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Mission Makes the Church

1916 – October 31 – 2016
Pontifical Missionary Union

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Abbreviations

CEP	Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples
CIAM	International Center for Mission and Formation
PMS	Pontifical Mission Societies
PMU	Pontifical Missionary Union
POPF	Pontifical Mission Society of the Propagation of Faith
POSI	Pontifical Mission Society of the Holy Childhood
POSPA	Pontifical Mission Society of Saint Peter Apostle

Foreword

FABRIZIO MERONI*

The centennial anniversary of the Foundation of the Pontifical Missionary Union (PUM) on October 31, 1916 gives us the opportunity to pause and reflect on the nature, mission and role of this Pontifical Institution and its service to the Universal Church in her missionary identity. Renewal, rethinking and reform are required if we desire to be faithful to the charismatic original insights of the founders, Pope Benedict XV and Blessed Paolo Manna, a missionary priest of the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions (PIME). Manna was born in Avellino on January 16, 1872 and died in Naples on September 15, 1952.

Pope Francis, addressing the members of the Annual General Assembly of the four Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS) gathered in Rome (from May 30 to June 4, 2016), strongly reaffirmed the need for a real conversion and pastoral discernment for the sake of a radical reform of the PMS rooted in the mystical passion and heartfelt ardor of saints and martyrs. Dealing exclusively with bureaucracy, administration and material aid reduces the PMS's work to a mere administration of the existing reality and to a fruitless repetition of the already known. By taking a provocative line (mystical passion and heartfelt ardor), Pope Francis issues a subtle warning that sterile administration and useless bureaucracy can wear down the true meaning of the PMS. "Let us be permanently in a state of mission", is Pope Francis' strong challenge for us in this centennial celebration.

What we offer in the chapters of this book, marking this celebration, is our way to take into serious consideration the papal provocation. Each author attempts to reflect upon this urgency so that the Vatican II renewal can become truly effective for the Church through her missionary identity. The collection of these different approaches is

* Secretary General of the Pontifical Missionary Union (PMU), December 1, 2015.

deeply intertwined by a common understanding that mission unfolds the essence of the Church–World relationship inside God’s loving plan to save all. Being personally responsible for the contents of each chapter, each essayist gives his or her contribution with thought–provoking insights and cultural reflections for the mission of the Church.

In chapter one, Agnes de Dreuzy describes the historical background within which Pope Benedict XV created the Missionary Union of the Clergy. During his short but decisive pontificate, Pope Benedict never ceased calling for acknowledgement of the Church’s transnationality and of a universal missionary spirit. Such a spirit would galvanize the Church to spread the Gospel worldwide and thus engender a spirit of unity with other Christians. Both Pope Benedict and Fr. Paolo Manna envisioned this renewed universal missionary spirit as “an essential condition for the total triumph of the gospel in the world.” Their common insight endowed the Missionary Union of the Clergy with the privilege of undertaking this momentous task.

In chapter two, Gianni Colzani deals with the provocative affirmation that Mission makes the Church. His essay explores the theological foundation of the Church in her Mission and the pastoral implications for all churches of the precedence and priority of the Mission over the Church. Proclaiming the Gospel and dialogue with World Religions and Cultures represent the core of the Church’s Mission. The Church as such is made out of her missionary activity in the Spirit of the Risen Christ. Proclaiming the Gospel lays down the foundation for a Church which is always missionary in everything she loves, preaches, celebrates, does and hopes for. Missionary by nature, the Church always begins and ends by evangelizing herself. The Church is servant of the mission. Therefore, the mission is not the instrument, but the point of departure and the goal of all her pastoral and missionary endeavors.

In chapter three, Leo D. Lefebure reflects on World Religions, Mission and Dialogue shaping the nature and activity of the Church. Vatican II with its ecclesiological renewal, its positive evaluation of Other Religions, and its openness to new interreligious and cultural challenges for the contemporary Church, initiated an ongoing missionary work that looks for deep conversion of the Church as such. Improved relations with the World, including Other Religions, offer to the Church a providential opportunity for a renewed mutual un-

derstanding and a growing communion toward common goals and eschatological fullness.

In chapter four, Ambrogio Bongiovanni highlights the significant role of education for the culture of dialogue. Dialogue represents one of the greatest changes in the Catholic Church in terms of language and approach expressed by the Vatican II and built on the active and living experience of the faith of Christians and their communities (lay and religious) in the world, in the midst of people of different religions and creeds. The “culture of dialogue” needs to be nurtured by an appropriate and systematic education grounded on the existential, relational and hermeneutical approach for a better understanding of the “religiously other.” Here, education is not a mere fact-finding process but an actual transformative process. That requires a comprehensive vision of the reality where the Paschal Mystery, through the action of the Holy Spirit, assumes a universal meaning (*Gaudium et Spes*, 22).

Finally, in the last chapter, Fabrizio Meroni develops a theological reflection on the universality of God’s loving will that all should be saved. In light of Vatican II, the universal salvation of Jesus Christ shapes, from her very foundations, the Church as Mission entrusted for the entire World. The whole Church is meant for the whole World, no one excluded. This soteriological universality gives anthropological insights to better understand the Divine Missions, their Church and the world. The divine desire that all may be saved, the unity of all humankind in Jesus Christ and the universal sacramentality of his Church demonstrate how love, and only love, can lead the way to eternal salvation for all. Both Christians, always in need of conversion, and all humanity, encounter in love and in the soteriological reality of divine mercy, the concrete availability of life and life in abundance.

Rome, October 31, 2016

Address of His Holiness Pope Francis

To Participants in the Plenary Assembly
of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples

Cardinals, Dear Brother Bishops and Priests, Dear Brothers and Sisters, I welcome you on the occasion of your Plenary Assembly, in which you focused on the *Missio ad Gentes*, in addition to offering precious indications for the future. As Cardinal Filoni said, I have just returned from my first Apostolic Journey in Africa, where I saw firsthand the spiritual and pastoral dynamism of so many young Churches of that continent, as well as the serious difficulties in which a large part of the population lives. I was able to see that, where there are needs, the presence of the Church is almost always there, ready to heal the wounds of the neediest, in whom she recognizes the wounded and crucified body of the Lord Jesus. How many works of charity and of human promotion! How many anonymous Good Samaritans work every day in the missions!

An evangelizer by nature, the Church always begins by evangelizing herself. A disciple of the Lord Jesus, she listens to his Word, from which she draws the reasons for the hope that does not disappoint, because it is founded on the grace of the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom 5:5). Only in this way is she able to preserve her freshness and apostolic impetus. The Conciliar Decree *Ad Gentes* and the Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, from which your plenary drew inspiration, state that “it is from the mission of the Son and from the mission of the Holy Spirit that [the Church] draws her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father” (*Ad Gentes*, n. 2). The mission does not respond, in the first place, to human initiatives; the principal agent is the Holy Spirit, this project is his (cf. *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 21). The Church is servant of the mission. It is not the Church that makes the mission, but the mission that makes the Church. Therefore, the mission is not the instrument, but the point of departure and the goal.

In recent months, your Dicastery has carried out an inquiry on the vitality of the young Churches, to understand how to render the work of the *Missio ad Gentes* more effective, also considering the ambiguity to which the experience of faith is sometimes exposed today. The secularized world, in fact, even when it is receptive to the Gospel values of love, justice, peace and sobriety, does not show the same willingness to the person of Jesus: it neither regards him as Messiah nor as Son of God. At most it considers him an enlightened man. Therefore, it separates the message from the Messenger and the gift from the Donor. In this situation of detachment, the *Missio ad Gentes* acts as engine and horizon of the faith. It is vital at the present moment for the Church “to go forth and preach the Gospel to all; to all places, on all occasions, without hesitation, reluctance or fear” (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 23). In fact, the mission is a force capable of transforming the interior of the Church even before the life of peoples and cultures. Therefore, every parish should make its own the style of the *Missio ad Gentes*. In this way, the Holy Spirit will transform habitual faithful into disciples, dissatisfied disciples into missionaries, drawing them out of fears and closures and propelling them in every direction, to the ends of the earth (cf. Acts 1:8). May the kerygmatic approach to the faith, so familiar among the young Churches, also find space among those of ancient tradition.

Paul and Barnabas did not have a missionary dicastery behind them. Yet, they proclaimed the Word, gave life to several communities and shed their blood for the Gospel. Over time grew complexities and the need for a special connection between the Churches of recent foundation and the universal Church. Therefore, four centuries ago, Pope Gregory XV instituted the Congregation Propaganda Fide, which since 1967 has assumed the name Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. It is evident that in this phase of history «mere administration [of the existing reality] can no longer be enough. Throughout the world let us be “permanently in a state of mission”» (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 25): it is a paradigm. St John Paul II specified the modality of it, affirming: “All renewal in the Church must have mission as its goal if it is not to fall prey to a kind of ecclesial introversion” (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Oceania*, n. 19). “Going” is inherent in Baptism, and its boundaries are those of the world. Therefore, continue to commit yourselves so that the spirit

of the *Missio ad Gentes* may animate the path of the Church, and that she may always be able to hear the cry of the poor and of those who are distant, to encounter all and to proclaim the joy of the Gospel.

I thank you for your work of missionary enthusiasm and cooperation, with which you remember all the Churches that, if constrained within their own horizons, run the danger of becoming atrophied and of dying out. The Church lives and grows by “going forth”, taking the initiative and becoming neighbour. Therefore, you must encourage the communities to be generous even in moments of vocational crises. “For missionary activity renews the Church, revitalizes the faith and Christian identity, and offers fresh enthusiasm and new incentive” (*Redemptoris Missio*, n. 2).

The dawn of a new day is already visible in many areas of the *Missio ad Gentes*, as demonstrated by the fact that the young Churches are able to give, not only receive. The first fruits are their willingness to give their priests to sister Churches of the same nation, of the same continent, or to serve needy Churches in other areas of the world. Cooperation is no longer only along the north–south axis. There is also an inverse movement of restitution of the good received from the first missionaries. These are also signs of an attained maturity.

Brothers and sisters, let us pray and work so that the Church may be ever more in keeping with the model of the Acts of the Apostles. Let us allow ourselves to be urged on by the strength of the Gospel and of the Holy Spirit; let us go forth from our enclosures, let us emigrate from the territories in which we are sometimes tempted to enclose ourselves. Thus, we will be able to walk and sow further, a step beyond. May Mary Most Holy, Mother of God, St Francis Xavier, today, and St Thérèse of the Child Jesus, Patrons of the Missions, illumine our steps in the service of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus. I accompany you with my blessing and, please, I ask you to pray for me. Thank you.

Rome, December 3, 2015

Address of His Holiness Pope Francis

To Participants in the Assembly of the Pontifical Mission Societies

Your Eminence, Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood, Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I welcome all of you, National Directors of the Pontifical Mission Societies and co-workers of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. I thank Cardinal Fernando Filoni for the words he addressed to me, and all of you for your valuable service to the Church's mission to bring the Gospel "to the whole creation" (Mk 16:15).

This year our meeting is taking place on the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Pontifical Missionary Union (PMU). The work was inspired by Blessed Paolo Manna, a missionary priest of the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions [PIME]. Promoted by St. Guido Maria Conforti, it was approved by Pope Benedict XV on 31 October 1916; and 40 years later the Venerable Pius XII raised it to the status of "Pontifical". Through the intuition of Blessed Paolo Manna and the mediation of the Apostolic See, the Holy Spirit has led the Church to have a greater awareness of her missionary nature that was brought to maturity by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council.

Blessed Paolo Manna understood very well that to form and educate people for the mystery of the Church and her intrinsic missionary vocation is an objective that concerns the entire holy People of God, in the different states of life and ministries. "Concerning the tasks facing the Missionary Union, some of them are of a cultural nature and others are of a spiritual nature, still others are practical and of an organizational nature. The Missionary Union has the duty to enlighten, inflame and work to organize priests and through them the faithful in order to prepare them for the missions". These were the words of the Founder of the Pontifical Missionary Union, expressed in a historic speech at the second International Congress of the Mission Society in

1936. However, forming bishops and priests for the mission did not mean reducing the Pontifical Missionary Union to a simple clerical reality, but to support the hierarchy in its service to the missionary outreach of the Church, inherent to everyone: the faithful and their pastors, married people and consecrated virgins, the universal Church and particular Churches. By implementing this service with their own charity, Pastors maintain the Church always and everywhere in a state of mission, which is always ultimately the work of God, in which all believers participate by virtue of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist.

Dear National Directors of the Pontifical Mission Societies, the mission builds up the Church and keeps her faithful to the saving will of God. For this reason, while it is important that you worry about the collection and allocation of the funds that you diligently administer in favour of the many churches and many needy Christians, a service for which I thank you, I urge you not to limit yourself to this aspect alone. We need “mystique”. We need to grow in evangelizing passion. I am afraid — let me be frank — that your work is very organizational, perfectly organizational, but lacks passion. This can even make it an NGO, but you are not an NGO! Without passion your Union is not needed; without “mystique” it is not useful. And if we have to sacrifice something, let us sacrifice the organization, let us move forward with the mystique of the Saints. Today, your missionary Union needs this: the mystique of the Saints and Martyrs. And this generous work of ongoing formation for the mission is what you must undertake; which is not just an intellectual course, but intrinsic to this wave of missionary passion, of the martyrs’ witness.

The recently founded Churches — which you help with ongoing missionary formation — can transmit to the older established Churches, which are sometimes burdened by their history and a bit tired, the ardour of a young faith and the witness of Christian hope, sustained by the admirable courage of martyrdom. I encourage you to serve the Churches with great love, the Churches which, thanks to the martyrs, witness to us how the Gospel makes us participants in the life of God, and do so through attraction not proselytism.

In this Holy Year of Mercy, the missionary zeal that consumed Blessed Paolo Manna, and from which the Pontifical Missionary Union sprang, still continues today to kindle, excite, renew, rethink and

reform the service that this Mission Society is called to offer to the whole Church. Your Union must not be the same next year: it has to change in this direction, it must be reshaped by this missionary passion. While we thank the Lord for your one hundred years, I hope that the passion for God and for the mission of the Church will lead the Pontifical Missionary Union to also rethink — in docility to the Holy Spirit — in the perspective of an appropriate reform of its methods, an appropriate reform: namely conversion and reform, so as to implement authentic renewal for the good of ongoing formation for the mission of all the Churches. With gratitude, we entrust your service to the Virgin Mary, Queen of the Missions, and to the Sts. Peter and Paul, St. Guido Maria Conforti and Blessed Paolo Manna. I cordially bless you and ask you please to pray for me, that I may not drift into “blissful stillness”; that I too may have missionary zeal to move forward.

Let us now pray the *Angelus* together.

Rome, June 4, 2016

