



MISSIONS TODAY

Vol. 84, no. 3

Summer 2026

Rediscovering the Face of God



Pontifical Mission Societies

National Director's message

Missions Today summer issue 2026

Greetings brothers and sisters in mission! As we prepare for the 100th World Mission Sunday, I continue to reflect on this year's theme, One in Christ, United in Mission. We are called to come together, across all of the ways the world divides us, to share the Gospel to all peoples.

But it is good to remember that we share the mission of Evangelization also with generations that have gone before us.

In our spiritual reflection in this edition, we remember the Canadian martyrs. This year marks the 400th anniversary of Saint Jean de Brébeuf's arrival in Huronia and the 100th anniversary of the establishment of Martyrs' Shrine in Midland, Ontario. I challenge each of you to allow the missionary heritage of generations past to inspire missionary zeal in our own time.

Pope Leo XIV's missionary message for us is also inspired by the recent past. The Holy Father has been using his weekly catechesis to walk us through some of the most meaningful lessons of the Second Vatican Council. It is from these lessons that we get the theme for this edition – Rediscovering the Face of God. Even decades later, there is more to unpack from the words of the council fathers, and Pope Leo's reflections provide a roadmap for mission that we all can use.

This edition also features the story of a missionary working with the newest, youngest missionaries. I encourage you to find hope for the future as you read about the joyful spirit of Sister Corazon Beboso's work with the Holy Childhood Association in the Vancouver area.

As we approach the 100th World Mission Sunday, I humbly ask that you consider continuing or strengthening your support. The work of Catholic missionaries at home and around the world depend so greatly on this spiritual and material support. It is indeed another sign of our unity.

Yours in Christ,

Bishop John A. Boissonneau
National Director



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100 Years of World Mission Sunday

From the very beginning, the Church has lived the call of Christ to "go and make disciples," a mission that continues to shape its life and identity. This mandate, rooted in the Gospel and echoed in the command to love one's neighbour as oneself, found a defining moment 100 years ago. World Mission Day was officially established by Pope Pius XI in 1926, inspired by the missionary movement and organizations like the Pontifical Mission Societies.

Thank you for answering the call.

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Papal missionary message

Rediscovering the face of God

At the beginning of the year, Pope Leo XIV began a catechetical series on the documents of the Second Vatican Council.

In his introduction to the series, delivered during his weekly general audience, the Holy Father quoted Pope Saint John Paul II's 2000 Apostolic Letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*. "I feel more than ever in duty bound to point to the Council as the great grace bestowed on the Church in the twentieth century." Pope Leo XIV said of the council. "After a rich biblical, theological and liturgical reflection spanning the twentieth century, Vatican II rediscovered the face of God as the Father who, in Christ, calls us to be his children."

While his messages have covered many themes relevant to Christian life, the theme of mission, particularly in rediscovering and renewing a commitment to mission, is particularly prominent.

Here are just a few of the most poignant messages on mission to come from this catechesis so far:

We must proclaim the Word of God in such a way that it speaks to the human experience without neglecting its divine origin.

If our proclamation loses touch with reality, with our human hopes and sufferings, or if an incomprehensible language is used, it is ineffective. In every age, the Church is called to re-propose the Word of God in a language capable of being embodied in history and reaching hearts.

Equally reductive, on the other hand, is a reading of Scripture that neglects its divine origin and ends up understanding it as a mere human teaching, as something to be studied simply from a technical point of view or as a text "only of the past". [3] Rather, especially when proclaimed in the context of the liturgy, Scripture is intended to speak to today's believers, to

touch their present lives with their problems, to enlighten the steps to be taken and the decisions to be made. This becomes possible only when believers read and interpret the sacred texts under the guidance of the same Spirit who inspired them (cf. DV, 12).



From the general audience of Wednesday, 4 February 2026

We come to know Christ and have a relationship with God through Sacred Scripture.

The Church ardently desires that the Word of God may reach every one of her members and nurture their journey of faith. But the Word of God also propels the Church beyond herself; it opens her continually to the mission towards everyone. Indeed, we live surrounded by so many words, but how many of these are empty! At times we even listen to wise words, which do not however affect our ultimate destiny. On the contrary, the Word of God responds to our thirst for meaning, for the truth about our life. It is the only Word

that is always new: revealing the mystery of God to us, it is inexhaustible, it never ceases to offer its riches.

From the general audience of Wednesday, 11 February 2026

There is a place for everyone in the Church, and we are all called to share the Gospel with others.

Unified in Christ, Lord and Saviour of every man and woman, the Church can never turn inwards on herself, but is open to everyone and is for everyone. If believers in Christ belong to it, the Council reminds us that "All men are called to belong to the new people of God. Wherefore this people, remaining one and unique, must extend to the whole world and to all ages, so that the intention of God's will may be fulfilled, who in the beginning created human nature as one and wants to gather together his children who were scattered" (LG, 13). Even those who have not yet received the Gospel are

therefore, in some way, oriented towards the people of God, and the Church, cooperating in Christ's mission, is called upon to spread the Gospel everywhere and to everyone (cf. LG 17) so that every person may enter into contact with Christ. This means that in the Church there is, and there must be, a place for everyone, and that every Christian is called to proclaim the Gospel and bear witness in every environment in which he or she lives and works. Thus, this people shows its catholicity, welcoming the wealth and resources of different cultures and, at the same time, offering them the newness of the Gospel to purify them and to raise them up (cf. LG, 13).

In this regard, the Church is one but includes everyone. A great theologian described it thus: "The unique Ark of Salvation must welcome all human diversity into its vast nave. The only banquet hall, the food it distributes is drawn from all of creation. The seamless garment of Christ, it is also – and it is the same thing – the garment of Joseph, with its many colours".

It is a great sign of hope – especially in our times, traversed by so many conflicts and wars – to know that the Church is a people in which women and men of different nationalities, languages and cultures live together in faith: it is a sign placed in the very heart of humanity, a reminder and prophecy of that unity and peace to which God the Father calls all his children.

From the general audience of Wednesday, 11 March 2026.

All the faithful, not only ordained ministers, are called to participate in the priestly, prophetic and kingly work of Christ.

The messianic people (LG, 9) receive from Christ the participation in the priestly, prophetic and kingly work office through which his salvific mission is carried out. The Council Fathers teach that the Lord Jesus, through the new and

eternal Covenant, has established a kingdom of priests, constituting his disciples as a 'royal priesthood' (1 Pet 2:9; cf. 1 Pet 2:5; Rev 1:6). This common priesthood of the faithful is given with Baptism, which enables us to worship God in spirit and truth, and to "confess before men the faith which they have received from God through the Church" (LG, 11). Furthermore, through the sacrament of Confirmation all the baptized "are more perfectly bound to the Church ... and the Holy Spirit endows them with special strength so that they are more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith, both by word and by deed, as true witnesses of Christ" (ibid.). This consecration is at the root of the common mission that unites the ordained ministries and the lay faithful.

From the general audience of Wednesday, 18 March 2026.

The Church is present wherever the faithful bear witness to the Gospel.

The vast field of the lay apostolate is not confined to the Church, but extends to the world. Indeed, the Church is present wherever her children profess and bear witness to the Gospel: in the workplace, in civil society and in all human relationships, wherever they, through their choices, show the beauty of Christian life, which foretells here and now the justice and peace that will be accomplished in the Kingdom of God. The world needs to "be permeated by the spirit of Christ, and more effectively fulfil its purpose in justice, charity and peace" (LG, 36). And this is possible only through the contribution, service and witness of the laity!

It is an invitation to be the Church 'which goes forth' that Pope Francis spoke to us about: a Church embodied in history, always open to mission, in which we are all called to be missionary disciples, apostles of the Gospel, witnesses of the Kingdom of God, bearers of the joy of Christ whom we have encountered!

From the general audience of Wednesday, 1st April 2026.

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:



To view The Pope Video visit thepopevideo.org or scan the QR code.

July: For respect for human life.

Let us pray for the respect and protection of human life in all its stages, recognizing it as a gift from God.

August: For evangelization in the city.

Let us pray that in large cities often marked by anonymity and loneliness we find new ways to proclaim the Gospel, discovering creative paths to build community.

September: 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.

Courtesy of the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network

Spiritual reflection

Mission and martyrdom in Huronia: The legacy of the Canadian Martyrs

This year marks the 400th anniversary of Saint Jean de Brébeuf's arrival in Huronia, homeland of the Wendat Confederacy in present-day Ontario. It also marks the centenary of Martyrs' Shrine in Midland, Ontario, established in 1926 as a place of pilgrimage, prayer, and spiritual renewal.

Today, these stories continue to inspire new efforts of evangelization, remembrance, and reflection, including the film and devotional initiative *Of Blood and Water: The Story of the North American Martyrs and Indigenous Apostles* (Coming in 2028 from Martyrs' Shrine/Dunn Media & Entertainment).

The story of the Canadian Martyrs (also known as the North American Martyrs) is the remarkable witness of missionaries who left behind their homes, families, and countries to proclaim the Gospel half a world away. They travelled not for wealth or conquest, but out of a profound desire to share the hope and joy of Christ with others.

These missionaries knew about the challenges and dangers that mission in a foreign land entailed, yet they chose to pursue it.

The Canadian Martyrs were eight Jesuit missionaries associated with Sainte-Marie, the French Jesuit mission established in Wendake, the land of the Wendat people near present-day Midland, Ontario. During the conflicts of the mid-17th century involving the Wendat Confederacy and the Mohawk Nation, these missionaries were captured and

ultimately killed in what is now southern Ontario and upstate New York.

Their witness of faith led to their canonization on June 29, 1930, by Pope Pius XI, and they are venerated by the Catholic Church as martyrs. On October 16, 1940, Pope Pius XII proclaimed them patron saints of Canada.

The Jesuits' missionary effort in New France was marked by deep spiritual conviction, sacrifice, and cultural encounter. Inspired by Ignatian spirituality, they sought to find God in all things and proclaimed the Gospel among the Indigenous peoples with apostolic zeal.

One of the most notable among them was Fr. Jean de Brébeuf, known to the Wendat as Echon, "the load-bearer." Brébeuf embodied a mission rooted not in domination, but in accompaniment. He learned the Wendat language, composed catechetical works, and shared fully in the hardships of Indigenous life. He travelled long distances by canoe, endured illness and hunger, and immersed himself in the daily realities of the people he served.

Like his companions, Brébeuf hoped not merely to establish missions, but to foster a truly Indigenous Church with local leadership and living faith communities. As with missionary activity around the world today, this was never a one-sided story. Alongside the missionaries stood Indigenous Christians whose witness became equally important to the growth of



Image from the upcoming film project *Of Blood and Water: The Story of the North American Martyrs and Indigenous Apostles* (Martyrs' Shrine/Dunn Media & Entertainment), currently in production for release in 2028. Inspired by the enduring witness of the Canadian Martyrs and the Indigenous Christians of Huronia, the project seeks to rediscover the story, reflect on the truth, and renew the devotion surrounding these foundational witnesses of the Church in North America. For more information, visit: www.ofbloodandwater.com

Courtesy of Dunn Media & Entertainment / Of Blood and Water.

the early Church in North America. The Gospel was not simply preached to Indigenous peoples; it was embraced, lived, and shared by Indigenous apostles within their own communities.

Though marked by hardship, rejection, and sacrifice, the witness of the martyrs bore lasting fruit. Their lives helped sanctify the beginnings of the Church in North America and continue to inspire Christians today.

Among the many Wendat Christians in Huronia were Joseph Chiwatenhwa, his wife Marie Aonetta, and their family, whose encounter with the Jesuits led to their baptism and deep involvement in the early Church in Canada.

Baptized by Jean de Brébeuf, Joseph became a key lay leader and evangelizer among his people. He translated prayers, instructed others in the faith, and helped build the foundations of the early Church in Canada. Remembered as an "Apostle with the Apostles," he remains a profound witness of courage, cultural encounter, and fidelity to Christ.

During one of his eight-day silent retreats, Joseph composed a prayer that reveals the depth of his spiritual life:

You love us so deeply that all I can do in return is offer myself to you.

I claim you as my elder and chief.

There is no one else.

Ask me for anything you want.

Just let me always hold you in my heart.

Joseph's witness reminds us that holiness is not confined to one culture or people.

The modern world often fears suffering, sacrifice, and self-denial. Yet the witness of the martyrs reminds us that a life poured out in love is never wasted. Saint Paul writes: "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). When we offer our lives, like these missionaries, we do not lose them, rather, we gain the promise that beyond every sacrifice lies a joy that does not fade, a life that is eternal with God.



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Across the globe

Spotlight on Togo, Thailand, Peru and Spain

AFRICA/TOGO - The "Ahonhon Center," an advanced center for the treatment of brain disorders, has been inaugurated by the Togolese Province of the Society of African Missions

Yokoè (Fides News Agency) – In Togo, cognitive disorders continue to be treated somewhat superficially, despite their serious impact on the lives of patients and their families: loss of autonomy, social isolation, and loss of dignity. Faced with this reality, the Togolese Province of the Society of African Missions (SMA) has promoted the creation of the "Ahonhon Center" neuropsychology clinic in Yokoè.

Located about fifteen kilometers from the center of Lomé, near the Little Sisters of the Holy Family Medical Center and the parish of St. John the Baptist, the center is part of a broader effort to strengthen specialized care in West Africa. "Initially, the goal was to support teenagers in difficulty, whether due to family conflicts or problems at home," Father Fabien Sognon, the first Provincial Superior of the SMA in Togo, explained to Fides. "Over time, the project evolved. Faced with growing needs, the center decided to focus on brain health. Today, it treats cognitive disorders at all ages,

including memory, attention, and concentration problems in students, as well as age-related cognitive deficits such as Alzheimer's and dementia. It also offers support to people whose cognitive functions have been affected by head injuries or strokes." (AP) (Fides News Agency, 20/4/2026)
Read the full story at fides.org/en/news/77590

ASIA/THAILAND - Catholic community of Surat Thani: "A beacon of hope and compassion in the region"

Surat Thani (Fides News Agency) – "The effects of the devastating floods are still being felt in the diocese. As a local church, after providing emergency relief, we are now in a phase of long-term support, assisting people and families who have lost their homes, their jobs, and their livelihoods," Father John Baptist Amornkit Promphakdee, Vicar General and spokesperson for the Diocese of Surat Thani in the far south of Thailand, told Fides. Here, Catholic communities, thanks to the diocesan Caritas office and in cooperation with the national Caritas organization, are accompanying and supporting the local communities that were hit by the worst floods in history in November 2025.

"Christ himself, and his Gospel, are the greatest treasures we can offer."

Pope Leo from Message for 100th World Mission Day 2026

**Transform lives forever.
Help children encounter Jesus and grow in His love.**

Holy Childhood Association

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Courtesy of Pontifical Mission Societies USA

The government described the rainfall as "an event that occurs every 300 years." The devastating floods left behind a trail of destruction from which people are struggling to recover and resulted in over 630,000 internally displaced persons. (PA) (Fides News Agency, 24/4/2026)
Continue reading at fides.org/en/news/77605

AMERICA/PERU - The "Invisible" ones of the "Cottolengo" in Arequipa, loved like our own children

Arequipa (Fides News Agency) – The "Cottolengo" in Arequipa – Hogarcito de Niños Especiales San Jose Benito Cottolengo – welcomes the "invisible" ones from all over Peru: children, young people, and women with "special needs," severe physical and mental disabilities, living in abandonment and poverty.

What immediately draws attention is a colorful poster with a message for the "Peruvian Pope": "We love you very much, Pope Leo XIV. Greetings from the girls of the hogar Benito de Cottolengo..."

Founded on August 1, 2002, the "Cottolengo" in Arequipa draws its inspiration from the charism of Saint Joseph Benito Cottolengo, the Turin saint who founded the "Little House of Divine Providence" in 19th-century Italy. This charism has

now taken on an original form in Peru, rooted in the local context and its needs.

Since 2007, the house has been located in the Tiabaya district, where it has established a strong presence. Today, the facility is run by the Congregation of the Servants of the Lord and the Virgin of Matará and their staff, who carry out their mission daily. (Fides News Agency, 29/4/2026)

Continue reading at fides.org/en/news/77626



Courtesy of Fides

In remembrance

Our deceased donors

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

Josephine Treffers,	Chilliwack, BC
Myrtle Coghlan,	Thunder Bay, ON
Josefino P. Sanz,	Guelph, ON
Graham Pickles,	Salmon Arm, BC
John F. Driscoll,	Halifax, NS
Bernard McDonald,	Kingston, ON
Lilien Dobish,	Calgary, AB
Mathilda Ulrich,	North Battleford, SK
Betty J. Boyd,	Edmonton, AB
David Ryan,	Grand Falls-Windsor, NL

EUROPE/SPAIN - Spanish Pontifical Mission Societies celebrate the Day of Native Vocations

Madrid (Fides News Agency) – "Missionaries do extraordinary work, but they do not just do their job; rather, they go to build the Church in the territories where they are, and therefore one of the most important fruits they can bear is the formation of priests, religious men and women who are apostles of their own cultures."

This is how José María Calderón, national director of the Spanish Pontifical Mission Societies, expressed himself on the occasion of the presentation of the Day of Native Vocations and the World Day of Prayer for Vocations, which are celebrated jointly in Spain.

In a statement released by the Pontifical Mission Societies in Spain, it is noted that there are approximately 751 seminaries (minor, propaedeutic, and major) supported by the Pontifical Society of St. Peter the Apostle, which is specifically dedicated to supporting the formation of local clergy in territories under the jurisdiction of the Dicastery for Evangelization. (EG) (Fides News Agency, 26/4/2026)

Continue reading at fides.org/en/news/77620

Our team

Sr. Cora and Vancouver's little missionaries



Sr. Cora

Sr. Corazon Beboso, better known as Sr. Cora, is a Salesian sister of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (FMA) and has served as Coordinator of the Holy Childhood Association (HCA) in the Vancouver area since 2020.

Through her dedication and joyful missionary spirit, she continues to inspire children to become little missionaries by praying, doing good works, and helping children in need around the world.

Each year, Sr. Cora visits the Catholic Independent Schools of Vancouver (CISVA), a network of Catholic elementary schools, to present the mission of the Holy Childhood Association and encourage students to live the spirit of "Children Helping Children." She regularly participates in school fundraising initiatives and mission activities, fostering strong collaboration with principals, teachers, and school communities. Her presentations are warmly received and help children grow in awareness of the missions and the needs of children across the globe.

Once again this year, children involved in HCA showed great enthusiasm in supporting the missions through prayer and generosity. This past spring, St. Bernadette School held an assembly led by the Grade 7 student council to introduce students to the HCA initiative. Through the council's leadership, a total of \$487.85 was raised.

On May 6, 2026, students from 15 Catholic schools gathered with their principals and teachers for the HCA Mission Mass at Our Lady of the Assumption Parish in Port Coquitlam. The Mass was celebrated by Archbishop Richard Smith, who encouraged the children to become missionaries of hope and peace and to continue praying for and helping children in need around the world. His presence offered the students a broader understanding of the Church's mission to serve the poor, especially children.

The celebration also highlighted the remarkable generosity of the school communities. This year, the Holy Childhood Association collected \$12,670 from 12 Catholic schools of the Archdiocese of Vancouver, as well as from one Parish Religious Education Program (PREP) attended by public school children from Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish in Surrey. These donations will help support children in mission countries and continue the beautiful witness of children helping children throughout the world.

Year after year, children, educators, and school communities grow together in a spirit of solidarity and support for missionary work. This living expression of faith and sharing of the love of Jesus around the world is one of the reasons why Sr. Cora is full of smiles, hope and appreciation for the Holy Childhood Association.



Courtesy of Mr. Ged Wright

Project report

From poverty to hope: The quiet mission transforming Foya



Fr. Lorenzo Snider. Courtesy of SMA

In the remote region of Foya, in Liberia, the parish of St. John Vianney has become a vital lifeline for the most vulnerable. In a place where access to healthcare is limited and poverty widespread, the parish

has quietly built a mission rooted in dignity, compassion, and practical support, especially for people with disabilities and those living in extreme poverty.

Over the past few years, under the leadership of Fr. Lorenzo Snider, a missionary of the Society of African Missions (SMA), the parish has organized a charitable initiative that addresses urgent medical needs. What began as a modest effort has grown into a structured program offering medical consultations, essential medicines, and targeted support for some of the most neglected cases in the region. Treatments included malaria and other infections, and prenatal care.

"As we started to help, new scenarios opened up – people with epileptic seizures, unable to pay for their therapy, then malnourished children due to the death of the mother because of post-natal problems, or other situations," explains Fr. Lorenzo. "There are also those who present themselves to the parish with neglected sores, which they have suffered perhaps for years or in some cases decades."

The parish's outreach now includes the distribution of basic medicines, support for epilepsy and mental health treatment, nutritional aid such as powdered milk and peanut paste for children, and assistance for emergency surgeries. Each initiative is a response to a real and pressing need encountered within the community. If resources allow, the program is expected to assist approximately 500 people annually through the Foya Health Centre, with additional patients referred to hospitals in Borma and Gueckedou which offer access to more advanced laboratory services.

Since their presence in Liberia in 2013, the SMA missionaries have played a key role in restoring stability and fostering hope, particularly in regions where displacement and trauma have left deep scars following devastating prior civil wars. Their

presence has also helped revive Christian life in the area.

In addition to healthcare, Fr. Lorenzo has contributed to educational initiatives, including the construction of a Catholic school where both Christian and Muslim youth can pursue their studies side by side.

Despite the many challenges, Fr. Lorenzo remains hopeful. He points to the resilience, humour, and strength of the Liberian people, especially the youth, as signs of a future worth investing in. "The Church must walk with the people," he says simply. In Foya, that journey is already well underway, one act of care at a time.

Fr. Lorenzo is deeply convinced that Christian life is first and foremost a relationship with Jesus Christ and that, for those who accept the Gospel, the responsibility is to work together for the good of all.



Courtesy of Fides

DID YOU KNOW?

Liberia has a population of about 5.5 million people.

Approximately 30 per cent live in extreme poverty (under \$2.92 CAD/day).

Approximately 30 per cent of children under five suffer from undernutrition.

A majority of women and girls (ages 15–49) are affected by anaemia.

Liberia has the sixth highest maternal mortality rate in Africa.

14 per cent of maternal deaths occur among adolescent girls (ages 15–19), often linked to complications such as premature delivery and other neonatal conditions.



Support the mission through legacy planning

Through a legacy gift to Pontifical Mission Societies, you and your family can help spread the Word of God, changing lives and building up the kingdom of God through new churches, funding vocations and delivery of other pastoral and humanitarian efforts – all driven by our Lord’s call to missionary discipleship.

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Photo courtesy of Pontifical Mission Societies Australia

“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 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.”

Pope Leo from his message for 100th World Mission Day 2026