

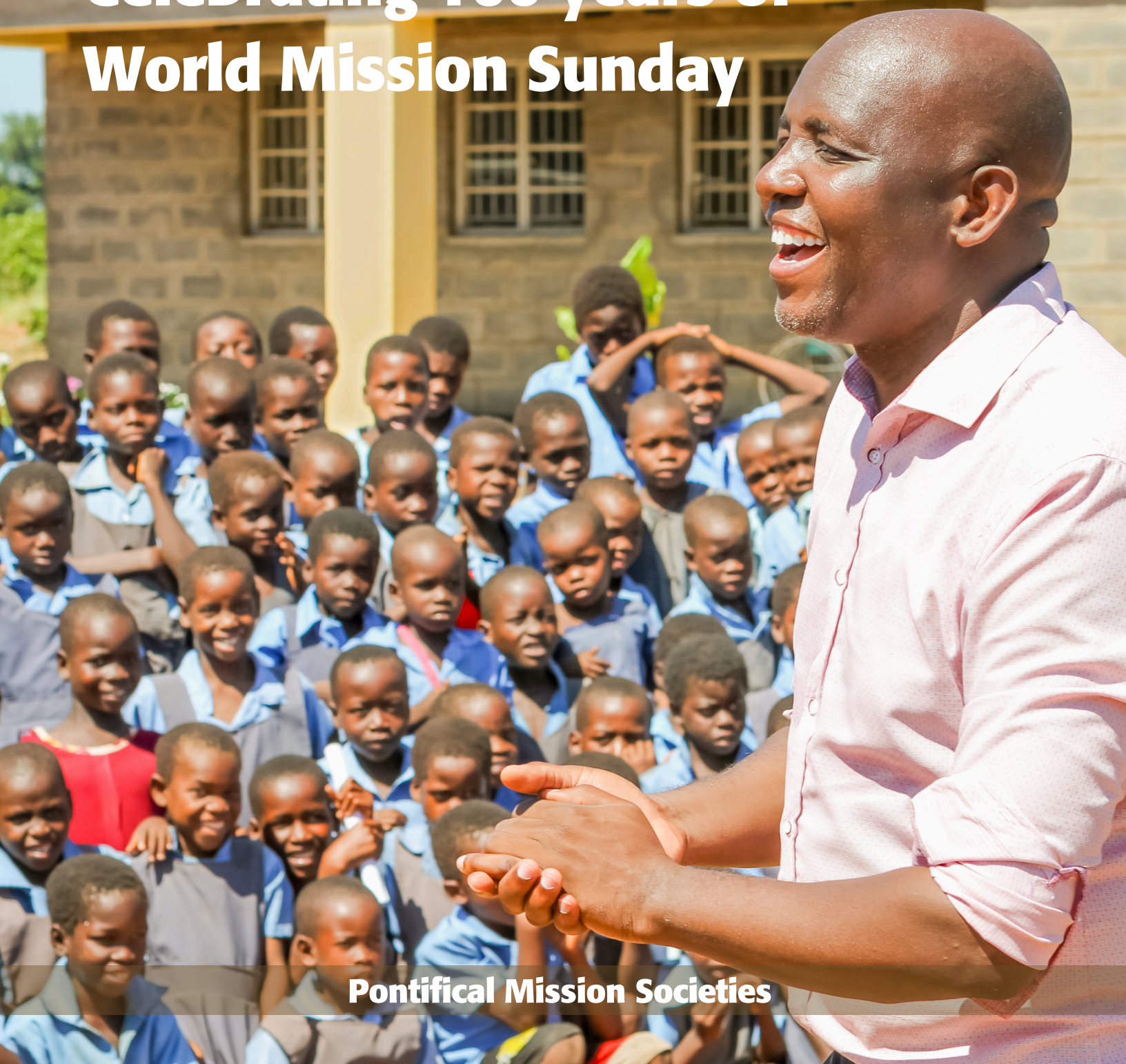


MISSIONS TODAY

Vol. 84, no. 4

Fall 2026

Celebrating 100 years of World Mission Sunday



Pontifical Mission Societies

National Director's message

Missions Today Fall issue 2026

It is my honour and pleasure to be the National Director of Pontifical Mission Societies – English Canada sector as the Universal Church commemorates the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the World Mission Day. In 1926 Pope Pius XI instituted this observance for the whole Church with the first worldwide Mission Sunday collection taking place in October 1927.

On this day, in rich or poor parishes alike, Catholics throughout the world contribute to the Universal Mission Fund of solidarity. Our goals: missionary animation and the sharing of resources.

Missionary animation is directed to all the baptized to witness to the Gospel and spread faith in Jesus Christ. Through education and information regarding the life of the Church in other countries, all are encouraged to be aware of the world-wide dimension of the Church and the special contribution of the missionaries and local clergy to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Sharing of resources means that we respond to the needs of new churches in Asia, Africa and South America. These resources include our faith-filled prayers, as well as financial support.

I am pleased that this autumn edition of Missions Today is giving attention to this centennial celebration.

Since 1963, the Holy Father has written a special annual message for this day to encourage people to share their faith. Pope Leo, our missionary pope, in his first such message shares his hope that: United in mission, the world may believe in Christ the Lord. He also offers us a prayer, which can be found in its entirety on page 11 of this issue. Here is an excerpt:

Bless all missionary men and women, support them in their efforts, and watch over them in hope!

Mary, Queen of Missions, accompany our work of evangelization in every corner of the earth: make us instruments of peace, and grant that the whole world may recognize in Christ the light that saves. Amen.

I invite each one of us to pray this simple prayer daily throughout the month of October.

Be assured of our Masses and prayers for all of you.

Yours in Christ,

Bishop John A. Boissonneau
National Director



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Thank you, Bishop Boissonneau, for 25 years of faithful ministry and inspiring witness to Christ!



Credits: Archdiocese of Toronto and PMS Canada

2026 marks the silver jubilee of Bishop John Boissonneau's episcopal ordination. For twenty-five years, he has faithfully shepherded the people of God, offering spiritual guidance, compassionate leadership, and a steadfast witness to the Gospel. Together with its donors and the faithful, The Pontifical Mission Societies in Canada thanks Bishop Boissonneau for his ministry and prays for God's continued blessings upon him.

Cover photo: Father Matthew Semba, Director of Social Services at the Diocese of Chikwawa, Malawi with children of St Peter's Nyamikuta Primary School. As the school's key coordinator, he collaborates closely with local families, teachers, and the Pontifical Mission Societies to ensure the school becomes not only a centre for learning but also a foundation for long-term community strength. His work gives the local community a renewed sense of hope while inspiring children to use their education to build a brighter future.



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Comments on this issue or other topics are always welcome. Contact us at: missions@missionsocieties.ca
2219 Kennedy Road
Toronto, Ontario M1T 3G5
416 699 7077, 1 800 897 8865
416 699 9019 (fax)
Visit our web site at: missionsocieties.ca
And our Facebook page: [@PontificalMissionSocietiesToronto](https://www.facebook.com/PontificalMissionSocietiesToronto)

Meet the founders

of the Pontifical Mission Societies



Blessed Pauline Jaricot (1799-1852)

Society for the Propagation of the Faith

Helping missionaries through prayer and financial support

Blessed Pauline was born into a wealthy family in Lyon, France but

experienced major challenges as a teenager: the death of her mother and an older brother, physical suffering due to a serious fall, and depression.

She experienced a deep conversion after listening to a homily about vanity, and at age 17, she decided to commit her life to God. She gave away all her jewelry and began caring for the sick and the poor.

During this time, Pauline's missionary heart was forming. Her brother, Philéas, while in training to become a missionary priest, told her about the suffering of abandoned children in China.

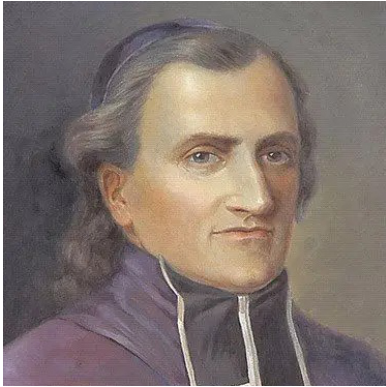
The cause touched her so deeply that she appealed for help to the women working in her brother-in-law's factory. She began by gathering a group of 10 people with the simple idea of "a prayer and a penny for the missions".

She then encouraged each person to do the same and to find another group of 10. Pauline Jaricot's idea grew to become the first social network for the missions, and in 1822, it came to be known as the Society for the Propagation of the Faith.

World Mission Sunday was later founded in 1926 after Pope Pius XI approved a request from the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, which petitioned the pope to establish a day of prayer and communications about the missions – to be celebrated on the second to the last Sunday of October in every Catholic diocese, parish and institute in the world.

The intentions behind this day were to foster understanding of the greatness of the missionary task; to encourage zeal among the clergy and the people; to offer an opportunity to make the Society ever more widely known; and to encourage

offerings for the missions. Even 100 years later, World Mission Sunday continues to do the same – spreading the missionary spirit all around the world.



Bishop Charles de Forbin-Janson (1785-1844)

Holy Childhood Association

Children helping children

Bishop Charles was born in Paris to a noble family. As a young man, he was in the military and was on track

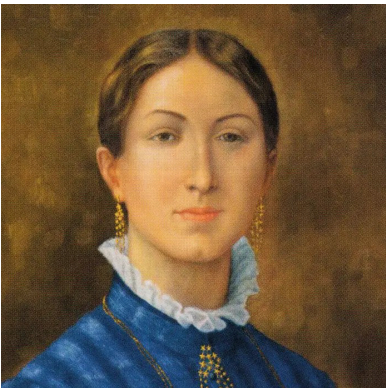
towards a promising political career. In fact, he was appointed to a government position by Napoleon Bonaparte. However, he chose a different path – a life of service as a priest – and he was ordained in 1811.

Charles' missionary heart began to grow after hearing stories of the missions while in seminary. He wanted to become a missionary but Pius VII advised him to remain in France where missionary work was needed. He was a great preacher and travelled throughout France preaching the Gospel.

He was made bishop of Nancy at age 38 but eventually had to flee France due to government pressure. He spent three years preaching in North America, then returned to France.

For some time, Bishop Charles had received letters with requests for help about suffering children in China but he didn't know how to help. He met with Pauline Jaricot, since he knew of her work, and they determined that children could be the focus.

Pauline's idea of prayer and sacrifice – i.e. saying a Hail Mary every day and giving a small coin every month for poor children in China – could unite children throughout world. With the simple concept of "Children helping children", Bishop Charles founded the Holy Childhood Association in 1943, one year before his death.



Jeanne Bigard (1859-1934)

Society of St. Peter the Apostle

Fortifying vocations in mission countries

Jeanne Bigard was born into a wealthy family. Jeanne and her mother, Stephanie, experienced

tragedy with the deaths of Jeanne's father and brother. However, they turned suffering into good by working together to aid missionaries in need and making it their life mission.

In 1888, Fr. Aimé Villion, a French missionary stationed in Kyoto, Japan, requested assistance to build a church and they agreed to help. Then in 1889, the Bishop of Nagasaki, Jules-Alphonse Cousin, asked the Bigards if they would support a seminary forming Japanese men for the priesthood, and they decided to contribute as well.

Jeanne and Stephanie sold some of their properties and made a conscious effort to live simply, enabling them to send more money to mission territories, specifically to assist clergy.

This support spread beyond Japan and to other parts of the world. Thus the Society of St. Peter the Apostle was formed – supported by the Bigards who donated most of their considerable fortune towards the cause. Jeanne Bigard devoted her life to spreading word about the society – throughout France and even beyond – until poor health prevented her from continuing.



Blessed Paolo Manna (1872-1952)

Pontifical Missionary Union

Promoting missionary hearts among the clergy

Blessed Father Paolo Manna was a priest formed in Italy through what is now called the

Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions, and for many years, he was a missionary in Burma (now Myanmar). With great sadness, he was forced to return permanently to Italy in 1907 due to serious health issues.

However, his missionary spirit continued on and led him on a path to forming missionary hearts through preaching and written materials.

He envisioned an association whose sole purpose was to animate and instill missionary eagerness in all clergy; primarily in pastors and leaders of seminaries and religious communities.

He founded the Missionary Union of the Clergy (as it was known at the time) in 1916, with the approval of Pope Benedict XV. Now known as the Pontifical Missionary Union, it celebrates its 110th anniversary this year.

Blessed Paolo Manna's motto was "All Missionaries" – not just priests and religious sisters but all the baptized are called to be missionaries.

Photos: PMS Canada website

"Your prayers and practical support... will be a great help in bringing the Gospel of God's love to everyone, especially the poorest and those most in need."

Pope Leo in his video message for World Mission Sunday 2025

Thank you for supporting the World Mission Sunday collection.

Society of the Propagation of the Faith

1 800 897 8865 missionsocieties.ca



Photo by PMS Australia

Papal missionary message

World Mission Sunday: Pope Leo expresses gratitude and urges continuing support for the missions



Pope Leo XIV invites the entire Church to participate in World Mission Sunday this October.

Speaking to representatives of the Pontifical Mission Societies on June 1, 2026, Pope Leo said, "I am happy to express my gratitude to all of you and to everyone who works with you throughout the world, for all of your efforts, great and small, in

promoting World Mission Day."

For one hundred years, this day has been a day for prayer, reflection and contributing to the Church's mission of evangelization through spiritual and material sacrifices – especially in areas where the proclamation of the Gospel is only just beginning and where the Church is still young.

The Holy Father spoke about the theme for World Mission Sunday 2026 – *One in Christ, united in mission*. He elaborated on this theme in a Papal message released in January 2026 that can be found online. He invites all members of the Church to a deeper communion in Christ and to a fuller unity in His divine mission of love.

Pope Leo reminds us that the "Church on earth is by her very nature missionary." The pope invites us to an ongoing missionary conversion and to look together for ways of being a missionary Church for the healing of our world – a world so

fraught with tensions, conflicts and wars.

"In this important task, ***the work of the Pontifical Mission Societies remains essential***," he concluded. "Let us therefore continue our missionary journey with joy and renewed zeal."

Like you, Pope Leo understands the work of Pontifical Mission Societies and speaks from experience.

While he served as a missionary in Peru, Father José Hipolito Purizaca Sernaque, National Director of the PMS in Peru, said: "The Pontifical Mission Societies were also very dear to his heart. He supported them especially when he was Bishop of the Diocese of Chiclayo."

Fr. José echoes the sentiments of the Peruvian faithful, stating that the pope "is known as a missionary, as someone who knows how to be with everyone and unite everyone. Wherever he has served as a missionary, he is greatly appreciated by lay people, priests, religious, and bishops. A great man, a man of God."

Source: [Vatican.va](https://www.vatican.va) and [Fides.org/en/news/76338-](https://www.fides.org/en/news/76338-)



Why World Mission Sunday matters

Reflections from our Diocesan Directors

The annual World Mission Sunday collection is more than a fundraising initiative. It is a tangible expression of communion with the universal Church.

To mark this historic centenary, a few Regional Directors from across Canada reflected on the significance of this day and the difference it continues to make in the lives of millions around the world.

Deacon Anthony Calaycay - Diocese of St. Catharines

"I was pleasantly surprised to discover how invaluable mission support is, not only for mission countries around the world, but for Canada as well. I had the opportunity to speak with Most Rev. Anthony Krotki, O.M.I. Bishop of Churchill-Hudson Bay, one of the mission dioceses in Canada. He shared that, because of the challenges of attracting priests to



serve in his diocese due to its difficult environmental conditions, he receives missionary priests from countries such as India and Nigeria, countries where the Pontifical Mission Societies support priestly formation.

When I shared this realization during homilies I preached in several parishes leading up to World Mission Sunday last year, many parishioners expressed how meaningful this connection was. They told me it inspired them to give even more generously to the WMS collection. Canada helps support mission dioceses with their financial needs; in turn, they help us address our own need for priests."



Sr. Rosemary Ryan Archdiocese of St. John's, NL

"I have served as the Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies for the Archdiocese of St. John's since 2014. Hearing reports at our annual conferences and reading in Missions Today about how the World Mission Sunday collection is used in various countries is truly heartwarming.

Having spent several years serving in our mission in Peru, I can picture the joy and gratitude of communities when they receive support to meet their needs: repairing a church roof, purchasing motorcycles for catechists, building gathering spaces for catechetical programs, establishing medical clinics, or expanding schools. In many places, the people are eager to do the labour themselves, but they simply lack the resources needed to purchase the necessary materials.

I find that WMS is a meaningful opportunity to remind parishioners of the good their donations allow the PMS to do. Above all, however, I remind them that we are all missionary disciples and encourage them to keep the missions in their prayers.



Fr. Luigi Filippini Diocese of Thunder Bay

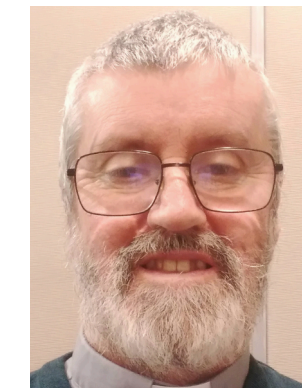
"For 100 years, World Mission Sunday has been a powerful reminder of our shared call to mission. Together with all the baptized faithful, I believe we can take pride in following Jesus by proclaiming the Good News and serving those in need. Mission and

service throughout the world are ongoing works that call each of us to remain committed.

This extraordinary centennial invites us to reflect on the generations of missionaries who have gone before us and those who will follow, united in the calling we received at Baptism to propagate our faith and to share God's love without hesitation.

We are the hands, the feet, and the voice of Christ in our world. When we give generously on World Mission Sunday, we respond to the needs of today while planting seeds of hope, faith, and love for tomorrow.

Thank you for your faithfulness, generosity, and prayers through which you bring courage, strength, and joy to the world."



Fr. Paul Johnston – Archdiocese of Toronto

"As we prepare to celebrate 100 years of World Mission Sunday, I write not only as the Director of the Mission Office of the Archdiocese of Toronto, but also as a missionary priest with more than 30 years of experience in mission.

Having served as a formator with my congregation, the Society of Missionaries of Africa, for 22 years, I have witnessed the impact of the support received through the WMS collection. Our congregation has benefited from these funds, which have helped in the formation of young men preparing to respond to face the challenges of mission today, mainly throughout Africa.

World Mission Sunday is a way for all of us to share in Christ's ongoing mission in our world today. May we continue to journey together and live the spirit of this year's World Mission Sunday theme: One in Christ, United in Mission."

United in Mission for the Next Century

These reflections remind us that World Mission Sunday is much more than a single day on the Church's calendar. It is a living expression of our shared responsibility for the universal mission of the Church and a testament to your generosity as Canadian Catholics who respond year after year with faith and compassion.

World Mission Sunday 2026: October 18

On World Mission Sunday, Catholics unite in a worldwide collection to support the Church's missionary work through the Pontifical Mission Societies. Together, we stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in mission territories, bringing Christ's love and hope to communities around the world.

On October 18, 2026, as we celebrate the 100th anniversary of World Mission Sunday, join us in giving thanks for a century of faith, generosity, and missionary spirit. Together let us continue to be witnesses of the joy and hope we have in Jesus Christ.

2025 World Mission Sunday collections in Canada

The dioceses of Canada (English Canada sector) contributed more than \$1.5 million through the World Mission Sunday 2025 collection. These funds are sent directly to bishops in mission territories, enabling Canadian Catholics to support local Churches in need, providing the resources essential to their pastoral and missionary work.

2025 World Mission Sunday collections in Canada

DIOCESE OF ANTIGONISH	\$11,649.00	DIOCESE OF PRINCE ALBERT	\$8,406.00
DIOCESE OF CALGARY	\$140,257.12	DIOCESE OF PRINCE GEORGE	\$5,698.90
DIOCESE OF CHARLOTTETOWN	\$9,633.42	ARCHDIOCESE OF REGINA.....	\$25,006.05
DIOCESE OF CORNER BROOK AND LABRADOR.....	\$4,882.35	DIOCESE OF ST. CATHARINES	\$31,970.00
ARCHDIOCESE OF EDMONTON	\$68,717.77	ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. JOHN'S, NL.....	\$5,668.00
DIOCESE OF GRAND FALLS.....	\$4,462.25	DIOCESE OF SAINT JOHN, NB	\$12,717.48
DIOCESE OF HALIFAX – YARMOUTH.....	\$1,195.00	DIOCESE OF SASKATOON.....	\$15,776.05
DIOCESE OF HAMILTON.....	\$131,100.00	DIOCESE OF SAULT STE-MARIE.....	\$17,227.42
DIOCESE OF KAMLOOPS.....	\$14,817.50	DIOCESE OF THUNDER BAY.....	\$5,000.00
ARCHDIOCESE OF KINGSTON	\$35,931.60	ARCHDIOCESE OF TORONTO	\$534,308.90
DIOCESE OF LONDON	\$63,592.05	ARCHDIOCESE OF VANCOUVER.....	\$214,500.19
DIOCESE OF MACKENZIE-FORT SMITH.....	\$2,620.00	DIOCESE OF VICTORIA.....	\$12,567.55
DIOCESE OF NELSON.....	\$31,540.87	DIOCESE OF WHITEHORSE	\$1,660.00
ARCHDIOCESE OF OTTAWA-CORNWALL	\$34,671.92	ARCHDIOCESE OF WINNIPEG.....	\$41,242.58
DIOCESE OF PEMBROKE	\$11,381.75	TOTAL	\$1,523,535.52 CAD
DIOCESE OF PETERBOROUGH.....	\$25,333.80		

TOTAL CANADIAN DONATIONS COLLECTED	\$1,523,535.52 CAD
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2025 Contributions to the missions

Your support of World Mission Sunday and other Pontifical Mission Societies’ fundraising efforts and programs made it possible for us to distribute close to \$2.4 million CAD in subsidies in 2025.

THE SOCIETY FOR THE PROPAGATION OF THE FAITH

SRI LANKA	\$885,483.42	46 projects
Total	\$885,483.42 USD	(\$1,244,321 CAD)

THE HOLY CHILDHOOD ASSOCIATION

NIGERIA	\$53,000.00	9 projects
TANZANIA	\$52,200.00	10 projects
THE PHILIPPINES	\$51,323.56	12 projects
INDIA	\$61,800.00	9 projects
Total	\$218,324 USD	(\$307,836 CAD)

THE SOCIETY OF ST. PETER THE APOSTLE

D. R. CONGO	\$145,060.53	9 projects
LIBERIA	\$17,400.00	2 projects
NIGERIA	\$198,790.00	17 projects
TANZANIA	\$233,106.57	26 projects
ZAMBIA	\$65,369.90	5 projects
Total	\$659,727.00 USD	(\$930,215 CAD)

TOTAL CONTRIBUTIONS	\$1,763,534 USD
	(\$2,486,583 CAD)

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR
GENEROSITY!**

100th

WORLD MISSIONS DAY 2026

One in Christ,
united in mission

“I urge every Catholic parish in the world to take part in World Mission Sunday.”

Pope Leo XIV

Will you join us with your prayers and support for the missions this year?

Donate in your parish on Sunday, October 18
Or online: <https://www.missionsocieties.ca/donate-now/>



Email us: missions@missionsocieties.ca
Call us: 416 699 7077, 1 800 897 8865
Or mail us: 2219 Kennedy Road
Toronto, ON M1T 3G5
(use the enclosed envelope)



Fulton J. Sheen

The missionary behind the microphone

The late Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, the voice of Catholicism in America for nearly half a century, was one of the most influential evangelizers of the twentieth century. His beatification will be held in St. Louis, Missouri on September 24.

A gifted teacher, preacher, and communicator, Archbishop Sheen was known to captivate audiences through his Sunday radio program, The Catholic Hour, which reached an estimated four million listeners at the height of its popularity. In 1951, he brought his message to television with the weekly series Life Is Worth Living, attracting nearly 30 million viewers. In today's language, he would undoubtedly be described as an "influencer."

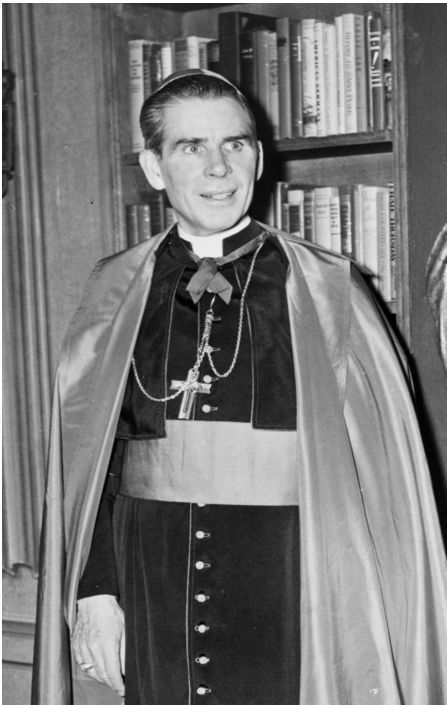


Photo by Fred Palumbo – Wikipedia – Public Domain

His charisma, eloquence, and unwavering commitment to evangelization led to his appointment as National Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies in the United States, a position he held from 1950 to 1966. During those sixteen years, Archbishop Sheen tirelessly encouraged Catholics to proclaim the Gospel ad gentes (to all nations) and to support the pastoral life of young Churches throughout Africa, Asia, Oceania, and Latin America.

One of his greatest accomplishments was transforming missionary fundraising in the United States. Through his compelling appeals, he inspired Catholics to see missionary

giving not merely as charitable support but as a spiritual responsibility shared by every believer. Donations increased dramatically, and before long, the Church in the United States was contributing nearly two-thirds of all worldwide funds raised for the missions.

The impact of this generosity was immense. During Archbishop Sheen's tenure, missionary programs supported by the Pontifical Mission Societies provided care to more than 54 million people annually, including children, the elderly, the sick, and those suffering from leprosy. At the same time, he modernized missionary communications, using the media of his day to educate, inspire, and mobilize millions of Catholics in support of the Church's missionary work.

Archbishop Sheen left behind an extraordinary legacy of missionary zeal, visionary leadership, and evangelization. His witness continues to inspire missionary disciples throughout the world.

As we reflect on his life and example, let us ask for his intercession in these times, when proclaiming the Gospel can be challenging in an increasingly secular world. May we renew our commitment to Christ's missionary mandate so that, in the words of Pope Leo XIV, "the whole world may recognize in Christ the light that saves."

The Pope's monthly prayer intentions



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

October: For mental health ministry.

Let us pray that the mental health ministry be established throughout the Church, helping to overcome the stigma and discrimination of persons with mental illnesses.

November: For the proper use of wealth.

Let us pray for the proper use of wealth, that not succumbing to the temptation of selfishness, it may always be put at the service the common good and solidarity of those who have less.

December: For single-parent families.

Let us pray for families experiencing the absence of a mother or father, that they may find support and accompaniment in the Church, and help and strength in the Faith during difficult times.



Photo: Unsplash / Dario Brönnimann

*Holy Father, make us one in Christ,
rooted in his love that unites and renews.*

*May all members of the Church
be united in mission,
docile to the Holy Spirit,
courageous in bearing witness to the Gospel,
proclaiming and daily embodying
your faithful love for all creatures.*

*Bless all missionary men and women,
support them in their efforts, and
watch over them in hope!*

*Mary, Queen of Missions,
accompany our work of evangelization
in every corner of the earth:
make us instruments of peace,
and grant that the whole world
may recognize in Christ
the light that saves.*

Amen.

Prayer by Pope Leo XIV from his message
for the 100th World Mission Day 2026

Forming Missionary Hearts

The Pontifical Mission Societies

The Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS) have been the official missionary arm of the Catholic Church since 1922, responsible for the work of evangelization and charitable works throughout the world. With a focus on forming missionary hearts and also supporting the poorest mission churches – all this is made possible thanks to generosity of its donors.

Commemorating the 100th Anniversary of World Mission Sunday provides an opportunity to highlight each of the four



societies that work together to make up the Pontifical Mission Societies as a whole.

At the heart of each of these societies was someone who simply saw a need in the world, tried to hear what God was guiding them towards, and then took action to help. The founders of Pontifical Mission Societies were featured earlier in this magazine issue; giving insight into what led to their creation.

Meanwhile, over 100 years later, the Pontifical Mission Societies continue their important work in a world increasingly marked by division, war and conflict among nations and peoples. During this critical time, PMS renders an invaluable service to the Church’s mission of proclaiming Christ, the Prince of Peace.

Pope Leo XIV took some time to acknowledge the important work of each of the four Mission Societies during an address to representatives of the Pontifical Mission Societies in June.



He stated that, thanks to the funds raised on World Mission Sunday, the *Society of the Propagation of the Faith* is able to provide necessary help to over 1,130 dioceses and other entities that depend on the Dicastery for Evangelization – to help them establish all the necessary infrastructures and to support their diverse missionary initiatives.

The Propagation of the Faith also supports the ongoing formation of priests and consecrated women and men through the administration of five colleges in Rome.

These leaders spend time learning and then return to their local churches as precious resources for the local community after completing their studies.

“These and many more missionary initiatives are possible thanks to the generosity of the faithful on World Mission Sunday.”

– Pope Leo

Reflecting on the other three societies, Pope Leo shared his reflections.

As the *Pontifical Missionary Union* celebrates the 110th anniversary this year of its founding, the pope encouraged all



to participate in its mission of fostering an ever more fervent missionary spirituality among all the baptized – and a deeper commitment to the Church’s universal mission of evangelization in this new missionary age.

Regarding the *Holy Childhood Association*, the Holy Father said that it carries out a particularly precious mission by bringing the light of faith and the consolation of Christian charity to children throughout the world, especially in regions afflicted by hatred and violence.

Finally, Pope Leo shared about the *Society of Saint Peter the Apostle* that it promotes and sustains the formation of indigenous clergy and consecrated religious in territories of first evangelization. In many places, without assistance, these seminarians and novices would lack the necessary means for their human, spiritual and pastoral formation.

Pope Leo concluded his remarks by giving his blessing to all

those who work in partnership with Pontifical Mission Societies – entrusting all to the intercession of Mary, the Mother of God and Queen of Missions and the intercession of all the missionary saints.

Join with Pontifical Mission Societies on this World Mission Sunday and throughout the whole year in spreading the missionary spirit in your communities and around the world.



Join us in supporting the men and women from mission territories who are Christ’s hands and feet in this critical time, bringing the Gospel message to the ends of the earth.

Pontifical Society of St. Peter the Apostle

1 800 897 8865 missionsocieties.ca



Photo by Julia Michelle / Unsplash

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.



And **follow us on Facebook!**
Connect and get inspired at facebook.com/PontificalMissionSocietiesToronto

Project report

Bright Futures: Strengthening children and families in rural communities of Zimbabwe

The Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS) have helped bring the light of Christ to the ends of the earth by accompanying local communities over the last 100 years. In this special issue, we take time to highlight the country of Zimbabwe and three projects in the Diocese of Mutare that, through the kind support of PMS's donors, have helped empower the local people.

Due to ongoing political and economic instability in Zimbabwe, poverty has become a daily reality for many families. El Niño-induced droughts have triggered deep food insecurity and rising rates of malnutrition, especially among vulnerable children.

Beyond food shortages, the continuing economic strain



St Barbara's Mission Hospital with solar panels installed on the roof.

DID YOU KNOW?

The population of Zimbabwe is approximately 17 million. Of the total population, Christians are 75% and Catholics are 7%.

Approx. 49% of the population live on less than \$3 a day. Students from poor families and located in rural areas have lower school completion rates than the national average.

Children under 5 have died mainly from birth disorders (41%), infectious diseases (39%) and malnutrition (9%). The leading cause of death for the whole population is HIV/AIDS.

Communities are currently grappling with an active Cholera outbreak.

means that many families struggle to pay basic school fees or medical bills – so the aid from Pontifical Mission Societies helps children and families in the Mutare diocese get through these trying times.

Zimbabwe is mainly Christian; most are Evangelical and Protestant but roughly 7% of the population is Catholic. Despite small numbers, the Catholic Church on the ground is mighty, providing a positive impact through its various initiatives – like bringing relief to the sick and educating children with limited means – helping to provide for their essential needs.

One of these projects is St. Barbara's Mission Hospital located in Rusape, in a very remote area some 90km north of Mutare. It was established in 1928 as a small clinic and upgraded to a rural hospital in 1988. The hospital offers health care services to nine villages, including three schools, and has a capacity of 65 beds.

High gas prices, along with frequent power cuts have made it difficult for the hospital to deliver its essential services due to unstable electricity. To address this, PMS worked alongside the local community to determine that solar panels would be the best approach to combat these challenges.

Through the generosity of PMS's donors, St. Barbara's Mission Hospital received a 12 kilowatt solar panel system – bringing reliable and environmentally-friendly energy to the hospital. The solar panels power services at the hospital like Maternal, Neonatal and Child care – therefore increasing the health and well-being of mothers and their children who are more susceptible to poverty.

The uninterrupted electricity (24/7) has resulted in no disruptions in patient care – and continuous refrigeration keeps the medicines and vaccines well preserved. The solar panel energy provides high quality lighting day and night, allowing for better patient monitoring.

The Pontifical Mission Societies are also bringing light to Zimbabwe through projects at two schools in the Diocese of Mutare – St. Bernard's Nursery School in Mamhondiani and St. Michael's Primary School in Nyanzou.

St. Bernard's Nursery School serves approx. 100 kindergarten-aged children and is actively growing. Dealing with overcrowding, the school did not have an adequate and



A team of masons laying brick walls together on the foundation slab of St. Bernard's School

safe space to educate all its students; in fact, a temporary structure was being used. PMS, with the help of the local community, embarked on the construction of a two-classroom block to address these concerns.

With Christ as the foundation and cornerstone, the building shelters the students from very high temperatures in the summer and heavy rain during rainy season. These classrooms also provide spaces for focused learning and increase the quality of education for students.

Meanwhile in Nyanzou, St. Michael's Primary School serves 450 children from grades 1 to 7 and is supported by a dedicated staff of 13 teachers.

Many of the students lack proper textbooks needed to fulfill their educational requirements based on the curriculum. To



PMS Director handing out newly delivered textbooks to pupils of St. Michael's Primary School.



Completed building with roof, plastered walls, doors, and windows in place

address this need, new books were provided – in subjects such as math, science, languages (English, Shona), religion, family and heritage studies – leading to a better education for the children.

These school projects in the Diocese of Mutare are building up the youth – the next generation – and bringing Christ's light to this region, helping them to build bright futures ahead.

Pope Leo XIV, in his message for World Mission Sunday 2026 encourages us to strive for unity. Let's remember that we are all connected and making a difference – PMS's donors, staff members, the local Church partners, and beneficiaries are "one in Christ, united in mission" through projects like these in Zimbabwe.

Photos credit of PMS Zimbabwe.



Pupils and teachers display their new textbooks and colouring books, with remaining stock still stacked on the table.

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me."

Matthew 19:14

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