



Vol. 83, no. 3

MISSIONS TODAY

Summer 2025

**The hope that
we see**



The Society for the Propagation of the Faith

National Director's message

Missions Today summer issue 2025



Greetings fellow missionaries, Easter people! Christ is Risen, hope reigns, and now we also celebrate a new papacy – one that has started off with a very strong emphasis on the missionary nature of the Church. Among the very first messages of Pope Leo XIV: an encouragement that we must

“seek together how to be a missionary Church.” A few years earlier, while he was still a missionary bishop in Peru, he was quoted by Vatican News as saying, “My vocation, like that of every Christian, is to be a missionary, to proclaim the Gospel wherever one is.”

Through our work in 1,124 mission territories, women and men have the opportunity to hear the gospel of freedom and mercy, and they respond. In one recent example, just this year, the Catholic community in Malaysia welcomed more than 2,000 new faithful at the Easter Vigil Mass. Closer to home, young people across Canada continue to participate with great enthusiasm in the activities of the Holy Childhood Association, responding to our motto of *Children Helping Children*. These are great signs of hope.

With your prayers and support, messengers of the Gospel are working and witnessing outside of the reach of the spotlight. And this process does not end with the initial preaching of the Gospel; it continues with the building up of Christian communities and accompaniment of each of the baptized along the path of new life.

Renewed by our baptism, sacred scripture, the sacraments, and the life of the Church, each of us is propelled forward to bring hope into our families, communities and mission countries.

The Pontifical Mission Societies plays a key role in allowing every Catholic to be a bearer of this hope worldwide. Through your prayers and donations, you are messengers of this hope. You are missionaries – and we are ever grateful.

Yours in Christ,

Bishop John A. Boissonneau
National Director



Leo P.P. XIV

Welcome Holy Father

The Pontifical Mission Societies join the universal Church in joy!

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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“I recommend to all dioceses throughout the world the service of the Pontifical Mission Societies.”

From Pope Francis’ message for World Mission Sunday 2024

Join us in proclaiming the Gospel, inviting everyone to be pilgrims of Hope.

Learn more about the **Society of the Propagation of the Faith**, and become a missionary through your prayer and support.

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Jubilee Year 2025: Pilgrims of Hope

'Spes Non Confundit': A journey and signs of hope*



The passing of Pope Francis and the election of Pope Leo XIV has brought new meaning to the Holy Year in Rome and around the world. With a deep sense of gratitude, we can reflect on the last messages of Pope Francis, encouraging us to "run towards

Jesus." And, of course, we can joyfully receive the first messages from Pope Leo XIV, himself a missionary for a missionary Church. Through all of this, the pilgrim journey remains. Just as ever, we are pilgrims of hope.

In the papal bull proclaiming the Holy Year, Pope Francis reflected on the signs of hope that mark the presence of God. Pope Francis warned us that in order to avoid the temptation to "think ourselves overwhelmed by evil and violence," we must "recognize the immense goodness present in our world."

Notably, he doesn't begin by listing great deeds or inspiring accomplishments; rather, he begins simply with the desires of our hearts. In a world marred by war, violence and division, the desire for peace in and of itself is a sign of hope. Among the uncertainties of modern life, the desire in hearts of young couples to have children is a sign of hope. These desires come from God and are great signs to us of His Love.

Pope Francis also highlighted tangible signs of hope explaining, "works of mercy are also works of hope." For the imprisoned, Pope Francis pointed to the ancient appeal for acts of clemency in a year of Jubilee. He set his own example of a sign of hope for prisoners by opening a Holy Door in Rome's Rebibbia prison. For the sick, he called their care a "hymn to human dignity." He invited a renewed effort to reach out to the young, calling them, "the joy and hope of the Church and of the world!" He asked that migrants be met with a spirit of welcome and that the elderly be esteemed, "for the treasures that they are." Pope Francis also made an impassioned plea on behalf of the poor that we not, "close

our eyes to the dramatic situations that we now encounter all around us."

These signs of hope, whether they manifest as a stirring of the heart or as a hand outstretched in merciful aid, are more than the guideposts on our pilgrim journey. In his message for World Mission Day 2025, Pope Francis called upon us to be, "bearers and builders of hope among all people." We must not just look for the signs of hope, but we must become the signs of hope.

He said, "in following Christ the Lord, Christians are called to hand on the Good News by sharing the concrete life situations of those whom they meet." This means that to become a sign of hope, we cannot set out to merely solve the immanent needs of those we serve, we must take on "the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish." As Pope Francis explained, when we live our mission this way, hope "transcends the passing things of this world and opens up to those divine realities in which we share even now."

** SPES NON CONFUNDIT "Hope does not disappoint" (Rom 5:5) refers to the Bull of Indiction of the Ordinary Jubilee of the Year 2025 given in Rome on May 9, 2024 by Pope Francis.*

In remembrance

Our deceased donors

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

Mrs. Sarah Kiley	Campbell River
Bishop Frederik Henry	Calgary, AB
Mr. Florent Marchildon	North York, ON
Mr. Jean-Louis Roy	Ottawa, ON
Miss. Leonore Sheehan	St. Catharines, ON
Mrs. Rozi Zorko	Calgary, AB

Spiritual reflection

Pope Francis' missionary saints

Among the nearly 1,000 saints canonized by Pope Francis are many examples of holy men and women who zealously lived out the Great Commission. As we reflect on the legacy of Pope Francis' pontificate, we turn especially to those newly declared saints who, by their witness and by their intercession, can fortify us in our work.

Blessed Pauline Jaricot (Beatified, 2022)



By Œuvres Pontificales Missionnaires of France. Portrait conserved by Œuvres Pontificales Missionnaires of France

Born into a wealthy family in France in 1799, Blessed Pauline Marie Jaricot took a private vow of chastity at just 17. Inspired by her brother's preparations to serve as a missionary in China, she began a movement to encourage women in her community to contribute one penny a week to support abandoned children in China. This movement eventually grew and led her to establish the Pontifical Society for the Propagation of the Faith, one of the four Pontifical Mission Societies.

St. Junípero Serra (Canonized, 2015)

Saint Junípero Serra joined the Franciscan order at age 17. He travelled from his homeland in Spain to Mexico in 1749, never to return. He spent the remainder of his life evangelizing the people of Mexico and California. Serra walked thousands of miles and established nine of California's 21 missions. Inspired by his knowledge that the Lord was waiting for him, Saint Junípero Serra lived his life and work according to the motto, Siempre adelante! Keep moving forward!

St. Charles de Foucauld (Canonized, 2022)



By Edsdet - Own work, Public Domain

After abandoning his faith in adolescence, Saint Charles de Foucauld experienced a deep conversion and became a missionary, eventually dedicating his life to the Tuareg people in the Algerian Sahara. Ordained a priest in 1901, he lived as hermit in the desert, serving in solitude and translating the Gospels into the local language. Though he

sought to establish a religious community and attract followers, not even one of his Muslim neighbours converted in his lifetime. He was not discouraged by his failure saying, "I should rejoice not in what I have but in what I lack, in lack of success and in penury, for then I have the cross and poverty of Jesus, the most precious possession the earth can give."

St. Joseph Vaz (Canonized, 2015)

St. Joseph Vaz was a young priest living in Goa when he learned of the persecution of Catholics in Sri Lanka. The Protestant Dutch leaders there had made life so difficult for Catholics that many of the faithful had not seen a priest in more than 50 years. In 1686, St. Joseph Vaz received permission to go to Sri Lanka. He travelled in disguise, experiencing difficulty and illness along the way, and began ministering to the Catholics in secret. He was jailed for his efforts, but he continued his missionary work even in prison. Eventually, he was successful in establishing Catholic communities throughout Sri Lanka – 15 churches, 400 chapels, schools, hospitals and more. The missionaries worked diligently to defend the rights of Catholics under the Dutch Protestant government.

Pope Francis' missionary message

Among the many gifts of Pope Francis' pontificate is the richness of his reflections on mission. Pope Francis has given us much to consider through his messages for World Mission Sunday, his addresses to the Pontifical Mission Societies, his homilies and audiences. Mission was always close to his heart. Our team has gathered for you a few of Pope Francis' most poignant reflections on mission and our call to live out the Great Commission.

"The joy of the Gospel is for all people: no one can be excluded."

— Evangelii Gaudium, 23

Taking inspiration from the words of Pope John Paul II who said, "communion and mission are profoundly interconnected," Pope Francis called on us to set aside any hesitation, reluctance or fear and preach the Gospel to all in all places. He began his papacy speaking about a Church that must "go to the peripheries," and maintained this message through his pontificate. Literally, Pope Francis did travel to the peripheries as pope. His very first journey outside Rome was to the small island of Lampedusa where he celebrated Mass for migrants fleeing poverty and violence.



COURTESY OF ANNETT KLINGNER / PIXABAY

But he also emphasized that the "peripheries" can be existential as well. Pope Francis built a loving relationship with the poor in Rome, often celebrating his birthday with the homeless. He cared especially for the imprisoned with whom he visited on Holy Thursday just days before his death, and to whom he willed his personal savings.

"I am a mission, always; you are a mission, always; every baptized man and woman is a mission."

— World Mission Day Message, 2019

As sons and daughters of God, we are the fruit of His love. That relationship is life-giving, it draws us out of ourselves to build, give and grow. When we reflect the love of God in our

lives, we can't help but share in that relationship with our brothers and sisters. This is what it means to "be" a mission.

Pope Francis often repeated this idea. In *Evangelii Gaudium* he says, "I am a mission on this earth; that is the reason why I am here in this world." He reminded us that when we embrace mission as an identity, as an intrinsic part of our ourselves and not a role that can be played or a badge that can be worn, then we will see the souls of the people we encounter. We will see them as God sees them.

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

— General audience, January 11, 2023

Pope Francis spoke of a Church that goes out, that evangelizes — a Church with apostolic zeal. He often likened mission to oxygen. Just as oxygen gives life to the body, mission gives energy and vigour to the Body of Christ. When deprived of oxygen, a living thing will wither and become atrophied, and without mission our own Christian life cannot be sustained.

To this point, Pope Francis also liked to clarify the distinction between evangelization and proselytization. He attributed proselytization to a Christian life that is turned in on itself and becomes self-

referential, losing touch with its apostolic nature. He reminded us that we cannot begin by trying to convince others. Instead, we begin by witnessing to the Love of Christ. Pope Francis said the beauty of that witness will do the convincing. He said we need not proclaim ourselves or an ideology, we need only to proclaim the Lord.

"Being a disciple means being constantly ready to bring the love of Jesus to others."

— *Evangelii Gaudium*, 127

When Pope Francis travelled to visit the missions of Papua New Guinea in 2024, he preached on the "courage to begin." "Missionaries are women and men of starting, and if they

come back, of restarting," he said. "This is the life of the missionary, starting and restarting." He reflected on the trials, failures and perseverance of the missionaries who had established the seeds of faith there.

But Pope Francis' words to the missions of the Pacific islands are also meant for us. Pope Francis reminded us to be prepared to evangelize always. In our work and travels and in our public and private life, we have a "daily responsibility" to evangelize.

"Prayer is the first 'missionary work' – the first! – that every Christian can and must do, and it is also the most effective, even if this cannot be measured."

— Video message to the Pontifical Mission Societies, May 28, 2018

Speaking directly to the Pontifical Mission Societies, Pope Francis asked, "Why are the Pontifical Mission Societies important? Above all, they are important because we must pray for missionaries, for the evangelizing action of the Church."

In his message for World Mission Day this year, among his last words to us, he reminded us that prayer is "the primary



missionary activity" and "the first strength of hope," and called upon us to "renew the mission of hope, starting from prayer." He especially encouraged us to pray from the Psalms which he said would "train" us to hope, discern and desire that, "God be praised among all peoples."

The Pope's monthly prayer intentions

Each month, Pope Francis has invited us to pray with him for a challenge in our world, linked to the Church's mission. He has taught us to learn compassion, closeness and listening to others from the Heart of Jesus. Today, it's our turn to say thank you!

The Pope's Global Prayer Network has produced a special video to express our gratitude for his intentions and faithful prayer. To view the video, scan the following QR code:



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TO VIEW

July: For formation in discernment

Let us pray that we might again learn how to discern, to know how to choose paths of life and reject everything that leads us away from Christ and the Gospel.

August: For mutual coexistence

Let us pray that societies where coexistence seems more difficult might not succumb to the temptation of confrontation for ethnic, political, religious or ideological reasons.

September: For our relationship with all of creation

Let us pray that, inspired by Saint Francis, we might experience our interdependence with all creatures who are loved by God and worthy of love and respect.

No greater love

Spreading the light of Christ in war-torn Myanmar



On Sunday, March 16, soldiers of a local military junta set fire to Saint Patrick's Cathedral in Banmaw, Myanmar, devastating the church on the eve of its patron's feast.

Built by missionaries of the Society of St. Columban in the late 1950s, the cathedral complex, which includes the cathedral, two clergy houses, a pastoral

centre and a residential shelter, has been a centre of Catholic life in the region for a half century.

The bishop of Banmaw, Raymond Sumlut Gam, told Fides that the staff, religious, priests, and lay people who lived and worked in the complex had to flee for protection at the onset of the violence. Now, the site is a war zone with the Burmese army and the independent army fighting battles even within the church buildings.

The cathedral is just one of several churches that have been destroyed by the fighting. In Falam, the Church of Christ the King had only just been completed to accommodate a growing Catholic community when it was hit by a Burmese army airstrike. In Nan Hlaing, the Burmese army fired two aerial bombs and five bullets into the grounds of the Church of St. Michael, destroying its pastoral centre. While the pastor, Jesuit Wilbert Mireh, reported no casualties, he told Fides that his region has been without power for nearly a year. He travels long distances to a city near the Chinese border to access

internet and communication with the outside world.

The already-dire humanitarian crisis was heightened by a recent earthquake which killed an estimated 3,600 people. Amidst this violent political upheaval and natural disaster, Catholic missionaries and organizations provide critical spiritual and practical support to tens of thousands of Catholics under threat in Myanmar.

Cardinal Charles Maung Bo told Fides that the priests, religious and pastoral workers of Myanmar have been "dispensers of mercy and hope," serving their neighbours as even they themselves suffer the consequences of war and destruction.

Though Sacred Heart Cathedral in Mandalay was damaged in the earthquake, the grounds have become a refuge for earthquake victims of all faiths. Priests, religious and even Archbishop Marco Tin Win have joined the refugees, sleeping outdoors in makeshift tents.

The historic Church of Our Lady of Lourdes in Yamethin was lost to the earthquake, but the parish priest, Fr. John Kyaw Thu Ya, celebrated the Palm Sunday liturgy among the rubble. The priest told Fides, "The church has been destroyed, but the faith of the baptised is firm. It is like the house founded on the rock".

Outside Myanmar, in the parish of Mae Teng in northern Thailand, Capuchin Franciscan friars are serving 350 Burmese Catholics refugees who've fled the violence and destruction. The friars provide the sacraments, food, and essential supplies. They are planning to provide for their educational and medical needs as well.

To read more about the crisis in Myanmar and the missionary efforts to serve the Burmese people, visit fides.org.

Photo of the Sacred Heart Cathedral in Mandalay, Myanmar. Courtesy of Bessie and Kyle - Flickr: Church in Mandalay, Myanmar, CC BY-SA 2.0.

Online home for the missions!

Missionsocieties.ca offers access to updated feature stories and news from the missions, the digital version of Missions Today Magazine, and a simple and secure way to donate. Visit us today and help us to spread the word.

A view from the pew

Anchored in hope: Living faith through life's storms



By Lori Lisi

St. Therese of Lisieux once said, "May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be." And, such was true on the day that I walked into my local bookstore and began the hunt for my next read. I meandered through the countless aisles, until my eyes set gaze on the word HOPE on the cover of our beloved Pope Francis' autobiography. With this year declared a Jubilee Year, with 'hope' being the central message and 'pilgrims of hope' being its theme, I knew for certain that this was the one.

Though our dear Pope Francis has passed, his message of hope lives on. In *Spes Non Confundit*, he reminds us that hope, alongside faith and charity, forms the core of Christian life. As part of this covenant, we must ask: How can we become bearers of hope? Pope Francis says, 'Offering a smile, a small

...And we need to continue to hope, because whatever the past has been, the story that begins in each person today is yet to be written.

Pope Francis, Hope: The Autobiography

gesture of friendship, a kind look, a ready ear, a good deed' is the how. Christian hope is the 'humble and strong virtue that sustains us and doesn't let us drown in the many difficulties of existence.' When I was diagnosed with cancer at 36, I truly understood the power of hope, and the role of a supportive community in keeping it alive. Drawing on our own experiences provides us with the tools to navigate the rough waters and support others when they need it most.

Recently, a dear friend's 19-year-old nephew was diagnosed with synovial sarcoma, requiring leg amputation and intensive treatment. Never have I witnessed a more resilient, determined, valiant and hopeful young man. He faces every upset with unmatched tenacity. Every treatment has been met with determination as he continued to uphold the very spirit of the words 'this, too, shall pass'. His unwavering faith and inner strength are deeply inspiring. He holds on to hope, which as Pope Francis tells us gives "inward direction and purpose to the life of believers." Where does he draw such courage from? It's from the countless people around him who relentlessly and tirelessly give of themselves, from showing up at milestones to offering emotional, financial, and spiritual support. This is the Christian community in action—living out the virtues of faith, hope and love.

My challenge to you is to never give up hope, and to always plant the seed of hope in others!

"We thank God for the new and numerous missionary vocations for the task of evangelization to the ends of the earth."

From Pope Francis' message for World Mission Sunday 2024

Join us in supporting tomorrow's priests and religious.

Pontifical Society of St. Peter the Apostle

Support the men and women whose vocations bring the missions to life.



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COURTESY OF PONTIFICAL MISSION SOCIETIES AUSTRALIA

Across the globe

Spotlight on Liberia, Haiti and Cambodia

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

AFRICA/LIBERIA - Medical support for people with disabilities or in situations of extreme poverty

Foya (Agenzia Fides) - For some years now, the parish of St. John Vianney in Foya, a remote strip of land in Liberia, with the formation of a charitable group, has begun to support the medical expenses of those who are unable to do so, especially the disabled and people in extreme poverty. Fr. Lorenzo Snider, a priest of the Society of African Missions (SMA) has been taking care of the community for the past few years and has launched a project that provides, among other things, medical visits and basic medicines for people with physical disabilities or in extreme poverty; supplies of basic medicines for people with epileptic disorders and treatment for other mental illnesses; powdered milk and peanut paste for malnourished children; and support for emergency surgery.

"From treatment for malaria, to infections, prenatal visits," says the missionary, who is parish priest of St John Vianney. As we started to help, new scenarios opened up: people with epileptic seizures, unable to pay for their therapy of 20 cents a day, then malnourished children, due to the death of the mother because of post-natal problems or other situations." (AP) (Agenzia Fides, 14/4/2025)

Continue reading at fides.org/en/news/76254

AMERICA/HAITI - "Foyer Saint Camille" inaugurates ward for premature babies

Port-au-Prince (Agenzia Fides) - "Providing modern care environments that are better adapted to the needs of the population and adequate for staff is one of the key elements of our health plan to make the network of health and social services more humane and efficient," said Father Robert Daudier, Director of the "Foyer Saint Camille" Hospital in Port-au-Prince, at the recent inauguration of the ward for premature babies or babies with birth defects which took place on Tuesday, 25 March.

In a country like Haiti, which is in chaos, this new ward is an important sign of hope and rebirth, according to a statement sent by the aid organization "Madian Orizzonti Onlus," an association active in Italy and in the Camillian missions abroad.

"Despite the many setbacks that prevented the hospital from meeting its deadlines," the hospital director continues,

"many goals have nevertheless been achieved that facilitate patient care. Examples include the acquisition of new medical equipment and devices, operating tables, anesthesia machines, monitors, incubators, medical imaging equipment, among others, as well as an important room for the oxygen production plant, which was made possible at the cost of great sacrifices. And now, we are finally inaugurating the Neonatal Unit." (AP) (Agenzia Fides, 3/4/2025)

Continue reading at fides.org/en/news/76211

ASIA/CAMBODIA - Young Cambodians attracted to Jesus were baptised during Easter Vigil

Phnom Penh (Fides Agency) - "There are many non-Christians who, driven by curiosity or desire, attend our churches every Sunday. And among them, there are those who ask to begin the journey of preparation for baptism," Jesuit Father Enrique Figaredo Alvargonzález, a Spanish missionary who has been in Cambodia for 40 years and is Apostolic Prefect of Battambang, told Fides Agency. In 2025, the small Catholic community in Cambodia—a predominantly Buddhist country where Catholics number only about 30,000 out of a population of 17 million—rejoiced at the gift of new baptisms.

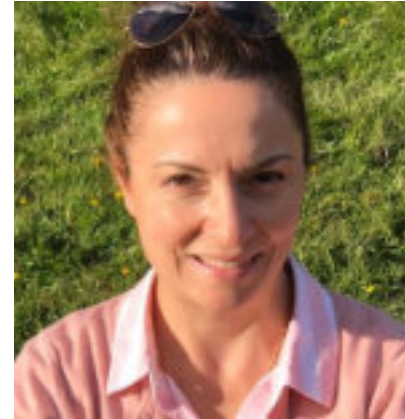
In Phnom Penh, 127 people, including young people and adults, were baptized after taking part in the "Rite of Election," led by Bishop Olivier Schmitthaeusler, Apostolic Vicar of Phnom Penh. The bishop urged them to "be ready to live and die with Jesus." Baptism, he recalled, "makes us new people," and the priest anoints us with oil "to receive strength directly from Jesus." We receive the white garment, "clothing ourselves with Jesus himself." (PA) (Agence Fides 24/4/2025)

Continue reading at fides.org/en/news/76286

FAST FACT

In 2015, the Cambodian Church began the beatification process for Bishop Joseph Chhmar Salas and 34 others—priests, laypeople, catechists, and missionaries—martyred during the Khmer Rouge persecution between 1970 and 1977.

Editor's reflection



As I reflect on the beginning of Pope Leo's papacy, I'm reminded that the heart of mission is presence. Before becoming Pope Leo, Robert Prevost lived out this truth in profound ways, serving as a missionary in Peru and later as a bishop, a c c o m p a n y i n g

communities with humility, compassion, and deep love. His life wasn't about delivering answers but about walking with people, sharing in their joys and suffering, and letting Christ's love speak through his presence. Now, as Pope Leo, he calls us to that same closeness with those around us.

This vision resonates powerfully with our missionary work today. The Pontifical Mission Societies continue to support missionaries who are living signs of hope across the globe. In Myanmar, where war and earthquakes have devastated churches and displaced thousands, priests and religious continue to shelter the homeless, care for the wounded, and

provide sacraments to the faithful often at great personal risk. In Cambodia, 127 people, many of them young and non-Christian, were baptized last Easter — a joyful testament to the Church's living witness in unexpected places.

Hope is not always loud or easy to see, but it's real. I think of the story shared by Lori of a young boy facing cancer with extraordinary resilience and hope. Despite the pain and uncertainty, he radiated joy and determination. His courage is a mission unto itself; a witness to God's strength in weakness and a reminder that mission is not always about doing, but about being — being present, faithful, and hopeful.

Pope Francis too placed mission at the centre of his papacy. In proclaiming the Holy Year, he urged us to see signs of hope in even the smallest desires, like the longing for peace or the decision to start a family in a troubled world. He reminded us that acts of mercy, like caring for the imprisoned, the sick, the young, the elderly, migrants and the poor, are not only works of charity, but works of hope. And more than that, he called us to become signs of hope.

Thank you for being a part of the Church's missionary nature and supporting our work through prayer, financial support and promotional efforts.

Aline Bedros



COURTESY OF PONTIFICAL MISSION SOCIETIES AUSTRALIA

"... with closeness, compassion and tenderness"

From Pope Francis' message for World Mission Sunday 2024

Make a lasting impact on their lives. Let them know and grow with Jesus.

Holy Childhood Association

Thank you for your prayers and financial support.

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