



CONGREGATIO
PRO GENTIUM EVANGELIZATIONE

Prot. N. 4364/17

Vatican City State, 3 December 2017
Saint Francis Xavier

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

In response to the personal invitation of the Holy Father in his letter dated 22 October 2017, I would like to share with you and your communities some reflections and proposals regarding the celebration of the Extraordinary Missionary Month of October 2019.

At the heart of this initiative, which involves the Universal Church, will be prayer, testimonies, and reflections on the centrality of the *missio ad gentes* as a permanent state of being sent out for the first evangelization (Mt 28:19). The obligation of personal and communal conversion to Jesus Christ crucified, risen, and alive in the Church, will renew the fervor and the passion for giving witness to the Gospel of life and the joy of Easter, through both words and actions (Lk 24:46-49). The mission of the Church in those human, religious, and cultural contexts not yet permeated by the Gospel requires that the transmission of the faith bring about a personal way of life, a culture, and a way of living in communion that are forged by the joy of the Gospel and Christian values. The Christian faith manifests its authentic mission when it is completely dedicated to the salvation of the world. The witness of charity, commitment to justice and peace, and intercultural dialogue with Religious Traditions in mutual respect for human life and its dignity, especially that of the poorest of society, all serve to orient the mission of the Church around the proclamation of the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The *missio ad gentes*, identified in *Evangelii Gaudium* as the paradigm of the ordinary pastoral action of the Church (EG 15), represents that which Pope Francis asks us to place at the heart of the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Apostolic Letter *Maximum Illud* of his predecessor Pope Benedict XV (30 November 1919). In other words, we are “to place the mission of Jesus at the heart of the Church, making it the criterion for measuring the effectiveness of her structures, the results of her labors, the fruitfulness of her ministers and the joy they awaken. For without joy, we attract no one.”¹

The Holy Father indicated four dimensions,² or ways to prepare for and live out the Extraordinary Missionary Month of October 2019, in order to overcome divisions and opposing views between ordinary and missionary pastoral work, and between the challenges of evangelization in previously Christian areas that are now secularized and indifferent to religion and the *missio ad gentes* among cultures and religions to which the Gospel is still foreign (EG 14). These four dimensions are:

1. a personal encounter with Jesus Christ alive in His Church: Eucharist, Word of God, personal and communal prayer,
2. the witness of the Saints, the Missionary Martyrs, and the Confessors of the Faith, who are unique expressions of the Churches throughout the world,
3. biblical, catechetical, spiritual, and theological formation regarding the *missio ad gentes*,
4. missionary charity as a material support for the immense work of evangelization, especially the *missio ad gentes* and Christian formation in Churches that are most in need.

¹ POPE FRANCIS, Meeting with the Executive Committee of CELAM, Apostolic Nunciature in Bogotá, 7 September 2017.

² POPE FRANCIS, Speech to the National Directors of the Pontifical Mission Societies, gathered in General Assembly, Vatican City State, 3 June 2017.

With due respect for the charisms of your respective communities, I suggest that you determine suitable and appropriate ways to live out and be molded by these dimensions, so as to bring about a renewed conversion to the mission of Jesus.

In this time of remote preparation, I propose that contemplative monastic and cloistered communities commit themselves to prayerful reflection, which can be of help to particular Churches, the lay faithful and pastors in their work of conversion and mission. In the midst of the world, you, our brothers and sisters, thanks to the baptismal radicality of your contemplative vocation, are efficacious signs of the sonship of every man and woman of God. You live, in the ordinary, daily rhythm of your monasteries and communities, the essential elements of Christianity that represent the heart of the mission, the heart of every Gospel proclamation and witness. It is necessary to involve our brother monks and cloistered sisters in this initiative, so that indeed all throughout the world may be transformed and conformed to the mission of Christ and of His Church, to the glory of God the Father.

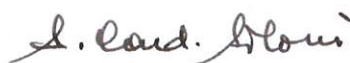
The Pontifical Missionary Societies (PMS) together with this Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples are directly involved in the work of preparing and implementing the Extraordinary Missionary Month. The national and diocesan PMS Directors, present and active in local Churches, are asked to work together with you so that this initiative of the Holy Father may indeed bring about renewed passion for the Gospel, greater zeal, and missionary fervor within our Churches. I have asked the International Secretariat of the Pontifical Missionary Union (PMU) to coordinate the preparation, formation, and implementation of the Extraordinary Missionary Month. Collaborative efforts are also underway with our Pontifical Urban University to organize moments of reflection and theological-missiological formation at the international and continental level.

Furthermore, in order to assist the creative action of particular Churches, some suggestions and indications will be offered by way of texts and reflections, the fruit of a wide consultation of Christians from throughout the whole world. In due time you will also be informed about the celebrations over which the Holy Father will preside, proposed as events of the Universal Church that will directly involve the Church in Rome.

Finally, I kindly ask you to identify particular examples from among the sons and daughters of your Institutes and Societies who have witnessed to the mission, who are known for their Christian example and enjoy the recognition of holiness in your communities and in the Churches where they provided their exemplary service. It would be most helpful if their biographies could be forwarded to the email address noted below. I would also be grateful if you could identify some members of your communities who might be able to compose spiritual and missionary reflections based on Sacred Scripture. I kindly ask you to forward these and other suggestions and proposals to the International Secretariat of the PMU (october2019@ppoomm.va).

Attached you will find a copy of the Holy Father's Letter to me, dated this past October 22nd, as well as the text of his Speech given to the National Directors of the Pontifical Mission Societies on 3 June 2017.

During this season of Advent, we entrust these preparations to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of the Apostles, to St. Francis Xavier and St. Thérèse, and to Blessed Paolo Manna. I extend to you my heartfelt greetings, with hopes of abundant fruits of conversion to Christ for the benefit of the missionary work of the Church.



Fernando Cardinal Filoni
Prefect