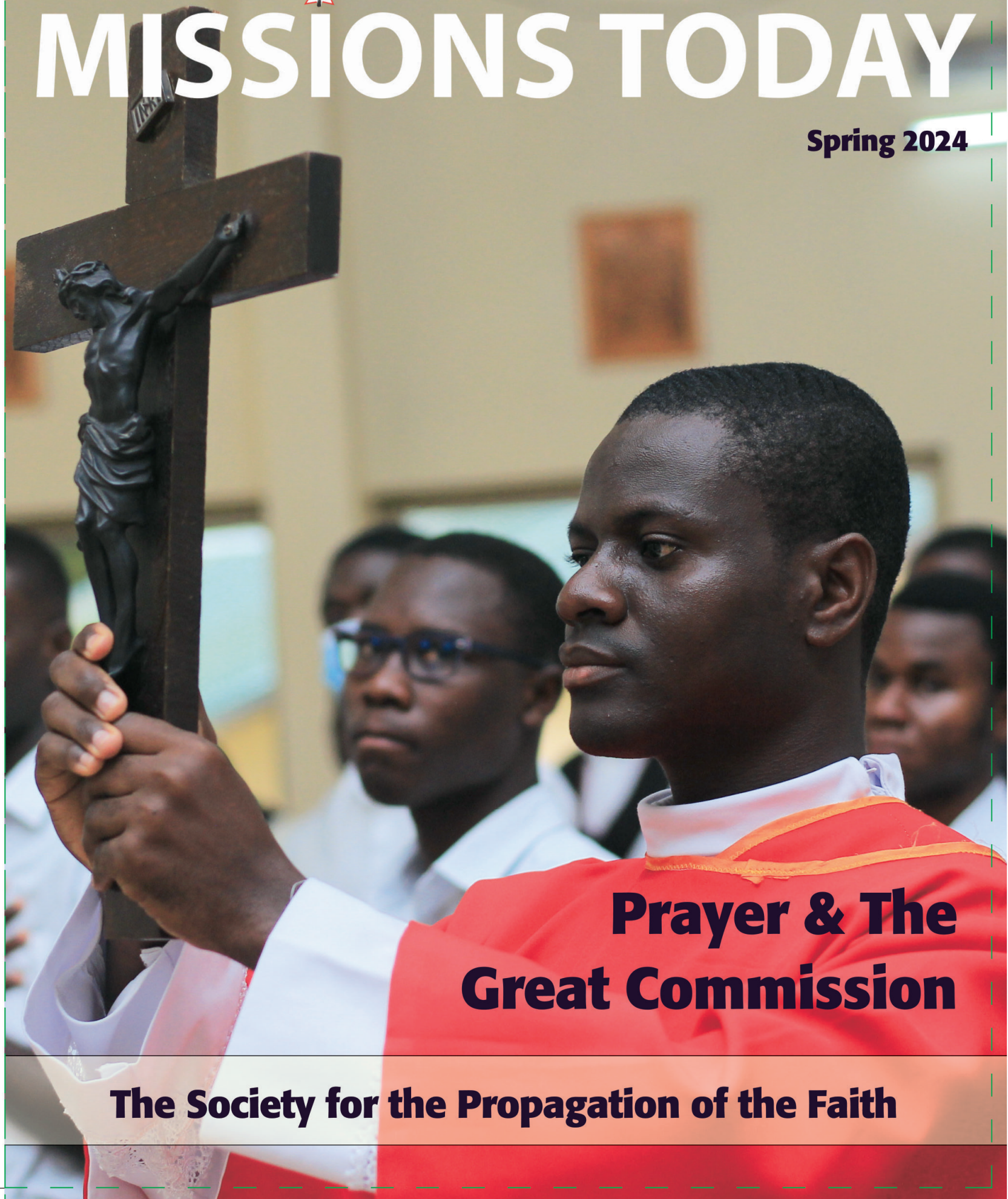




Vol. 82, no. 2

MISSIONS TODAY

Spring 2024

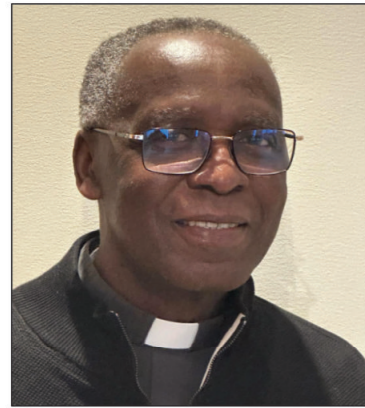


**Prayer & The
Great Commission**

The Society for the Propagation of the Faith

National Director's message

Missions Today spring issue 2024



Alleluia! He is risen! As the Church celebrates the Easter and Pentecost seasons, we also celebrate the beginning of the Church and her mission. From the Great Commission to the coming of the Holy Spirit, there is no better time to reflect on the first mission

of the Apostles. And Easter is the perfect time to renew our own missionary commitment. Listen to the words of Saint Pope John Paul II: "Our own time, with humanity on the move and in continual search, demands a resurgence of the Church's missionary activity. The horizons and possibilities for mission are growing even wider, and we Christians are called to an apostolic courage based upon trust in the Spirit." (Redemptoris Missio, 30)

It is this conviction that has spurred the Pontifical Mission Societies onward, from the foundation of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith up to the work of today. The mission of Christ the Redeemer, entrusted to the Church, is still far from completion.

Charles de Foucauld, founder of the Little Brothers of Jesus, wrote: "All our life, however silent it is...must be a witness of the Good News through example; our whole existence, whatever we are, must shout the Good News from the rooftops!"

What Good News? That Jesus has come as one of us, has died, is risen and invites us – each and all of us – to fullness of life, now and forever. The past has been redeemed! We can stop being afraid. God is here.

Does my life speak this message? Today is the right time to renew our solidarity with missionaries and the missionary spirit of the Church. Let us lend our support with our prayers, offerings, and sufferings offered up in faith. In the years that I have spent working with the societies, I have been more convinced of the outstanding contribution these societies and their large network of donors and supporters have made to the proclamation of the Gospel and to the nurturing of faith in every corner of our world.

In preparation for the 2025 Jubilee year "Pilgrims of Hope," Pope Francis has declared 2024 the Year of Prayer, a year to rediscover the joy and beauty of prayer from the heart. This issue features a reflection on how prayer is at the heart of the missionary call. This issue also features a review of the Holy Father's catechesis, the Passion for Evangelization, and an introduction to a new saint, Saint María Antonia de San José.

This issue also includes project reports from our work in Ghana and India. Your contribution to the missions is already doing so much – you help to provide food, medical care, and housing for God's people and to educate more seminarians and nuns for the work of evangelization.

This Easter season, as we renew our cry, "Indeed He is Risen," please know we deeply appreciate your prayers, your promotion of our work among your family and friends and, whenever possible, your financial contributions.

Most importantly, thank you for your missionary work.

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Alex Osei, C.S.Sp.
National Director

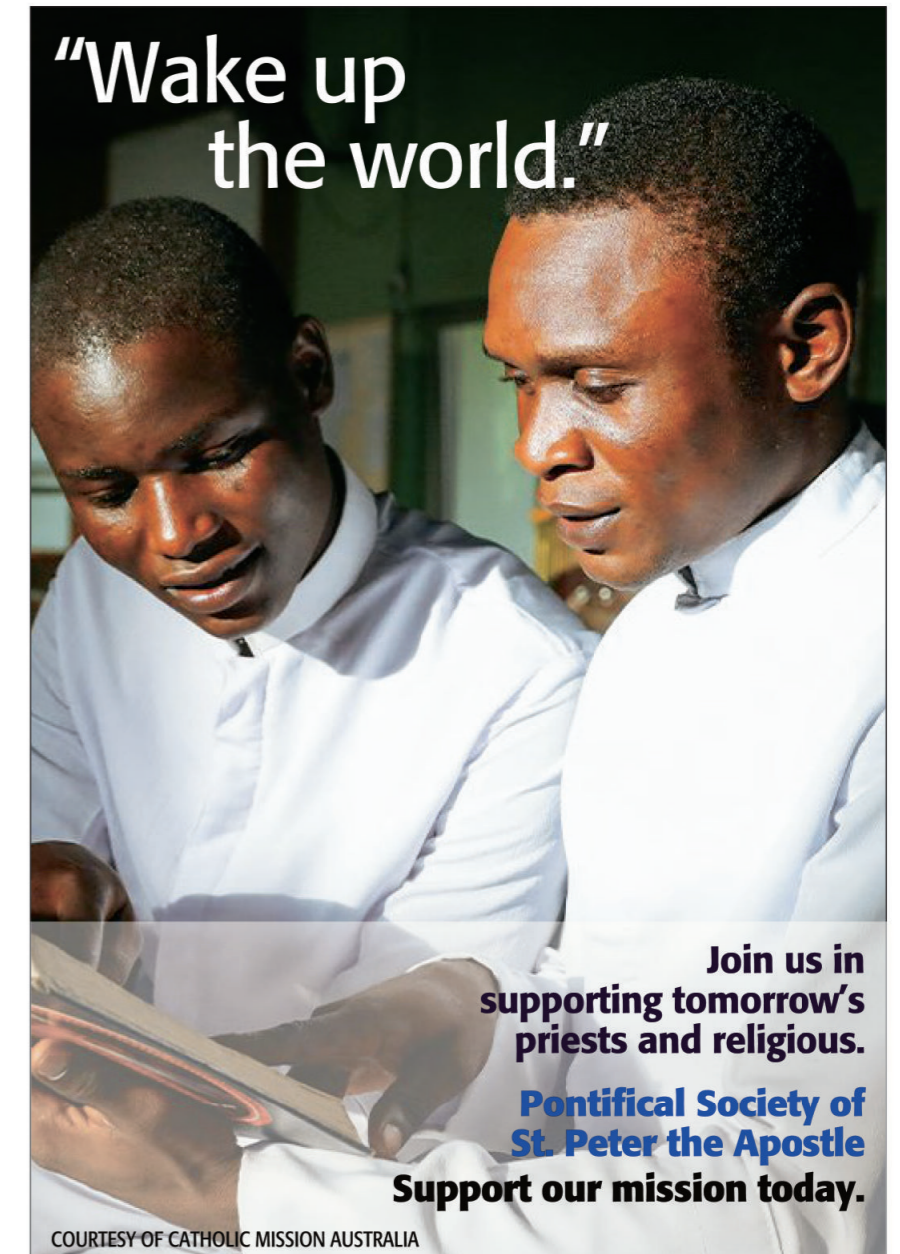
The Society for the Propagation of the Faith

The Society for the Propagation of the Faith supports new Catholic communities as well as those lacking essential resources. Present in more than 120 countries, the Society for the Propagation of the Faith is one of four **Pontifical Mission Societies** that collectively encourages Catholics in their baptismal call to mission, inviting each one of us to contribute through prayer and financial support. Other Pontifical Mission Societies include the Pontifical Society of the Holy Childhood, Pontifical Society of St. Peter the Apostle and Pontifical Missionary Union.

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Senior contributor: Jamie Lynn Black

Comments on this issue or other topics are always welcome. Contact us at editor@missionsocieties.ca or at Editor - Missions Today Magazine 2219 Kennedy Road Toronto, Ontario M1T 3G5
Telephone: (416) 699 7077
Toll Free: 1 800 897 8865
Fax: (416) 699 9019
Office Email: missions@missionsocieties.ca
Visit our web site at missionsocieties.ca

Across the globe

With support from the Pontifical Mission Societies, missionary projects are making an impact in every corner of the world.



COURTESY OF THE PONTIFICAL MISSION SOCIETIES USA

Bishop Vincent Mwachwawa visiting a home building project in Malawi. The Pontifical Mission Societies provided counseling and spiritual support to this community after they lost their homes and crops to a cyclone in 2023.

AMERICA/VENEZUELA - Kenyan missionary found dead; Warao indigenous people call for "serious and credible" investigation

Caracas (Agenzia Fides) - A "serious and credible" investigation into the death of the missionary "with a big smile". This is what the Warao community from the Delta Amacuro state in eastern Venezuela is demanding in order to clarify the circumstances of the death of Consolata missionary from Kenya, Father Josiah Asa K'Okal.

Father K'Okal's body was found hanging from a tree by police officers in a forest area in Guara, Monagas state, on January 2. The missionary had been missing since January 1, 2024, when he left the Congregation's House in Paloma Sector, Tucupita Municipality, on his bicycle at around 9 a.m., leaving his identification documents and cell phone inside the house. At 10 a.m. he visited residents of Janokosebe settlement on a section of the national highway and was last seen at around 11 a.m. Father K'Okal was a sporty person, a habit he acquired during his time as a marathon runner in Kenya, sometimes running,

sometimes cycling, and taking long trips around the communities that he combined with his evangelization work to visit the communities for which he was responsible.

"Dear brother, may your soul rest in peace. Thank you for so much love for this Venezuelan land, thank you for being a great missionary. May Maria Consolata keep you among her chosen ones," says the website of the Congregation of the Consolata - Missionaries. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides, 3/1/2024)

Continue reading at [fides.org/en/news/74558](https://www.fides.org/en/news/74558)

ASIA/SOUTH KOREA - Preparing for WYD 2027 in "synodal" style

Seoul (Agenzia Fides) - A laboratory of ideas, a place of listening and exchange, an organizational "hub" to coordinate the different charisms and make World Youth Day (WYD) 2027 an authentic initiative of evangelization: with this aim the Archdiocese of Seoul launched a research

group ahead of WYD 2027 to "prepare the ground for a youth experience that is truly transformative for young people's lives", it said in a statement. In Seoul, the city preparing to host World Youth Day 2027, the first meetings organized at an intra-ecclesial level and with civil authorities are already taking place to plan the spaces and the reception for the hundreds of thousands of young people who will come from all over the world Korea. But in addition to the technical and logistical aspects, it is above all the pastoral aspects that are important to the local church, which intends to do everything to ensure "WYD is a deep spiritual experience with a great impact for the young participants". The research team, made up of over 40 members, brings together priests, religious and youth in a dynamic that aims to identify the unique contribution of each individual and then synthesize the results to define the spiritual, formative and experiential dimensions of WYD 2027. (PA) (Agenzia Fides, 26/1/2024)

Continue reading at [fides.org/en/news/74656](https://www.fides.org/en/news/74656)

AFRICA/NIGER - Kaaryan ma dumi: light to live, grow, love and prepare for the future

Dosso (Agenzia Fides) - "There are more and more, almost a hundred in Gaya and Dosso, with ever better prospects for their education and ophthalmological care," writes Father Rafael Casamayor, who works as a missionary in Dosso, about the situation of children with visual impairment in the communities in which he works.

A house has been purchased in Gaya and is already in use, another is being set up in Dosso and we plan to open it soon to be able to prepare a good training program during the summer", explained the religious of the Society of African Missions.

Kaaryan ma dumi is the new organization dedicated to children and young people with visual impairment from the communities of Dosso and Gaia, which means 'May the light always shine'. Created from the union of the two associations Zankey Handuriya in Dosso and CIES in Gaya, both of which care for visually impaired children, the organizers want to combine their efforts and thus improve the care of these children. "Light to live, grow, love and prepare for the future," added Dieudonné, who cares for these children in Gaya. "The two charities have the same goals and these children light up as soon as they experience interest, affection and respect for their

situation," he emphasized. The two associations work on the social integration of these children who are seen as a burden or even a curse by their families and society in general. (AP) (Agenzia Fides, 30/1/2024)

Continue reading at [fides.org/en/news/74665](https://www.fides.org/en/news/74665)

EUROPE/France - Narrating the mission: Pauline Jaricot Prize is awarded for the second time

Lyon (Agenzia Fides) - The life of Christian communities, the missionary and pastoral activities of local churches and the witness to the vitality and beauty of the proclamation of the Gospel are the criteria taken into account by the jury members when awarding the prize named after Blessed Pauline Jaricot conceived and organized by the National Direction of the Pontifical Mission Societies in France (PMS) and is being awarded for the second time this year. The prize was first announced in 2022 on the occasion of the beatification of Pauline Marie Jaricot (see Fides 23/5/2022). Aimed at young people between 18 and 35 years old, it consists of the creation of an audio, written or video report, the main purpose of which is to report on the mission of the Church today. "For the second time, the Pauline Jaricot Prize aims to encourage young people to discover mission and present it in the current context. Talking about mission is itself a way of evangelization. Mission is not just a thing of the past, it is also today still really relevant," said Georges Delrieu, Secretary General of the Pontifical Mission Societies in France. Many young people have experiences studying, traveling and volunteering in mission countries, thereby coming into contact with religious and lay missionaries, and this competition aims to motivate them to become "windows to the mission world". Through the opportunities offered by today's technology, these young people are called to witness and share a beauty that is often hidden in the ordinary lives of missionaries working in local churches. (EG) (Agenzia Fides, 24/1/2024)

Continue reading at [fides.org/en/news/74643](https://www.fides.org/en/news/74643)

Fides News Agency is the information news service of the Pontifical Mission Societies. Since 1927, Fides has been raising awareness of missions to the people of God. To read more news from the missions, visit [fides.org](https://www.fides.org).

Papal missionary message

Year in review: Pope Francis's catechesis on the passion for evangelization

Throughout 2023, Pope Francis focused his catechesis on the passion for evangelization. Over the course of thirty talks, he explored the nature of apostolic zeal, the holy men and women who bore witness to that zeal in their own lives, and what true proclamation of the Gospel looks like today.

"Without apostolic zeal, faith withers. Mission, on the other hand, is the oxygen of Christian life: it invigorates and purifies it."

January 11, 2023

The Church grows through attraction and witness

"The proclamation is born from the encounter with the Lord; every Christian activity, especially the mission, begins from there."

February 15, 2023

The Holy Father asked us to rediscover the evangelizing passion by starting with the Scriptures. He recalled Matthew 9:9 as a model of evangelization.

"As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the customs post. He said to him, 'Follow me'. And he got up and followed him."

There are several steps to the call of Matthew. Jesus "saw" Matthew. He invited Matthew. Matthew rose, and then followed. The gaze of Jesus, the way he "saw" Matthew, inspired an attraction. So when Jesus gave Matthew the invitation, Matthew was spurred to movement. The Holy Father explained that this story demonstrates how evangelization begins – when we see our fellow man with the eyes of Christ, we bear witness to God's love.

The Holy Spirit allows us to carry out the apostolic mission of the Church

"So, what does it mean to be apostles? It means being sent for a mission."

March 15, 2023

Pope Francis reminded us that an apostle is one who is sent. And while ordained priests have particular charisms in the Body of Christ, each of us shares in Christ's mission as priest, prophet, and king. We must be open to the Holy Spirit – pray to the Holy Spirit – so that our hearts will be moved and we may receive the desire to evangelize.

Look to the saints for exemplary witnesses to true passion for the Gospel

For example, on Venerable Matteo Ricci:

"He is great, yes, because he is a great scientist, he is great because he is courageous, he is great because he wrote many books – but above all, he is great because he was consistent in his vocation, consistent in his desire to follow Jesus Christ."

May 31, 2023



YERSON RETAMAL/PIXABAY

Through the example of St. Kateri Tekakwitha:

"Kateri's life is further proof that apostolic zeal implies both union with Jesus, nourished by prayer and the sacraments, and the desire to spread the beauty of the Christian message through fidelity to one's particular vocation."

August 30, 2023

On St. Charles de Foucauld:

"Brother Charles thus reminds us that the first step in evangelizing is to have Jesus inside one's heart; it is to 'fall head over heels' for him."

October 18, 2023

Proclamation is joyful, it is for everyone, it is for today, and it is of the Holy Spirit

"The Spirit is the protagonist; he always precedes the missionaries and makes the fruit grow."

December 6, 2023

In his words on proclaiming the Gospel in our world, the Holy Father reminded us of the characteristics of true evangelization. Making note of the 10th anniversary of the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, the Holy Father said we all must bring the joy of the Gospel to the streets. True proclamation requires us to leave behind our selfishness, overcome boundaries, and go out to encounter others in the "crossroads where human beings share what has meaning in their lives."

Pope Francis described the Holy Spirit as the "engine of evangelization," removing the fear that trapped the Apostles in the Upper Room and moving them to go out to change the world. He challenged us to pray to the Father, the Son, AND the Holy Spirit, asking, "Don't you pray to the Holy Spirit, who is the one who moves your heart, who carries you forth, who brings you consolation, who brings you the desire to evangelize, undertake mission?"

At the conclusion of his catechesis, the Holy Father asked us to consider the following:



ANNETT KLINGNER/PIXABAY

"Brothers, sisters, let us all feel called, as baptized people, to witness and proclaim Jesus. And let us ask for the grace, as Church, to bring about a pastoral and missionary conversion. On the banks of the Sea of Galilee, the Lord asked Peter if he loved him and then asked him to tend his sheep (cf. vv. 15-17). Let us too ask ourselves. Let each one of us ask ourselves this question, let us ask ourselves: Do I truly love the Lord to the point of wanting to proclaim him? Do I want to become his witness or am I content to be his disciple? Do I take to heart the people I meet, bringing them to Jesus in prayer? Do I want to do something so that the joy of the Gospel, which has transformed my life, may make their lives more beautiful? Let us think about this, let us think about these questions and go forward with our witness."

December 13, 2023

Through the missionary movement that you support with your prayers and financial contributions, thousands of missionaries are working across the globe, responding to Christ's call to proclaim the Gospel. This work is only possible because of the many more missionaries at home, praying and supporting them. Thank you for being such an important part of our mission family.

Spiritual reflection

As the entire Church prepares for the 2025 Jubilee year, the Holy Father has declared 2024 the Year of Prayer. As he explains, it will be "a year dedicated to rediscovering the great value and absolute need for prayer in one's personal life, in the life of the Church, and in the world."

Our missionary work is inextricably tied to prayer. In his catechesis on the passion for evangelization, the Holy Father emphasizes:

"The Gospel says that Jesus "appointed twelve, to be with Him, and to be sent out to preach" (Mk 3:14); two things: to be with him and to send them to preach. There is one aspect that seems contradictory: He called them to be with him and to go and preach. One would say: either one or the other, either stay or go. But no: for Jesus there is no going without staying and there is no staying without going."

'No going without staying' and 'no staying without going.' What does the Holy Father mean by this? *'No staying without going'* is a theme we are familiar with as missionaries. A deep relationship with Christ requires us to respond to the Great Commission; Christ has asked us to go and make disciples of all nations. Our faith cannot thrive in a vacuum. We belong to the Body of Christ.

We see this even in the Gospels. The Lord sends the disciples out very soon after they have been called. Mission is not a step they graduate to, it is part of their preparation. Or, as Pope Francis says, "the experience of mission is part of Christian formation."

"But what about 'no going without staying?' Pope Francis explains that all Christian activity is borne from an encounter with the Lord. In fact, he calls this encounter "the first apostolate." We cannot proclaim the Gospel without seeking out the Lord. We will share only ourselves or our ideas, because we cannot bear witness to Christ and the Gospel if we do not spend time with the Lord. Furthermore, we must remain with the Lord. It is not enough to begin our work with prayer. Rather, we must constantly go to Him.

So as we enter into this Year of Prayer in preparation for the Jubilee, we should reflect seriously on this idea of 'no going without staying.' We can learn the words of the Gospel, but we can only truly spread it through the light of Christ. The witness of God's love comes from an encounter with him, the first apostolate.

- Prayer -

May God the Father who made us bless us.

May God the Son send his healing among us.

May God the Holy Spirit move within us and give us eyes to see with, ears to hear with and hands that your work might be done.

May we walk and preach the word of God to all.

May the angel of peace watch over us and lead us at last by God's grace to the Kingdom.

St. Dominic

A new saint St. María Antonia de San José

In February, Pope Francis canonized an 18th century Argentinian, St. María Antonia de San José. Born Antonia de Paz y Figueroa and affectionately known in her time as Mama Antula, she was the founder of the House for Spiritual Exercises in Buenos Aires.

St. María Antonia de San José had already dedicated herself to a life of service when the Jesuits were expelled from Argentina. Despite the hostility toward the Society of Jesus, María Antonia traveled Argentina on foot, promoting Ignatian spirituality and organizing retreats. At her canonization, Pope Francis said she is, "a model of apostolic fervor and boldness" for traveling "thousands of miles on foot through deserts and dangerous roads" to evangelize.

"The Holy Spirit ignited in her a missionary flame based on trust in Providence and perseverance."

- Pope Francis

During her beatification in 2016, Cardinal Angelo Amato said that María Antonia's retreats "were the miraculous therapy that cured throngs of laypeople and priests of being lukewarm, transforming them into faithful disciples of Christ and apostles of his Gospel."

In a message to the Argentinian people after her beatification, Pope Francis said María Antonia was, "a woman who helped strengthen the heart of Argentina."

St. María Antonia de San José is only the second native born Argentinian, and the first Argentinian woman, to be canonized.



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The Pope's monthly prayer intentions

Each month, the Holy Father asks for our prayers for a specific intention. You are invited to join the whole Church as we pray:

April: For the role of women

We pray that the dignity and immense value of women be recognized in every culture, and for the end of discrimination that they experience in different parts of the world.

May: For the formation of religious and seminarians

We pray that religious women and men, and seminarians, grow in their own vocations through their human, pastoral, spiritual and community formation, leading them to be credible witnesses to the Gospel.

June: For migrants fleeing their homes

We pray that migrants fleeing from war or hunger, forced to undertake journeys full of danger and violence, find welcome and new opportunities in the countries that receive them.

In remembrance

Our deceased donors

Please remember the recently deceased members of the Pontifical Mission Societies in your prayers:

Mr. Clarence Gallagher North Vancouver, BC
Mr. M.F. Coulis North York, ON
Ms. Petronella Kameka Brampton, ON
Mr. James Daley Fredericton, NB
Mrs. Louise Crebas Innisfail, AB
Mr. P.D. Dohm Vancouver BC
Mrs. Frances Dittrich London, ON
Mr. Magnus Ochsner Summerside, PE
Ms. Gilda De Bonis Welland, ON
Ms. Rita Hui Scarborough, ON
Deacon Dominic Pullano Toronto, ON

No greater love

Missionaries who laid down their lives in 2023

"There are still those – and there are many of them – who suffer and die to bear witness to Jesus, just as there are those who are penalized at various levels for the fact of acting in a way consistent with the Gospel, and those who strive every day to be faithful, without fanfare, to their good duties, while the world jeers and preaches otherwise. These brothers and sisters may also seem to be failures, but today we see that it is not the case. Now as then, in fact, the seed of their sacrifices, which seems to die, germinates and bears fruit, because God continues to work miracles, through them, (cf. Acts 18:9-10), changing hearts and saving men and women.

Let us ask ourselves, then: do I care about and pray for those who, in various parts of the world, still suffer and die for the faith today? So many who are murdered for their faith. And in turn, do I try to bear witness to the Gospel consistently, with meekness and confidence? Do I believe that the seed of goodness will bear fruit even if I do not see immediate results?"

Pope Francis, Angelus on the Feast of St. Stephen Protomartyr, December 26, 2023

Twenty missionaries and pastoral care workers were killed around the world in 2023. According to Agenzia Fides, this includes one bishop, eight priests, two religious men, one seminarian, one novice and seven laypersons.

Africa registered the highest number of missionaries killed, followed by America and Asia respectively.

Father Isaac Achi

Nigeria - Father Achi's body was recovered among the charred remains of the Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Church parish building. The priests' residence was attacked and set ablaze by armed bandits in the middle of the night. Fr. Achi had previously survived a kidnapping as well as a church bombing which killed 44 people.

Father Léopold Feyen

Democratic Republic of Congo - Father Feyen was found stabbed to death in his room, the victim of an apparent robbery. At 82, the Salesian priest had stepped back from parish duties, but spent his time cultivating gardens of fruits and vegetables for the local Catholic schools.

Junrey Barbante and Janine Arenas

Philippines - Barbante and Arenas were among the four victims of the bomb attack on a Mass at the Mindanao State University. Both young people were volunteers for liturgical animation from the school's chaplaincy community. Mass was being held in the gymnasium because the community's chapel was destroyed by Islamic militants during the siege of Marawi in 2017.

The Pope's special prayer request for March is to remember the new martyrs

We pray that those who risk their lives for the Gospel in various parts of the world inflame the Church with their courage and missionary enthusiasm.

DID YOU KNOW?

Fides Press Agency reports

that by the end of 2021, the number of priests in the world had decreased by -2,347 (407,872 total). In contrast, vocations had increased in Africa (+1,518), Asia (+719) and Oceania (+11).

Project reports

Pontifical Society of the Holy Childhood

Children's Ministry Formation
Archdiocese of Trichur, Kerala, India

"Your generous grant has been instrumental in enabling us to conduct formation camps...it has allowed us to extend our reach to various charitable institutions, spreading the light of faith and spirituality to those in need. Furthermore, these visits have brought comfort and solace to those who often go unnoticed."

Rev. Fr. Sijo Muringathery
Director, Children's Ministry
Archdiocese of Trichur, Kerala, India

Support from the Pontifical Mission Societies has benefitted the children's ministry in the Archdiocese of Trichur. The ministry provides hundreds of children with programming including camps on mission awareness, psycho-spiritual formation, and leadership. The children also visited the Pope Paul Mercy Home and Peace Home to visit the residents including orphans and those with physical challenges and mental disabilities.



Deacon Dominic Pullano
March 9, 1961 - November 4, 2023

His message to you. Our message to those we serve around the world.

**Pontifical Society of the Holy Childhood
Thank you for your support**

Pontifical Society of St. Peter the Apostle



St. Gregory the Great Provincial Major Seminary
Archdiocese of Kumasi, Ghana

"We are most grateful to Pontifical Mission Societies and all who contributed to the fund that enabled us to run the seminary. The subsidy has always been a tremendous help to us. We have always managed it well and made very judicious use of it to meet the needs of the seminary. Please accept our sincere thanks and appreciation. Your kindness is always appreciated. May God bless you and all the donors for your generosity and the great work you do for God and the Church."

Rev. Msgr. John Opoku-Agyemang
Rector, St. Gregory the Great Provincial Major Seminary
Archdiocese of Kumasi, Ghana

Support from the Pontifical Mission Societies has benefitted the 222 major seminarians of St. Gregory the Great Provincial Major Seminary. The seminary program focuses on the four pillars of formation: human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral. A new dormitory housing 102 seminarians and five full-time formators was recently completed.

A view from the pew...

Embracing hope through the Paschal mystery



By Lori Lisi

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

~John 12:24

These words from scripture illustrate for us that death does not imply a finality, but rather through this irreversible end death gives rise to an everlasting HOPE. Hope is 'the anchor of our soul'; it keeps us steady and strong during the fiercest storms of our lives and pulls us out of despair, despondency and fear. It propels us to live as true disciples of Jesus and be of service to one another and, then, when our time on earth is done, return home to live in the Glory of God forever. Christians are a people of hope, and that hope lies in Jesus.

The Paschal Mystery — Jesus' Passion, death, Resurrection and Ascension — fulfills God's plan for the salvation of mankind. We refer to it as a mystery because it defies our human understanding, and, yet, it gives rise to an unabating hope that one day we will live eternally with our Lord. 'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.' (John 3:16), and to the realization that 'death shall be no more' (Rev. 21:4)

Notwithstanding our faith in God's plan, we often find ourselves asking, 'How can it be that death brings hope? How can an end bring a new beginning?' It is unfathomable! Death connotes an 'end' and hope a 'beginning'; death a 'exit' and hope a 'entrance'; death a 'stop' and hope a 'start.' We are prompted to reflect on this mystifying connection between death and hope in John 12:24, wherein we are reminded that the only way for a seed to bear fruit is to fall into the earth and die.

The events in Jesus' life fulfill God's plan. Had Jesus not died, God's salvation plan would not have been fulfilled. The Paschal Mystery, which is the main event in the liturgy of the Church, the celebration of the sacraments and the seasons of Lent and Easter, exists in every occasion of our life — in all that we do, in all that we say, and in all that we are. We live the Paschal Mystery, not just during the Triduum, but throughout our daily lives. The Paschal Mystery is unlike any other event in history, which although true and accurate, is 'one and done,' and resides only in the past. When we live a life centered on Jesus Christ, we partake in and experience the Paschal Mystery, not as a historical event, but as a recurring part of our day-to-day life.

This may seem less complicated and less difficult in good times, but how do we maintain our relationship with Jesus and live as His true disciples during the difficult times in our lives? How do we find hope in death? How do we start again, when everything in our life seems to have come to a halt? How do we find our 'Easter' after our 'Good Friday?' Reflecting on our lives, from as far back as we can remember, we will see that we have had many 'Good Fridays' followed by many 'Easters.'

As a breast cancer survivor, one of my most prominent 'Good Fridays' was the diagnosis. Something in me died upon hearing the news. The entire ordeal was filled with sadness, anxiety, pain, uncertainty, and fear — the fear that there might not have been any hope. But through the intercession of the Holy Spirit, I found the strength and the courage to deal with all those feelings, and following my surgery, I found hope again — hope in my young children (then, 10 and 6 years of age), hope in my husband, and hope for a future that included a new me.

For although something perished in me that day in July 1999, a new me was born to a world and a life that I had begun to take for granted. This conversion propelled in me a renewed faith in all that the Lord provides for me and I promised God,

and myself, that I would live life to its fullest. My 'Easter' taught me much about myself that I had not previously known, and/or that I had forgotten about. Today, I continue to deal with 'Good Fridays' and I try to find my hope, my 'Easter,' for I realize that each 'Good Friday' (some harder than others) brings HOPE...a personal Easter...a personal HOPE.

The trials and tribulations of life, the events of 'Good Friday,' are not how we would choose to participate in the Paschal Mystery. We would all rather share in the events of 'Easter.' However, it is only in carrying our own personal crosses and becoming vulnerable to our brokenness that we become more receptive to God's grace, able to fully take part in the Easter of Christian life and ready to live as true disciples of Jesus; children of God, commissioned to care for others with the love and compassion with which God cares for us. As Jesus says, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their crosses and follow me." (Mark 16:24)



MAURISA MAYERLE/PIXABAY

So, my personal ongoing challenge, and the one that I offer to everyone, is to acknowledge the mini crosses of our daily lives and commit to embracing them, as Jesus taught us, and then to believe in our hearts that each 'Good Friday' will be met with God's grace and our own personal 'Easter.' It is because of the Paschal Mystery that we are certain that HOPE will always have a place in our lives.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

1 Peter 1:3

We want to hear from you

If you have any comments on the content or structure of the magazine, or if there is anything you would like to see us explore in future issues, please get in touch.

Contact the editor via email at:
editor@missionsocieties.ca

Or write to us at:

Editor - Missions Today Magazine
2219 Kennedy Road
Toronto, Ontario M1T 3G5

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Today's missionaries

In the field: Sister Henriette Lowere

Sister Henriette Lowere from the Missionaries of Christ the King in Montreal recently returned from seven impactful years in Benin, where the congregation has been actively serving the community. Operating in Iganfan and Dassa-Zoumè, the Missionaries of Christ the King are committed to holistic community development – managing a house, a health centre and a school.

As a nurse, Sister Henriette managed a health center in Dassa-Zoumè without government support, offering essential care to address various health issues, including malaria and critical pregnancies. The center, founded and sustained by missionaries, fills a vital healthcare gap. Additionally, the congregation provides pastoral care, supported by local priests, offering training sessions on topics like Christian family building, conflict resolution, financial management, and health education. In 2021, the missionaries opened a bilingual school in Calavi, catering to approximately 200 students.

"The people of Benin are welcoming and friendly – I learned a lot from them, especially patience, listening and acceptance of others without judgment," said Sister Lowere. "Seeing the

suffering of the sick and the poor made me see Christ suffering in humanity. This brought me closer to the people. I found great comfort every time a child I cared for awoke from a coma, or recovered from illness, or someone got back on their feet after some trial."

Sister Lowere's experience in Benin highlights the joy we feel when we unite ourselves to a living, inter-connected and mutually-supportive family – in so many ways, this is the same family to which we also belong.



COURTESY OF THE MISSIONARIES OF CHRIST THE KING

What our donors are saying...

"There are a lot of people around the world who are suffering. Through the work of Pontifical Mission Societies, I'm able to help in a practical way and share the hope that comes from Jesus Christ."

Our team: Sister Rosemary Ryan



COURTESY OF SR. ROSEMARY RYAN

In St. John's, Newfoundland, Sister Rosemary Ryan, a devoted member of the Sisters of Mercy, serves as the archdiocesan director.

This past year, her community at St. John the Baptist Cathedral Basilica parish started the Living Rosary Apostolate. This program, which was started by Blessed Pauline Jaricot in 1826, invites

each member to say one decade of the Rosary daily. Currently all four Mysteries are said at St. John's twice each day. The first intention is always for the missions.

Sister credits her own missionary experience and Pope Francis' missionary message for her inspiration.

"Having ministered in Peru for six years, I have a great love for the missions and for Pope Francis' emphasis that we are all missionary disciples. I trust that the bit I do will awaken a missionary spirit in others."

Editor's reflection



Through His life and Resurrection, Jesus conveyed to His disciples that true life resides in Him. Having triumphed over death, they should not be afraid anymore, He will be with them always. Now, He sends them forth to emulate

His deeds. This mission is not exclusive to the disciples; it encompasses all followers of Jesus. Each of us is called to a mission, and through prayer and discernment, we can hear His voice and uncover the mission He is sending us to do – be it caring for the suffering of the sick and the poor, supporting, praying, advocating, or encouraging.

Many missionaries paid attention to the inner call of Christ, venturing into the unknown without fixating solely on tasks or potential risks. Their response to Jesus' call was resolute. This was the case of the Kenyan missionary in Venezuela who sacrificed his life to the people he served. Similarly, missionaries' perseverance in Niger amid heightened instability. Despite these trials, missionaries maintain a steadfast belief in God's love triumphing over prevailing violence.

These missionaries, alongside many others, embarked on their journeys solely to proclaim Christ, placing Him at the core of

their endeavors. They embraced also Pope Francis' plea for the Church "to come out of herself and to go to the peripheries, not only geographically, but also the existential peripheries: the mystery of sin, of pain, of injustice, of ignorance and indifference to religion, of intellectual currents and of all misery."

Sr. Henriette Lowere dedicated herself to serving the sick and poor in Benin. In the resonance of her mission, and that of others like her, lies the profound understanding that, through the suffering they witness, they encounter Christ's suffering in humanity. They touch His wounds in every person they meet, experiencing genuine joy rooted in selfless love.

We too can partake in this joy by following the path Jesus illuminated through His life, His teachings, His healings, and His care. Loving Christ goes hand in hand with loving our neighbors, echoing the profound truth encapsulated in the essence of Jesus' message.

Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free.

(Ephesians 6:7-8)

Aline Bedros
Editor

Holy Father announces theme for 2024 World Mission Sunday October 20, 2024



"I recommend to all dioceses throughout the world the service of the Pontifical Mission Societies. They represent the primary means "by which Catholics are imbued from infancy with a truly universal and missionary outlook and [are] also a means for instituting an effective collecting of funds for all the missions, each according to its needs" (Ad Gentes, 38). For this reason, the collections of World Mission Day in all the local Churches are entirely destined to the universal fund of solidarity that the Pontifical Society of the Propagation of the Faith then distributes in the Pope's name for the needs of all the Church's missions. Let us pray that the Lord may guide us and help us to be a more synodal and a more missionary Church."

Excerpt from the Holy Father's Message for World Mission Sunday 2024

Read the entire message from Pope Francis or a summary, at missionsocieties.ca



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of the Faith**

(A Pontifical Mission Society)
2219 Kennedy Road Toronto,
Ontario M1T 3G5

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