

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER TO PONTIFICAL MISSION SOCIETIES

*Clementine Hall
Thursday, 22 May 2025*

*Your Eminence, Your Excellencies,
General Secretaries, National Directors and
Personnel of the Pontifical Mission Societies,
Dear brothers and sisters,*

I offer a warm welcome to all of you, who have gathered from over one hundred and twenty countries to take part in the annual General Assembly of the Pontifical Mission Societies. I want to begin by expressing my gratitude to you and your associates for your dedicated service, which is indispensable to the Church's mission of evangelization, as I can personally attest from my own pastoral experience in the years of my ministry serving in Peru.

The Pontifical Mission Societies are effectively the "primary means" of awakening missionary responsibility among all the baptized and supporting ecclesial communities in areas where the Church is young (cf. Decree *Ad Gentes*, 38). We see this in the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, which provides aid for pastoral and catechetical programmes, the building of new churches, healthcare, and educational needs in mission territories. The Society of the Holy Childhood, too, provides support for Christian formation programmes for children, in addition to caring for their basic needs and protection. Likewise, the Society of Saint Peter the Apostle helps to cultivate missionary vocations, priestly and religious, while the Missionary Union is

committed to forming priests, religious men and women, and all the people of God for the Church's missionary activity.

The promotion of apostolic zeal among the People of God remains an essential aspect of the Church's renewal as envisioned by the Second Vatican Council, and is all the more urgent in our own day. Our world, wounded by war, violence and injustice, needs to hear the Gospel message of God's love and to experience the reconciling power of Christ's grace. In this sense, the Church herself, in all her members, is increasingly called to be "a missionary Church that opens its



arms to the world, proclaims the word ... and becomes a leaven of harmony for humanity" (*Homily, Mass for the Beginning of the Pontificate*, 18 May 2025). We are to bring to all peoples, indeed to all creatures, the Gospel promise of true and lasting peace, which is possible because, in the words of Pope Francis, "the Lord has overcome the world and its constant conflict 'by making peace through the blood of his cross'" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 229).

Hence we see the importance of fostering a spirit of missionary discipleship in all the baptized and a sense of the urgency of bringing Christ to all people. In this regard, I would like to thank you and your associates for your efforts each year in promoting World Mission Sunday on the second-to-last Sunday of October, which is of immense help to me in my solicitude for the Churches in areas which are under the care of the Dicastery for Evangelization.

Today, as in the days after Pentecost, the Church, led by the Holy Spirit, pursues her journey through history with trust, joy and courage as she proclaims the name of Jesus and the salvation born of faith in the saving truth of the Gospel. The Pontifical Mission Societies are an important part of this great effort. In their work of coordinating missionary formation and animating a missionary spirit on the local level, I would ask the National Directors to give priority to visiting dioceses, parishes and communities, and in this way to help the faithful to recognize the fundamental importance of the missions and supporting our brothers and sisters in those areas of our world where the Church is young and growing.

Before concluding these words with you this morning, I would like to reflect with you on two distinctive elements of your identity as Pontifical Mission Societies. They can be described as, communion and universality. As Societies committed to sharing in the missionary mandate of the Pope and the College of Bishops, you are called to cultivate and further promote within

your members the vision of the Church as the communion of believers, enlivened by the Holy Spirit, who enables us to enter into the perfect communion and harmony of the blessed Trinity. Indeed, it is in the Trinity that all things find their unity. This dimension of our Christian life and mission is close to my heart, and is reflected in the words of Saint Augustine that I chose for my episcopal service and now for my papal ministry: *In Illo uno unum*. Christ is our Saviour and in him we are one, a family of God, beyond the rich variety of our languages, cultures and experiences.

The appreciation of our communion as members of the Body of Christ naturally opens us to the universal dimension of the Church's mission of evangelization, and inspires us to transcend the confines of our individual parishes, dioceses and nations, in order to share with every nation and people the surpassing richness of the knowledge of Jesus Christ (cf. *Phil 3:8*).

A renewed focus on the Church's unity and universality corresponds precisely to the authentic charism of the Pontifical Mission Societies. As such, it should inspire the process of renewal of the statutes that you have initiated. In this regard, I express my trust that this process will confirm the members of the Societies worldwide in their vocation to be a leaven of missionary zeal within the People of God.

Dear friends, our celebration of this Holy Year challenges all of us to be "pilgrims of hope." Taking up the words that Pope Francis chose as the theme for this year's World Mission Day, I would conclude by encouraging you to continue to be "missionaries of hope among all peoples." Commending you, your benefactors and all associated with your important work to the loving intercession of Mary, the Mother of the Church, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of lasting joy and peace in the Lord.

Leo P.P. XIV

