communicator of the Gospel.

St. Teresa saw the problems of her time and asked what she could do. Her answer was essentially: I will do what lies within my power. That is a spirituality desperately needed today.

We often ask, "What can the Church do?" St. Teresa asks, "What can I do?"

We often complain about young people. St. Teresa asks us to accompany them.

We complain about families. St. Teresa asks us to build communities of friendship.

We complain about secularisation. St. Teresa asks us to deepen our prayer and witness.

We complain about divisions in the Church. St. Teresa reminds us that authentic prayer must produce charity, humility and fraternity.

Pope Francis emphasised that St. Teresa understood that neither prayer nor mission could flourish without genuine community life. She wanted her communities to become houses of communion, where people loved, helped and supported one another. Thus, Teresian devotion becomes mission when prayer becomes love in action.



4. Three Saints, Three Missionary Movements

These three spiritual paths can be remembered very simply:

Mary teaches us to GO. She receives Christ and immediately goes to Elizabeth.

Francis teaches us to EMBRACE. He embraces Christ, the poor, the excluded and creation as brothers and sisters.

Teresa teaches us to REMAIN. She remains with Christ in prayer so that she can go forth with greater courage and love.

Mary: "Yes." Francis: "Brother and sister." Teresa: "Prayer."

Together they form a beautiful missionary spirituality: Receive Christ like Mary. Love the world like Francis. Remain with Christ like Teresa. Then go and serve. This is precisely the missionary discipleship emphasised by Pope Francis in his Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World, *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013): by baptism, all Christians are missionary disciples; evangelisation is not the task of only clerics while everyone else remains passive.



5. Making Devotion Concrete Today

The great challenge is to move from devotional events to missionary habits.

In Parishes

A Marian Rosary group can adopt a family in difficulty. A Franciscan group can care for creation or the poor. A Teresian prayer group can establish a weekly hour of Eucharistic adoration followed by a concrete charitable apostolate. Every devotional group should ask at least once a year: "Whom are we serving because of our devotion?"

In Schools

The lives of Mary, Francis and Teresa can become practical programmes. A Marian project could encourage students to visit elderly people. A Franciscan project could involve environmental stewardship. A Teresian project could teach silence, meditation and compassionate listening. The objective is to help young people understand that holiness is not separation from real life; holiness transforms real life.

In Families

The home can become a small missionary community. Pray the Rosary, but also reconcile after an argument. Celebrate the feast of St Francis, but also reduce waste. Pray like St Teresa, but then listen patiently to a struggling family member. The family altar must eventually lead to the family table, and from the family table to the neighbour.

Among Young People

Young people should not be treated merely as recipients of devotional programmes. They can become protagonists of mission. The post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit* (2019), presents Mary as a model of a youthful Church: her courageous "yes" was a committed response to God's call. Pope Francis also reminds young people that popular piety and pilgrimages can become genuine missionary experiences, and specifically encourages them to use social networks as new fields for mission. A youth group could therefore combine a Marian pilgrimage with a visit to the poor; a Franciscan ecological project with prayer; or a Teresian retreat with a concrete service commitment.

In Digital Spaces

Pope Leo XIV explicitly states in his first Encyclical in 2026 that we must consider the digital world as a new continent to be evangelised and calls for mature Christian missionaries in that digital environment. The digital world is not outside the mission field (*Magnifica Humanitas*, no. 238). A parish Facebook or Instagram page should not only announce Mass timings. It can tell stories of Jesus, stories of hope, share short reflections, explain the Rosary, promote care for creation, accompany grieving people and invite young people into service. A simple question can guide digital evangelisation: After seeing our Christian content, has someone been brought closer to Christ, or merely given another religious post to scroll past?

Conclusion: Devotion That Has Feet

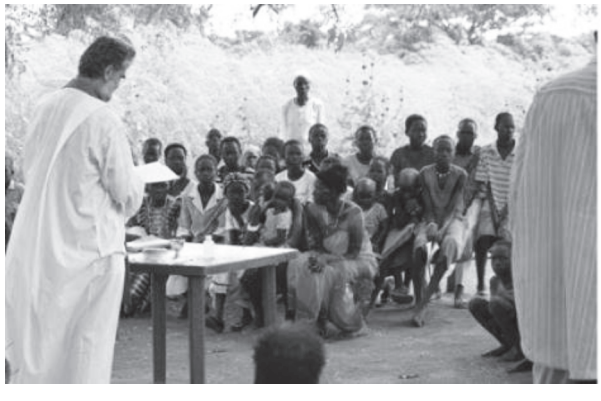
The Church does not need less devotion. She needs deeper devotion. Mary, St. Francis and St. Teresa remind us that authentic spirituality always moves outward. Mary's contemplation becomes visitation. Francis' love of Christ becomes fraternity. St. Teresa's prayer becomes reform and service. This is the movement from devotion to mission.

The question, therefore, is not whether we are devoted to Mary, St. Francis or St. Teresa. The deeper question is: What has our devotion made us do? If devotion to Mary makes us say "yes" to service; if devotion to Francis makes us embrace the poor and creation; if devotion to Teresa makes us deepen prayer, fraternity and courageous action - then our devotion has become mission.

And perhaps this is the spirituality the Church needs today: Knees that pray, hearts that love, hands that serve, feet that go. That is when devotion stops being merely something we practise and becomes something we live.

*** The writer, a priest of the Diocese of Kottar, is the Director of the Centre of Canon Law Studies at St Peter's Pontifical Institute, Bangalore, and Executive Secretary of the Commission for Canon Law in the CCBI.** ◆

Continued from Page 11: Hundred Years of Memory, Gratitude and Renewal



The future of mission depends on whether the whole Church lives out this missionary calling in its structures, formation and daily life. Pope Leo XIV points to a new missionary age shaped by the realities of our time, including migration, poverty, discrimination, war and artificial intelligence. In this changing world, the Church must continue reaching people in distant and neglected places. At the same time, she must find new ways to bring the Gospel to people in cities, in the digital world and in the struggles of everyday life. These changing circumstances call for fresh ideas, new initiatives and effective ways of sharing the faith.

A hundred years of World Mission Day is not merely a reminder of what has been accomplished. It calls us to move forward with renewed faith and commitment. Those who once received help from the missionary generosity of others must increasingly become missionaries themselves. By sharing their faith, serving others and supporting missionary work, they can help the Gospel reach every corner of the world.

*** The writer, a priest of the Diocese of Chingleput, is a professor of Canon Law, St Peter's Pontifical Institute of Bangalore** ◆

Mary's Fiat

The Missionary Vocation of the Church

*Fr Dr I Raymond Joseph**

Introduction



From the beginning of salvation history, God has invited human beings to participate freely in his plan to bring salvation to all through Jesus Christ. Mary holds a unique place in this history. Through her faith-filled response, she became the Mother of Jesus, the Saviour of the world. Her words, "Let it be done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38), known as her *fiat*, express her willingness to participate in God's saving mission.

Mary's fiat is more than a personal act of obedience; it reveals how the Church is called to respond to God. Her faith, service, faithfulness in suffering, and prayerful communion with the disciples illuminate different aspects of the Church's missionary vocation.

The Second Vatican Council teaches that the Church is missionary by her very nature, originating in the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit according to God's plan (*Ad Gentes*, no. 2). Mary's life offers the Church a model of how to live this calling.

1. The Biblical and Theological Meaning of Mary's Fiat



In Latin, fiat means "let it be done." In Luke 1:26–38, the angel Gabriel announces that Mary will conceive and bear Jesus, the Son of the Most High. Although she cannot fully understand every consequence of this calling, she freely entrusts herself to God: "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38).

God takes the initiative in salvation, but Mary responds willingly. Her consent does not make her the source of salvation; through God's grace, she cooperates uniquely in the mystery of the Incarnation. The Second Vatican Council teaches that Mary received the Word of God in her heart and in her body and gave Life to the world *(Lumen Gentium*, no. 53).

In *Redemptoris Mater*, Pope John Paul II presents Mary's response as an expression of the "obedience of faith" (cf. Romans 1:5; 16:26). She entrusted her whole self to God, submitting her intellect and will to his purpose (*Redemptoris Mater*, no. 13). Her response was not passive resignation but a free and loving commitment.

For the Church, Mary's fiat shows that mission begins with listening to God's Word and responding to the Holy Spirit, not simply with human plans or organisational activity. The Church must allow God's will to shape its worship, teaching, and service.

2. Mary's Unconditional Love and Faith in God's Word

Mary's love for God is evident in her willingness to accept the vocation entrusted to her. By calling herself the "servant of the Lord" (Luke 1:38), she expresses humility and readiness to serve.

Elizabeth recognises Mary's faith when she says, "Blessed is she who believed that what the Lord has said to her will be fulfilled" (Luke 1:45). Mary trusts God even when she cannot see the whole path ahead. Pope John Paul II explains that her pilgrimage of faith began at the Annunciation and continued throughout her life (*Redemptoris Mater*, nos. 13–19). This trust challenges the Church to examine its missionary intentions. Mission must never become a means of gaining power, prestige, or personal advantage. Its purpose is to help people encounter Jesus Christ. The Church must proclaim the Gospel with humility, respect for human dignity, and concern for people's spiritual and material needs.

Mary's example calls the Church to ensure that its mission is motivated by love of God and neighbour rather than self-interest.

3. Mary's Helping Attitude: A Mission of Service



Immediately after the Annunciation, Mary travels "in haste" to the hill country of Judah to visit Elizabeth (Luke 1:39–40). Rather than concentrating on her own extraordinary experience, she reaches out to a relative who needs support.

Mary remains with Elizabeth for about three months (Luke 1:56), offering companionship and practical assistance. When Elizabeth hears Mary's greeting, the child leaps in her womb, and Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:41–45). Mary brings Christ to Elizabeth even before Jesus is born.

The Visitation shows evangelisation through loving presence. Mary responds to a human need, and her visit becomes an occasion of joy and spiritual blessing. Her example reminds the Church that mission takes place not only through preaching but also through concrete acts of care.

Today, the Church proclaims Christ through education, healthcare, charitable works, care for the poor and vulnerable, and solidarity with those who suffer. Pope Francis, in *Evangelii Gaudium* (nos. 20–24), calls the Church to go forth towards others, especially those who are forgotten or excluded.

Mary's initiative challenges Christian communities to recognise opportunities for service in families, parishes, neighbourhoods, and workplaces. Mission becomes visible when faith moves believers to respond generously to others.

4. Mary's Readiness to Suffer with Jesus



Mary's fiat did not spare her suffering. At the presentation of Jesus in the Temple, Simeon foretells that a sword will pierce her soul (Luke 2:34–35). Her vocation as the Mother of Jesus would involve sharing in the sorrow surrounding her Son's mission.

Mary and Joseph flee to Egypt to protect the infant Jesus from Herod (Matthew 2:13–15). Later, she experiences anguish when Jesus remains behind in Jerusalem at the age of twelve (Luke 2:41–50). Through these events, she remains faithful, pondering God's work in her heart (Luke 2:19, 51).

Her fidelity reaches its profound expression at Calvary. Mary stands near the Cross (John 19:25). She cannot take away her Son's suffering, but she does not abandon him. Her presence expresses love that remains faithful in the face of pain.

The Second Vatican Council teaches that Mary was united with Jesus in compassion at the Cross and cooperated in the Saviour's work through faith, hope, and charity (*Lumen Gentium*, nos. 58, 61). This participation must be understood in relation to Christ's unique redemptive sacrifice. Jesus alone is the Redeemer; Mary's participation depends entirely on his grace.

Her example strengthens those engaged in difficult missionary work. Christians who serve the sick, defend the oppressed, or stand beside persecuted communities may encounter suffering they cannot immediately relieve. Mary teaches them to remain compassionate and faithful. This does not mean seeking suffering or tolerating injustice. It means remaining committed to love and truth when discipleship becomes costly, trusting that the Cross is not the final word and that the Resurrection sustains Christian hope.

5. Mary as a Disciple and Model for the Church

Mary is not only the Mother of Jesus; she is also his faithful disciple. She listens to God's Word, reflects on its meaning, and follows her Son in faith.

At the wedding feast at Cana, Mary notices that the wine has run out and brings the need to Jesus (John 2:1–5). She tells the servants, "Do whatever he tells you" (John 2:5). These words express the heart of discipleship: Mary directs others towards Jesus rather than herself.Luke describes Mary as pondering events in her heart (Luke 2:19, 51). Her example shows the importance of reflection and prayer. Missionary disciples need to discern God's will and allow Scripture to guide their choices.



At the Cross, Mary remains faithful when following Jesus becomes painful (John 19:25–27). The Second Vatican Council describes her in *Lumen Gentium* (no. 53) as an outstanding member and model of the Church in faith and charity.

Mary's discipleship shows that mission belongs to the whole Christian community, not only to a few specialists. Every Christian is called to witness to Christ through words, actions, relationships, and daily choices.

6. Mary with the Disciples after the Ascension

After Jesus' Ascension, the apostles gather in Jerusalem and devote themselves to prayer with Mary, the mother of Jesus, and other believers (Acts 1:12–14). Together, they await the promised Holy Spirit as they prepare for the mission entrusted to them by the risen Lord: "You will be my witnesses … to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).



Mary accompanies the apostles through prayer and communion. She does not replace their responsibility to proclaim the Gospel; her presence strengthens the unity of the community. The Second Vatican Council notes that Mary prayed with the apostles before Pentecost and was present at the beginning of the Church's missionary journey (*Lumen Gentium*, no. 59). Pope John Paul II reflects on the connection between Mary's openness to the Holy Spirit at the Annunciation and her presence among the disciples awaiting the Spirit at Pentecost (*Redemptoris Mater*, nos. 24–26).

The Spirit who overshadowed Mary at the Annunciation (Luke 1:35) empowers the Church at Pentecost (Acts 2:1–4). These distinct events reveal the Spirit's continuing work in salvation history.

Mary's presence in the upper room reminds the Church that mission requires prayer, unity, and dependence on the Holy Spirit. Missionary activity must therefore be rooted not only in action but also in prayerful discernment and communion.

7. Mary's Fiat: A Continuing Challenge to the Missionary Church

Mary's fiat remains relevant to the Church in every age. Pope Francis presents Mary in *Evangelii Gaudium* (nos. 286–288) as a missionary who draws near to people and accompanies them throughout life. She is a sign of hope and maternal love, particularly for those who suffer.

Every baptized person shares responsibility for the Church's mission. Parents can live their *fiat* through the Christian formation of their children. Religious men and women can express it through their vows and service. Priests can live it through pastoral dedication, while laypeople can witness to Christ in professional, social, and cultural life.

Mary's life brings together the essential dimensions of missionary vocation: faith at the Annunciation, service at the Visitation, perseverance at Calvary, and prayerful communion with the apostles before Pentecost. Her example calls every Christian to place personal gifts at the service of God's mission.

Conclusion

Mary's fiat, expressed in the words "Let it be done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38), reveals the relationship between faith, obedience, service, and mission. By accepting God's invitation, Mary participated uniquely in the mystery of the Incarnation and became the Mother of Jesus, the Saviour of the world. Her trust remained firm through uncertainty, service, suffering, and hope.

Inspired by Mary, the Church is called to welcome Christ, bring his presence into human situations, accompany those who suffer, and proclaim the hope of salvation to all nations. Her fiat remains a living inspiration for the Church's missionary vocation until the Gospel reaches the ends of the earth.

*** The writer, a priest of the Diocese of Sivagangai, is a professor of Scripture, Sacred Heart Seminary, Poonamallee, Chennai. ♦**

St Francis of Assisi

Mission Through Poverty, Peace and Fraternity

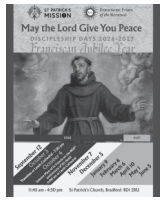
*Fr Nithiya Sagayam OFM Cap**



St. Francis of Assisi (1181/82–1226) stands as one of the most transformative figures in Christian history, embodying a Gospel vision that unites voluntary poverty, universal fraternity, and radical peacemaking. His mission was not a collection of isolated spiritual practices but a coherent evangelical programme rooted in the imitation of Christ. Francis' poverty generated his peacemaking; his peacemaking revealed the depth of his fraternity; and his fraternity expressed the fullness of his poverty. Together, these three dimensions formed a single, integrated mission that continues to inspire the Church's response to the cry of the poor, the longing for peace, and the need for human and ecological reconciliation. In a world marked by violence, inequality, and fragmentation, Francis' witness remains profoundly relevant.

1. The Historical Context of Francis' Mission

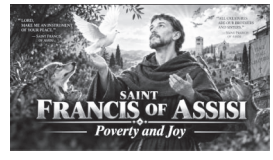
Francis lived during a period of intense social, political, and religious upheaval. Italian communes in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries were characterised by violent conflicts between city-states, such as the long-standing hostility between Assisi and Perugia; internal class tensions between nobles and emerging merchant families; and feudal oppression, which weighed heavily on peasants and the urban poor. The Church itself faced a crisis of credibility because of clerical wealth, political entanglements, and the rise of movements such as the Cathars and Waldensians, whose growth reflected deep spiritual hunger among the people.



Francis personally experienced the brutality of war. His participation in the Battle of Collestrada in 1202, followed by imprisonment and illness, became decisive moments in his conversion. These experiences awakened in him a profound rejection of violence and a longing for a life shaped by the Gospel of peace. His mission must therefore be understood as a response to the concrete suffering he witnessed in his own time.

2. Voluntary Poverty as the Foundation of Francis' Mission

Francis' embrace of voluntary poverty was not merely an ethical choice but a spiritual transformation. It was his personal response to his encounter with Jesus, who embraced poverty and suffered on the cross. His encounter with lepers was a decisive experience that transformed his attitude towards them and helped him recognise Christ in their suffering. In his *Testament*, he recounts the experience that marked the beginning of his conversion:



"The Lord gave me, Brother Francis, thus to begin doing penance: for when I was in sin, it seemed too bitter for me to see lepers. And the Lord Himself led me among them, and I showed mercy to them. And when I left them, what had seemed bitter to me was changed into sweetness of soul and body."

This encounter with the lepers—those who were most excluded and feared—revealed to Francis the face of Christ and opened him to a life of radical humility and solidarity. Poverty was not a rejection of the world but a deeper entry into its woundedness.

Voluntary Poverty as Freedom and Peace

Francis understood poverty as freedom from domination, rivalry, and fear. Wealth, in his view, fostered competition, social superiority, and violence. By renouncing possessions, Francis sought to remove the roots of conflict from his own life. He believed that a poor person need not be an oppressor, a rival, or a threat to others. Poverty liberated him to love everyone without calculation or self-protection. War further deepens economic inequality: the rich may grow richer through war, while the poor become poorer and bear its heaviest burdens.

Voluntary Poverty Leads to Fraternal Love

Francis' poverty was not solitary asceticism but communal voluntary poverty. It was a prophetic response to the socioeconomic trends of his time, which reinforced divisions and degraded the poor. Francis sought to return to the original evangelical way of life as lived by Jesus and the Apostles. The early Franciscan fraternity lived without property, shared what they received, and depended on the generosity of others. This created a new social model: a fraternal community in which authority meant service and relationships were marked by mutual care. Francis' poverty enabled him to move freely among the poor, the sick, and the marginalised.

3. Francis' Mission of Peace

Peace in a Violent World

Francis' commitment to peace must be understood against the backdrop of the violence of his time. He rejected the culture of chivalry, military glory, and vengeance that dominated medieval society. His greeting, "Pace e Bene" ("Peace and Good"), was not merely a pious formula but a radical proclamation of a new social order rooted in the Gospel.



Peace Through Nonviolence in Thought, Word and Action

Francis forbade his brothers to carry weapons and insisted on gentleness, forgiveness, and patience. His nonviolence was not passive but active: it was a courageous engagement with the world that sought to transform hostility through love. Francis became a reconciler in Assisi, mediating conflicts between rival families and social groups. His humility and poverty gave him moral authority: he had no political agenda, no wealth to defend, and no personal interests to protect. His very presence was disarming.

Peace Leads to Dialogue

One of the most remarkable episodes in Francis' life was his journey to Egypt in 1219 during the Fifth Crusade. Crossing battle lines unarmed, he met Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil and engaged him in respectful dialogue. Cusato notes that Francis did not seek to win an argument but to bear witness to the peace of Christ. This encounter stands as one of the most significant examples of interreligious peacemaking in Christian history.[v]

Peace Leads to Cosmic Harmony

Francis' vision of peace extended beyond human relationships to the whole of creation. His *Canticle of the Creatures* expresses a vision of the universe as a family of brothers and sisters. This cosmic fraternity arises from poverty: because Francis did not seek to possess creation, he could relate to it with reverence and joy.

4. Fraternity as Mission

Francis' way of life—simple, joyful, and peaceful—was itself a proclamation of the Gospel. His understanding of fraternity was not limited to his companions. He saw every person—rich or poor, healthy or sick, Christian or non-Christian—as a brother or sister. This universal fraternity flowed from his poverty, which placed him alongside others as an equal, and from his commitment to peace, which enabled him to approach everyone with openness.

Francis' relationship with creation was fraternal rather than utilitarian. He regarded animals, plants, and the elements of nature as brothers and sisters, recognising their relationship with humanity within the wider family of creation.



Francis' mission can be summarised in a simple but profound spiritual insight: If you own nothing, you fear nothing. *If you fear nothing, you hate no one. If you hate no one, you can love everyone.*

*** The writer, a priest of the Capuchin Province of Tamil Nadu, is the State Secretary of the SC/ST Commission of the Tamil Nadu Bishops' Council in Trichy. Formerly, he served as the International JPIC Secretary of the Capuchin Order and as Executive Secretary of the CBCI Commission for Justice, Peace and Development. ◆**

Saint Thérèse of Lisieux
Patroness of Missions Without Leaving the Cloister

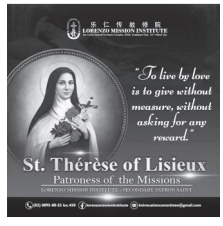
Sr Anjala Lincy Clark*

Mission is not first a matter of geography, but of love: prayer, sacrifice, and hidden fidelity can sustain the whole Church.

Introduction

Mission is at the heart of the Church's identity. Jesus entrusted His disciples with the command to "make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). Throughout history, missionaries have carried the Gospel to distant lands through preaching, education, healthcare, and service to the poor. Yet mission is measured not only by distance travelled or people reached. It begins with love for God and neighbour and grows through prayer, self-giving, and union with Christ.

Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face, known as Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, embodies this understanding. Though she lived within the Carmelite cloister at Lisieux, France, her spiritual influence reached the ends of the earth. Through her *Little Way* of spiritual childhood, prayer, humble love, and sacrifice, she showed how a heart surrendered to God can participate profoundly in the Church's mission.



1. Saint Thérèse: A Missionary Behind the Cloister Walls

Born on 2 January 1873 in Alençon, France, Thérèse entered the Carmelite monastery at Lisieux at fifteen. She lived a hidden life of prayer and fidelity until her death on 30 September 1897.

In 1927, Pope Pius XI proclaimed her Patroness of the Missions, alongside Saint Francis Xavier. This recognition affirms that missionary greatness depends not on physical mobility alone, but on union with Christ and participation in His saving work.

Thérèse prayed and offered sacrifices for priests and missionaries, especially those working in difficult circumstances. Her life shows that contemplation and active ministry are not opposed; both serve the one mission of Christ. As Saint Paul teaches, "There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:4).

2. *Divini Amoris Scientia:* The Science of Divine Love

On 19 October 1997, Pope Saint John Paul II proclaimed Thérèse a Doctor of the Universal Church through the Apostolic Letter *Divini Amoris Scientia* ("The Science of Divine Love").

Her wisdom arose from a profound experience of God's merciful love. She discovered that holiness means receiving that love with childlike trust and responding through self-giving. Her teaching reveals that even the smallest action, performed with love, can become an offering to God and a contribution to the Church's mission.

Saint Paul writes, "If I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:2). Mission without love risks becoming mere activity. Before carrying Christ to others, we must allow Him to transform our own hearts and daily lives.

3. "In the Heart of the Church, I Will Be Love"

Seeking to understand her vocation, Thérèse reflected on Saint Paul's teaching about the many members of Christ's Body. She expressed her discovery in *Story of a Soul*:

"In the heart of the Church, my Mother, I will be Love."

Thérèse realized that love gives life to every vocation and unites every apostolic service. Preaching, teaching, healthcare, missionary work, contemplation, and service to the poor all draw their strength from love. As Scripture says, "Above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony" (Colossians 3:14).

For Thérèse, love meant patience, forgiveness, cheerful acceptance of difficulties, and fidelity to ordinary duties. Her example encourages religious sisters serving in convents, schools, hospitals, and mission communities to

recognize that prayer, intercession, and unselfish service can make every vocation missionary.



4. The Little Way: Small Acts, Great Love

The *Little Way* is Thérèse's distinctive contribution to Christian spirituality. It calls us to childlike trust in God and love expressed through small acts of fidelity. Aware of her limitations, Thérèse placed her weakness in God's merciful hands rather than seeking extraordinary achievements.

A smile offered to someone suffering, patience in the face of criticism, a hidden sacrifice, faithful prayer, or a duty performed conscientiously can become an offering to God. Jesus teaches, "Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much" (Luke 16:10).

The Little Way does not diminish active mission; it deepens it. Teaching a child, caring for the sick, accompanying someone discerning a vocation, or praying for those who have lost faith can all serve the Church's mission. External work bears its richest fruit when it flows from interior love.



5. Prayer and Sacrifice: The Hidden Strength of Mission

Thérèse offered her prayers, daily difficulties, and sacrifices for the Church, especially for priests and missionaries. Her life shows that prayer is not an escape from mission but an essential participation in it. "Pray without ceasing," urges Saint Paul (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Jesus reminds us, "Apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Mission depends not only on human effort but also on God's grace.

Thérèse teaches us to entrust unavoidable hardships to Christ without romanticizing suffering or imposing it on others. For missionaries facing loneliness, illness, rejection, or discouragement, her witness offers hope: no sincere act of love is wasted when offered to God. The fruits of prayer may remain unseen, yet hidden fidelity can sustain those who proclaim the Gospel publicly.

6. Mission Without Borders: The Universal Reach of Love

Thérèse's life reveals that mission is not first a geographical journey but a movement of the heart towards God and humanity. Though she remained within the cloister, she prayed for missionaries in distant lands and desired that everyone might know Christ.

Her example reminds the Church to go beyond its comfort zones and serve those on the margins. Without prayer, mission can become mere activism; without love, service loses its Gospel spirit.

Contemplative communities participate in the universal Church's mission through prayer, solidarity, and self-offering. Every Christian, too, has a missionary role: parents forming children in faith, compassionate teachers, healthcare workers protecting human dignity, and religious faithful in hidden service all contribute to evangelization.

As Saint Paul writes, "Neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth" (1 Corinthians 3:7). Some sow the seeds of faith, others nurture them, and still others witness the harvest. All cooperate with God's grace.

7. A Message for Missionaries and Consecrated Persons Today

In a world marked by conflict, loneliness, inequality, migration, and spiritual uncertainty, Thérèse's spirituality remains relevant. She invites missionaries and consecrated persons to rediscover the power of interior life and hidden love.

First, she calls us to place God's love at the centre of our vocation. Our missionary identity depends not merely on our responsibilities or ministries, but on our relationship with Christ.

Second, she encourages us to perform ordinary duties with extraordinary love. Community life, teaching, healthcare, hospitality, administration, and care for the vulnerable can all become forms of evangelization.

Third, she reminds us to pray for those who proclaim the Gospel. Missionaries need spiritual support, encouragement, and the prayers of the faithful.



Finally, she teaches us to trust God when results remain unseen. Our responsibility is to remain faithful, leaving the growth to Him.

A congregation's missionary vitality depends not only on its institutions and activities, but also on the quality of its prayer, the depth of its fraternal charity, and the fidelity of each member.

Conclusion: Love Is the Soul of Mission

Saint Thérèse of Lisieux shows that mission is born in love, sustained by prayer, purified through sacrifice, and fulfilled in fidelity to God. Though she never left the Carmelite cloister, her witness continues to inspire missionaries throughout the world.

Her *Little Way* teaches that holiness is possible in the smallest details of daily life and that every vocation can contribute to Christ's mission. We do not need to travel to distant lands to become missionaries. We need hearts open to God, hands ready to serve, and lives willing to offer themselves in love.

The cloister can become a centre of missionary grace, the classroom a place of evangelization, the hospital a sanctuary of compassion, and a small act of kindness a silent proclamation of the Gospel.

May Saint Thérèse teach us to become missionaries of love wherever God has placed us. May our prayers strengthen those who labour in the missions, our sacrifices sustain the Church, and our daily fidelity reveal Christ's tenderness to the world.

As Saint Paul reminds us, "And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13:13).

Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, Patroness of the Missions, pray for us, that we may become living witnesses of Christ's love to the ends of the earth.

"Love is the soul of mission, prayer is her hidden strength, and fidelity is its daily witness."

*** The writer is a nun of the Congregation of the Franciscan Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Coimbatore** ◆

Continued from Page 06: One in Christ, United in Mission

Inspired by these testimonies, let us all commit to contributing to the great mission of evangelization — which is always a work of love —according to our own vocation and the gifts we have received. Your prayers and practical support, particularly on World Mission Day, will be a great help in bringing the Gospel of God's love to everyone, especially the poorest and those most in need. Every gift, no matter how small, becomes a meaningful act of missionary communion. I renew my heartfelt gratitude "for everything you will do to help me help missionaries throughout the world" (*Video Message for World Mission Day 2025, 19 October 2025*). To foster spiritual communion, I give you my blessing with this simple prayer:

Holy Father, make us one in Christ, rooted in his love that unites and renews. May all members of the Church be united in mission, docile to the Holy Spirit, courageous in bearing witness to the Gospel, proclaiming and daily embodying your faithful love for all creatures.

Bless all missionary men and women, support them in their efforts, and watch over them in hope!

Mary, Queen of Missions, accompany our work of evangelization in every corner of the earth: make us instruments of peace, and grant that the whole world may recognize in Christ the light that saves. Amen.

From the Vatican, 25 January 2026, Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul

LEO PP. XIV ◆

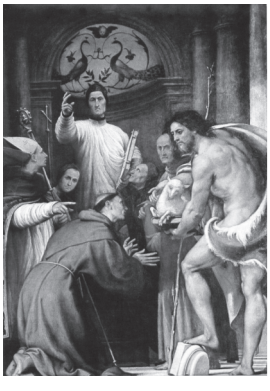
SAINT OF THE MONTH – I

St Lawrence Giustiniani

01 July 1381 – 08 January 1456 **Feast Day: September 5**



St Lawrence Giustiniani was a descendant of the noble house of Giustiniani, a Venetian patrician family that included several saints among its members and was highly regarded in Genoa, Venice, and Naples. He was born on July 1, 1381, to very pious parents, but lost his father, Bernard, at an early age. His mother, who was now responsible for the education of her children, redoubled her efforts. However, Lawrence gave her very little trouble, as he was naturally inclined towards virtue. One day, she told him that she feared he might secretly harbour ambition or pride in his heart. He replied, "Fear not, mother; I have only one ambition, and that is to become a great servant of the Lord and to be more pious than my brothers." His pious mother thus sowed the seeds of a devout religious life in her son during his childhood. His conduct in youth bore witness to his words. Although he lived at a time when the morals of the entire city were very corrupt, his exemplary life was regarded with surprise and admiration by everyone.



To escape the dangers that threatened him, Lawrence prayed fervently to God to grant him the grace to discern his vocation. One day, while kneeling before a crucifix and an image of the Blessed Virgin Mary and praying for this intention, he felt an intense desire deep within himself to leave the world and serve God in the religious life. He obeyed this heavenly call, renounced the world and all its attractions, and went to the Canons Regular of St. George in Alga, on an island near Venice. He requested admission to their community, and his request was granted. He began his novitiate cheerfully, but soon demonstrated through his conduct that he was no beginner in the pursuit of holiness, but already well advanced in it. His superiors found it much more difficult to moderate his zeal than to encourage it.

Despite his youth, Lawrence inspired admiration through his poverty, mortifications, and fervour in prayer. At that time, the convent was reorganised into a congregation of canons living in community. After his ordination in 1406, Lawrence was chosen as prior of the community and, shortly afterwards, as the superior general of the congregation. He gave the congregation its constitution and was so zealous in spreading its observance that he came to be regarded as its founder. His reputation for holiness and his zeal attracted the attention of Pope Eugene IV, who appointed him Bishop of Castello on May 12, 1433.

As bishop, Lawrence restored churches, established new parishes in Venice, supported the foundation of convents, and reformed the lives of the canons. Above all, he was noted for his Christian charity and boundless generosity. He gave the poor all the money he could raise, while he himself lived a simple and austere life of poverty. He was greatly respected in Italy and elsewhere by dignitaries of both Church and State. Through his sermons and writings, he also sought to foster and strengthen the religious life.

The Diocese of Castello belonged to the Patriarchate of Grado. On October 8, 1451, Pope Nicholas V united the See of Castello with the Patriarchate of Grado and transferred the patriarchal see to Venice. Lawrence was appointed the first Patriarch of Venice and held this office until his death, a little more than four years later.

While the holy patriarch devoted himself tirelessly to the duties of his high office, his

...Continued on Page 29

SAINT OF THE MONTH – II

St Remigius

437–533 **Feast Day: October 1**

On March 16, 455, Emperor Valentinian III was killed by two soldiers of the Imperial Guard on the Field of Mars. With his death, the Theodosian dynasty came to an end in the Western Roman Empire, hastening the decline of an already weakened empire.

For another twenty years, the throne of the Caesars would be contested by a succession of short-lived rulers, caught up in political struggles and driven by unrestrained human passions. Old and weakened, the Roman State continued to disintegrate before its final collapse. It was undermined from within, its foundations corroded by decadent customs and political, military, and financial chaos. As one account puts it, "Among the Romans there was no longer education, but only moral corruption and intrigues; family life was destroyed."



Meanwhile, successive barbarian invasions from the north had weakened the authority and unity of the Roman Empire. Nevertheless, one historical interpretation holds that the barbarians did not destroy the Empire by themselves; rather, they hastened the downfall of a civilisation already weakened from within by its own moral and political failures.

It was around this time that Remigius was born in Laon, in 437, into a noble Gallo-Roman family. From an early age, his intelligence and gift for public speaking won the admiration of his teachers and fellow students. His eloquence became so widely known that, in 459, following the death of the Bishop of Rheims, he was chosen to succeed him.

The work of this young man, only twenty-two years old, in leading such an important episcopal see soon demonstrated the wisdom of that choice. In his famous *Historia Francorum (History of the Franks)*, St. Gregory of Tours writes: "St. Remigius was a bishop of considerable knowledge who at first had been steeped in the study of rhetoric, but who so distinguished himself by his holiness that he equalled Sylvester in miracles."

The charity and kindness of the young prelate soon won the hearts of the faithful. He served them devotedly, comforting those who sought his help with material assistance, spiritual consolation, and guidance. Yet, while caring for those already belonging to Christ's flock through Baptism, St. Remigius burned with a desire to bring more souls to Christ.

He was exceptionally tall, and his face combined majesty with serenity. His manner was gentle, humble, and retiring. He was learned and eloquent, and was credited with the gift of miracles. His compassion and charity knew no bounds, and he never tired of his labours. His outward appearance reflected a noble and holy soul, filled with meekness and deep devotion. God had prepared this remarkable servant for an important mission.

At that time, Arian Christianity had a strong presence in parts of southern Gaul, while the pagan Franks were extending their power in the north at the expense of Roman authority. Remigius undertook the challenging task of bringing the Franks to the Christian faith. He played a decisive role in the conversion of their king, Clovis, who was baptised at Christmas, traditionally dated to around 496.

This conversion was the culmination of a long and difficult process. Remigius was not alone in this mission. Clovis had married Clotilde, a Christian princess who had long sought to bring her husband to the Christian faith. Her prayers and influence helped prepare the way for his conversion. With Clotilde's support and the guidance of Remigius, Clovis eventually embraced Christianity.

Following the king's baptism, Remigius baptised members of the royal family and, according to traditional accounts, thousands of Frankish warriors, together with women and children. Other bishops and priests also assisted in this great undertaking. The conversion of Clovis and many of his followers marked a decisive turning point in the Christianisation of the Franks. Remigius helped establish the Church's presence among them, destroyed pagan altars, built churches, and appointed bishops. He also firmly opposed Arian teachings. His missionary efforts contributed greatly to the development of a Catholic Frankish kingdom, with Clovis becoming one of the most influential Catholic rulers in Western Europe.



Hincmar of Rheims (c. 806–882), a powerful Frankish archbishop, theologian, and canon lawyer, wrote a *Life of St. Remigius* in the ninth century. He was the first known writer to record the legend that, during the baptism of Clovis, the chrism required for the anointing was missing. According to the story, St. Remigius prayed, and a dove descended from heaven carrying in its beak an ampulla containing the sacred oil.

A phial of oil, traditionally believed to be the same one, was preserved at the Abbey of Saint-Remi and used in the anointing of the kings of France until the coronation of Charles X in 1825. During the French Revolution, the Holy Ampulla was broken, but a fragment and some of its contents were saved and are preserved in Rheims Cathedral.

St Gregory of Tours describes Remigius as "a man of great learning, fond of rhetorical studies, and equal in his holiness to St. Silvester." St. Remigius died around the year 533, having devoted his long life to the service of God and the spread of the Christian faith.

Long before the Catholic Church established the modern, formal process of papal canonisation, Remigius was recognised as a saint through ancient Christian tradition and public veneration (*cultus*). His holiness and contribution to the Christianisation of the Franks have been honoured through the centuries, and his feast day is celebrated on October 1.

Sources: www.catholictradition.org; https://fatima.org/fatima-messages; https://catholicmagazine.news ◆

Continued from Page 27: St Lawrence Giustiniani

strength gradually declined, and he felt that his end was approaching. On Christmas Day, while celebrating Holy Mass, he experienced an intense desire to be admitted into the presence of God. A fever that seized him soon after Mass led to his death within a few days. He lay on the bare floor, and even in his final days, he could not be persuaded to use a softer bed. "Jesus Christ," he said, "died upon the hard wood of the Cross, and you desire that a sinner like me should lie soft and comfortable!" After receiving the holy sacraments, he gave his final instructions to those around him. "Keep the Commandments of the Lord," he said. "Nothing is more noble or excellent than to serve God." Having finished speaking, he raised his eyes to heaven and said, "I am coming, O my Jesus!" Then his soul went to God.

St. Lawrence Giustiniani was beatified by Pope Clement VII in 1524 and canonized by Pope Alexander VIII in 1690.

Sources: www.newadvent.org; https://catholicharboroffaithandmorals.com; https://ewtnmission.com ◆

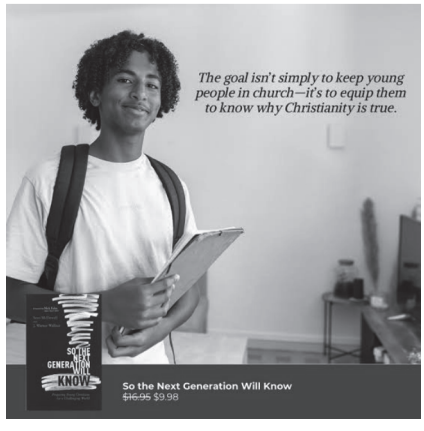
STORY

A Teenager God Story!

The idea of God had always been funny to me. A big man in the sky watching our every move. Woah, weird.

But my parents had basically hammered the knowledge of His presence into my head, and for all my life, I had known Him just to be two things; Fair and nice. I never really spoke to Him much when things started kicking off for me at school.

I had a lot going for me. I was one of the popular girls and had everyone surrounding me wanting us to be friends. I was awkward looking at that point, but still, I had a lot of guys who were attracted to me. One specifically caught my attention, but how about I save the juicy details for later?



I was changing from a British-based school to a Nigerian one, and have you know they have totally different teaching systems. Coming to school on the first day, I was determined to fit in. For the first few terms I didn't. I wasn't only bullied for my accent (which they thought was fake) but also for my glasses (which at that time were square framed and had lenses that usually fell off if one pushed too hard), so from a school where everything was 'honky – dory' to one where the reality of life starts to hit you a little harder.

I expected this new school to be just like the old one with loving people, a welcoming spirit, and basically just a rosy-everything is perfect-atmosphere, but it wasn't. Far from it, I'd say.

Finally, I got a break when a senior asked me out. I was on cloud nine! It seemed like the best thing ever, and from that moment, my popularity and confidence skyrocketed because now I was conversing with seniors. Seniors!

The seniors who people said were mean were actually the same ones coming to meet me regarding this guy. Through this, I made friends with a lot of them, and I don't think I could've described just how loved my little self felt to be surrounded by people older than me who actually wanted to talk to me.

Yes, I was actually a prayerful Christian, the type that would whisper a few prayers before bed or say 'Thank God' whenever the need arose.

But at that point, I let all cares go. I was swearing (even though till now, I no longer swear or say any curse words), speaking in vulgar terms and basically doing whatever I felt was necessary for people to see me as cool and down to earth.

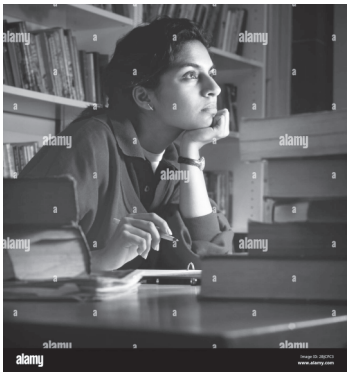
My confidence was on a whole other level, and I jumped from relationship to relationship because they made me feel something. I thought they were enough to fill the emptiness, I thought it would cover up everything I was missing, but it didn't. And at one point, it got worse.

I had loved God from a distance. I felt like to be truly loved by Him, I needed to be perfect. I thought I had to strip myself of every human emotion to be good enough for God.

Yes, I was taught that God is ever present, ever faithful, and ever forgiving , but these words would just hover around my head, not really taking any deep root in my soul. I felt like pastors were people who were perfect in every way. I thought only they could read Bibles and understand. I thought only they had the responsibility to teach and share the gospel.

But on the 15th of May, 2021, I felt like everything I ever knew was gone. I had made a lot of mistakes in the name of trying to fit in. Mistakes that affected friendships, but I didn't care at that time because I thought I had everything I needed. On this faithful day, however, God revealed to me the intentions of the boy I liked, and after confronting him not only did I find myself in a raging battle of comparison with his new girlfriend, things in itself blew out of proportion.

I had never felt more hurt before than I did at that time. I don't know why it hurt so much, but I owed it to the fact that my previous school shielded me from the world. It made me think that there was nothing to be scared of, that I could put my heart on the line for anyone, and they would guard it as their most-priced possession.



I entered into a false state of depression at first. I needed an excuse for pity. I would walk around with 'nobody loves me' written across my face (not literally) and a victim mentality talking about how my crush had ditched me for a prettier, model-looking replacement, but another thing that my former school didn't teach me was that, sometimes, people weren't always going to take time out to ask you how you were doing or render their services.



I felt alone. Everyone withdrew from me to the point where I decided to cook up a plan to force people's attention by claiming that I wanted to attempt suicide. Yes, stupid. I was actually willing to take my own life for people who didn't create it.

That just made everything a 100 times worse. Looking back now, I do realize I wasn't in the right state of mind, and I see how telling someone this would've been the right thing to do, but nobody was there to listen.

It was like the world was moving without me.

After that time, students, teachers, and even my crush tormented me with the memories of my suicide attempt even long after I had tried it. Mocking me.

I wondered where God was and why He had allowed this to happen, I prayed that He would punish those that hurt me, and for a period of time, I even took Christianity seriously, hoping I could gain God's trust and love so He would repay them for what they did to me.

Of course, coming to God with false intentions isn't right. He knows our heart and discern our thoughts, so obviously, He saw right through my act. He saw that I hadn't quite learnt from my experience, so He made sure that I had completely nothing so I would remember that in Him I have everything.

2022 was a defining year of my life.

I remember praying to God to help me win the democratically conducted school elections that take place every 2 years. I told Him that I wanted to know that He's still by my side. And yes, I won as the Head Girl thanks to Him, but one mistake I made was thinking that the position would make me feel accomplished. I thought it would cover up for everything and that, with that title, I wouldn't need anything else. But I still needed Christ, and I didn't know that until that year came to a close.

By November, I had already started walking closely with God, getting to know Him better for the right reasons. I still wasn't really sure what to think about Him, but I knew that He was all I had. I might as well give it a shot.

So for the last few months of 2022, **I committed my ways to the Lord** and for the first time, gained my tongues (that is, speaking in tongues), now THAT made me feel accomplished. I also felt like this heavy weight and burden had been lifted off of me, and that I could finally breathe.

I felt like I got myself back. I got my smile back, but most importantly, **I got God back**. Now, just brushing the surface of my experiences to some people, it may seem like they are insignificant or not that serious, but you really have to seen things from someone's perspective before judging what they're facing. Yes, God taught me that too. How to not be a hypocritical Christian and how not to judge others.

On December 31st, 2022, I sat down to do a reflection with God, thinking back to everything that has happened and how far He has brought me. He kept me alive. He kept me going. He kept me safe. So, that day, I promised God that I would serve Him with everything I have. I promised not to take His love for granted, and I prayed. I prayed more seriously than I ever had, and I know He heard me because as I entered into the new year, I felt like a whole new person. I could love again.



Till now, I have been following God and walking in the path that he paved for me, I am happy to say that I am 16 and serving the Lord with my heart. He is taking me by the hand and leading me all the way.

Now, I face even deeper challenges because people don't understand what has brought me here. They don't understand what God is doing in my life. They see me as weird now because I read the Bible, because I trust in Him, and because I can no longer follow my fleshly desires. But I don't need their approval.



Currently, I am trusting God to get me through a very serious situation involving my friends at school and me. Because I am representing Christ, obviously, I am facing a lot of backlashes, and sometimes I get lonely. I get confused. Frustrated. Sometimes the things they say hurt me, but now I have someone who cares, who I can tell and talk to and cry to.

Now I know God as more than just 2 words. He is my Father, my best friend, my lover, my Saviour, my vindicator, my Creator, and so much more, I am still learning more about Him, but as of today, I have a new name to add to the list '**My Refuge.**'

So I am happy, as Paul said in the Bible, sad yet rejoicing, poor yet rich. I would never regret a thing that has happened just because it brought me to Christ. And now I trust Him. He is still all I have, and I no longer see the need for love or things of this world, for I focus my eyes on God, seeking first His kingdom…I think you can finish the rest of that verse.

(Kikelomo's God Story: Written by a Christian teenager for teens and young adults finding themselves.)

Source: https://questionsgod.com/kikelomo-story.htm ◆

Holy Father's Prayer Intentions

September 2026: *For the Care of Water*

Let us pray for a just and sustainable management of water, a vital resource, so that everyone may have equal access to it.

October 2026: *For Mental Health Ministry*

Let us pray that mental health ministry be established throughout the Church, helping to overcome the stigma and discrimination of persons with mental illnesses.



Pope Leo XIV's Prayer for Mission

Holy Father, make us one in Christ, rooted in his love that unites and renews. May all members of the Church be united in mission, docile to the Holy Spirit, courageous in bearing witness to the Gospel, proclaiming and daily embodying your faithful love for all creatures.

Bless all missionary men and women, support them in their efforts, and watch over them in hope!
Mary, Queen of Missions, accompany our work of evangelization in every corner of the earth: make us instruments of peace, and grant that the whole world may recognize in Christ the light that saves. Amen.

Message for the 100th World Mission Day, 2026

"Therefore, the more united we are in Christ, the better able we will be to carry out together the mission that he entrusts to us." (§1)

"IF UNITY IS THE CONDITION OF MISSION, LOVE IS ITS ESSENCE."

POPE LEO XIV

MESSAGE FOR
THE 100TH WORLD MISSION DAY, 2026, §3

#44, 3rd Cross,Ulsoor Road, Bengaluru 560 042
Karnataka, INDIA

+ 91 79758 31942

secretariat@indiapms.com

www.pmoinindia.org

POPE LEO XIV





POPE PIUS XI