

The Sower

A Newsletter of the Pontifical Mission Societies in New Zealand
MISSIONZ & MISSIO AOTEAROA

Issue 3 - March 2026

missionz
missio
TO GIVE A FUTURE WITH HOPE *aotearoa*
WWW.MISSIO.NZ

BOTH/AND - The Catholic Approach

My dear friends of the Pontifical Mission Societies,

Tena koutou, Salve, and greetings! As National Director, one of my main tasks is to instill a missionary heart in the People of Aotearoa New Zealand so that as a people, and as individuals, they may see the need to support the Pope's missionary endeavours via the Pontifical Mission Societies. The support needed is both financial and in prayers, and it starts with having a missionary outlook. The missionary call to *"Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you"* (Matt 28:19) is given to all the baptised.

When it comes to financial support, it is so easy to think first of many other worthy causes 'at home'. I could think of my own Diocese of Christchurch embarking on its massive fund-raising project to re-build our Cathedral and churches lost in the earthquake. I could think of the many who are struggling under the so called *"cost of living crisis"*. With all these in mind, the call to support the Pontifical Mission may be drowned out. Conscious of this, when I commenced with my role, I prayed for a story to tell as part of my promotional message. Providence intervened, and a compelling story fell on my lap while I was attending my first Asia-Oceania meeting in Vietnam. I now tell the story of the *"Vietnamese Pentecost"*, a term I coined to show the vibrancy of the Catholicism in that country where, despite a few centuries of persecution, the Catholic Church is bursting at the seams. New Zealand benefitted from it. In our time, all Dioceses in New Zealand have priests from Vietnam, and practically half the students in our seminary are Vietnamese. If we follow the breadcrumbs, we would see that Catholicism in Vietnam would not be what it is today had it not been for the visions of its first Missionary bishops. More importantly, had it not been for organisations that are equivalent to the present PMS, they would not have had the funding to go to Vietnam. Furthermore, they would not have had the ability to realise their vision, including sending their first local priestly vocations to receive formation at the Asian Regional Seminary, promoting lay leadership, establishing schools, and so on.

It is a story that highlights our need to embrace the Catholic **"both/and"** approach, which is a foundational theological principle. Bishop Robert Barron, famed for the *"Catholicism"* series of videos, speaks of the **"both/and"** principle as the *"union of contraries,"* which embraces

Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you.
(Matt 28:19)

seemingly opposing, yet complementary, truths rather than choosing between them. It promotes a holistic and harmonious worldview that is rooted in the Incarnation of Our Lord (Christ is BOTH God, AND a man). The principle integrates Catholic elements like **"Sacred Scriptures and Living Tradition"**, **"faith and reason"**, and **"grace and nature"**. We, as a people and as a Church, will be the poorer for it if our outlook in supporting charities if focused only at the parochial is at the expense of the universal. By all means, we must support the local needs (the 'parochial' - home, parish and Diocese), but we must also do the **both/and**, and support the needs of the wider Church (the 'universal')! After all, the word Catholic comes from the word *"catholic"* which means *"universal"*. The name of the Church, **"Catholic"** (with a capital C) is itself derived from the Greek adjective *katholikos* (καθολικός), meaning "universal," "worldwide," or "all-inclusive". In turn, it is derived from the Greek phrase, *kath' holou* (καθ' ὅλου), which translates to "on the whole" or "according to the whole," combining *kata* ("about" or "according to") and *holos* ("whole"). The word *"catholic"* was used by the early Christians to describe the entire body of believers, for example, in the Nicene Creed of 325AD where we state we are *"one holy, catholic, and apostolic church"*.

I thank God that even without my promotional talks, many already do the **'both/and'**, and they support both the local needs and also the need of the Pontifical Mission Societies. I am quite touched by those who do so with regular donations (weekly, monthly, yearly etc), and those who leave a bequest. I am currently working on inviting people to consider making major donations for investments, from which their dividends are used to generate a more stable 'income' for the charity. Please consider joining them in this most important of tasks to take the Good News to the ends of the earth, and making disciples of all the nations.

Fr Michael Pui
National Director





The theme: chosen by Pope Francis for **Mission Sunday 2024**. The Gospel calls everyone to the Divine Banquet.

Our Global Network

Faith knows no borders.

It calls us to work together as nations, cultures and communities, marked by joy, fraternity and sharing.

Pope Francis was called to Eternal life in April 2025. The year prior to his death, he chose for Mission Sunday 2024, the theme 'Go and invite everyone to the banquet'. It was a timely reminder of the universal call to welcome all people into the shared mission of faith, hope, love, and service.

The call is rooted in the spirit of solidarity with those in need, Catholic or otherwise, especially in countries less wealthy than developed ones.

As we enter the pontificate of Pope Leo XIV, who was himself a missionary priest, we carry forward the legacy of Pope Francis. We continue to walk together and co-create a future where faith, hope, and love transcend borders, and every community is invited to the banquet.

GO AND INVITE EVERYONE
to the banquet

Funds* Distributed (in US\$) distributed among the 5 Continents in 2024

From PMS website: <https://www.ppoomm.va/en.html>

AMERICA	AFRICA	EUROPE	ASIA	OCEANIA
Holy Childhood US\$273,100.00	Holy Childhood US\$10,612,430.00	Holy Childhood US\$79,100.00	Holy Childhood US\$5,535,230.00	Holy Childhood US\$215,900.00
Propagation of Faith US\$2,134,800.00	Propagation of Faith US\$23,338,872.50	Propagation of Faith -	Propagation of Faith US\$16,405,085.00	Propagation of Faith US\$1,911,150.00
St Peter the Apostle US\$129,680.00	St Peter the Apostle US\$12,391,768.00	St Peter the Apostle US\$6,562.05	St Peter the Apostle US\$3,564,302.50	St Peter the Apostle US\$108,300.00



130 Countries in 5 Continents working together to support:

- + 2,685 Projects in mission territories for the education and protection of children
- + 6,575 Novices in the formation courses
- + 76,284 Minor and Major Seminarians
- + 751 New churches in 5 Continents



The figures are the combined total of both Ordinary and Extraordinary Subsidies

- **Ordinary:** provides for essential, ongoing, and long-term support for the daily, operational needs of "young" mission dioceses, parishes, and religious communities
- **Extraordinary:** provides for one-off, targeted projects or urgent needs. E.g the construction/ repair of churches, schools, seminaries, or specific pastoral, educational, or health programmes.
- Excludes Million more dollars from European and Australian National PMS Offices which provide funds directly to support many other projects

The theme: chosen for **Mission Sunday 2025**, in the Jubilee Year of Hope. The Gospel calls everyone to sow the message of hope.

MISSIONARIES OF HOPE

among all peoples



Pope Leo was elected in the Jubilee Year of Hope 2025. Before he took over the Chair of St Peter, his predecessor, Pope Francis, had already chosen the theme for Mission Sunday 2025; **‘Missionaries of Hope among all peoples’**. It was a providential choice, for the new Pope had been a missionary priest, sowing the message of hope in missionary territories.



The Workings of the Universal Solidarity Funds

One for all, all for One Global Family

The funds raised by each ‘National Direction’ or country becomes part of the ‘Universal Solidarity Fund’, which symbolises communion and cooperation between all the local Churches.

When the projects are approved for funding, each National Direction receives instructions to forward the funds directly to the Pope’s **Nuncio** (i.e. the Pope’s local ambassador) of the particular country for the realization of the projects. This ensures traceability and accountability.

Aotearoa New Zealand’s Contribution to the Universal Solidarity Fund

New Zealand’s contribution is raised mainly from five sources:

- + **Mission Sunday** (of which 100% go to support projects of the PMS Propagation of Faith)
- + **Various appeals** (to raise funds for the other PMS)
- + **Regular donations**
- + **Bequests** and legacies and
- + **Dividends** from investments (major donations and bequests invested at the request of the donors).

Please consider leaving a bequest by contacting the National Director

+++++

New Zealand’s contribution towards the Pope’s Universal Solidarity Funds for the last two years included:

2024 - \$378,152.14, supporting projects in

- + **PMS Propagation of Faith:** Papua New Guinea
- + **PMS Holy Childhood:** Kenya and India
- + **PMS St Peter the Apostle:** Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, Tanzania, Bolivia, Bangladesh, Phillipines, Indonesia and Sri Lanka.

2025 - \$473,712.84*, supporting projects in

- + **PMS Propagation of Faith:** Cambodia and Papua New Guinea
- + **PMS Holy Childhood:** Papua New Guinea
- + **PMS St Peter the Apostle:** Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Papua New Guinea

* with minor adjustments made due to some funds arriving late the year before



The Church in New Zealand

“Whakapapa”, in Māori, refers to genealogy, lineage, and the layering of generations, representing the core framework that connects individuals to their ancestors, land, and all living things. It acts as an oral history that maps relationships, organizing knowledge, identity, and kinship (whānau, hapū, iwi) from the spiritual world to the present day. Through this lens, we see the richness of our country’s connections with the Mission of the Church.

By Barbara Te Miha

Artwork by Damien Walker, commissioned by the NZ Bishops to celebrate the rededication of Aotearoa New Zealand to Mary, Mother of God, Assumed into Heaven

The whakapapa of the Catholic Church in Aotearoa New Zealand leads us to a direct line to the city of Lyons in France to which we owe a special debt. This city provides us with a spiritual link to Our Lady herself through the many priests and religious who dedicated themselves and their work to her at her shrine at Fourviere.

There are two rivers that flow into Lyons that join and become the Rhone which flows south to the Mediterranean Sea. Imperial Rome used this route to send their armies further afield to conquer more lands. As Lyons grew in importance, traders from Asia Minor began following the armies. Many of these traders were Christians and to these, St Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, sent Bishop Pothinus who began preaching the Gospel to the people. St Polycarp had been a disciple of St John who stood with Mary beneath the Cross and looked after her until her death. That love of Mary, acquired from Polycarp who learnt it from St John, was relayed by Pothinus to the populace of Lyons.

These were dangerous times for Christians and in the year 177AD, Bishop Pothinus with several of his priests and people were put to death. The next Bishop, Irenaeus, was also martyred. Their deaths sowed the seeds of a strong Christian community and as the influence of Lyons waned with the changes in Imperial Rome, the community who had until then, enjoyed material wealth, now sought a greater wealth in Faith.

Lyons has remained a most Catholic city and from it has emerged many religious leaders; the Marist Fathers, Marist Brothers, Sisters of the Missions, Marist Sisters, Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary and Mother Aubert.

In Lyons one of the chief shrines is that of Our Lady of Fourviere which sits on the hilltop overlooking the valley of the Rhone. Pre-Christianity it was a sacred pagan temple topped with a statue of Mercury. This temple was consecrated to Christian use and the statue of Mercury replaced with one of Our Lady. Here in the Christchurch Diocese we have a link again to Lyons through the Beatitude Community in Leithfield who have a replica of the golden statue of Mary of Fourviere in their grounds.

The church at Fourviere was destroyed twice with the present church dedicated again to Mary in 1805. It will always be associated with Fr Jean-Claude Colin and the beginnings of the Society of Mary. It was here Bishop Pompallier came with other missionaries on the eve of their departure to Oceania where they dedicated their mission to Our Lady of Fourviere. In Lyons the bishop teased a young girl to “eat plenty of porridge” and grow strong enough to be a missionary in Aotearoa New Zealand. That small girl grew to become Mother Aubert, founder of the Sisters of Compassion in Hiruharama, Jerusalem, up the Whanganui River.

When Bishop Pompallier arrived in the South Pacific, his first act was to dedicate the whole territory to Our Lady under the title of her Immaculate Conception. Then, upon arrival in Aotearoa New Zealand with the Sisters of Mercy, he, in turn, dedicated the country as one of the Mission Stations, under the title of the Assumption (*Our Lady of the Assumption*).

But it was a woman from Lyons who never came here who, through her faith and work, supplied the missions with the money and supplies they needed to further the Word of God. Her name was (Blessed*) Pauline Jaricot who in her lifetime was the founder of the **Society of the Propagation of the Faith** and later of the **Pontifical Mission Societies** now known as **Missio**. Pauline's lifework was spent raising awareness of the poor and the unwanted with a deep commitment to mission and evangelisation. Fr Jean-Claude Colin, Bishop Pompallier and Suzanne Aubert knew her very well. Another priest, Bishop Charles de Forbin-Janson, was also a friend whose concerns mirrored those of Pauline. He was the founder of the Holy Childhood, an association that brought children an awareness through prayer and education, of the suffering of other youngsters around the world. Children helping Children was born. Through MissioNZ Pauline's and Bishop Charles' foundations are becoming well known in our schools and colleges. It is heartening to see the aroha and manaakitanga that our students are showing to others around our troubled world. And all this goodness stemming from people with a great love of God and Mary in the city of Lyons.



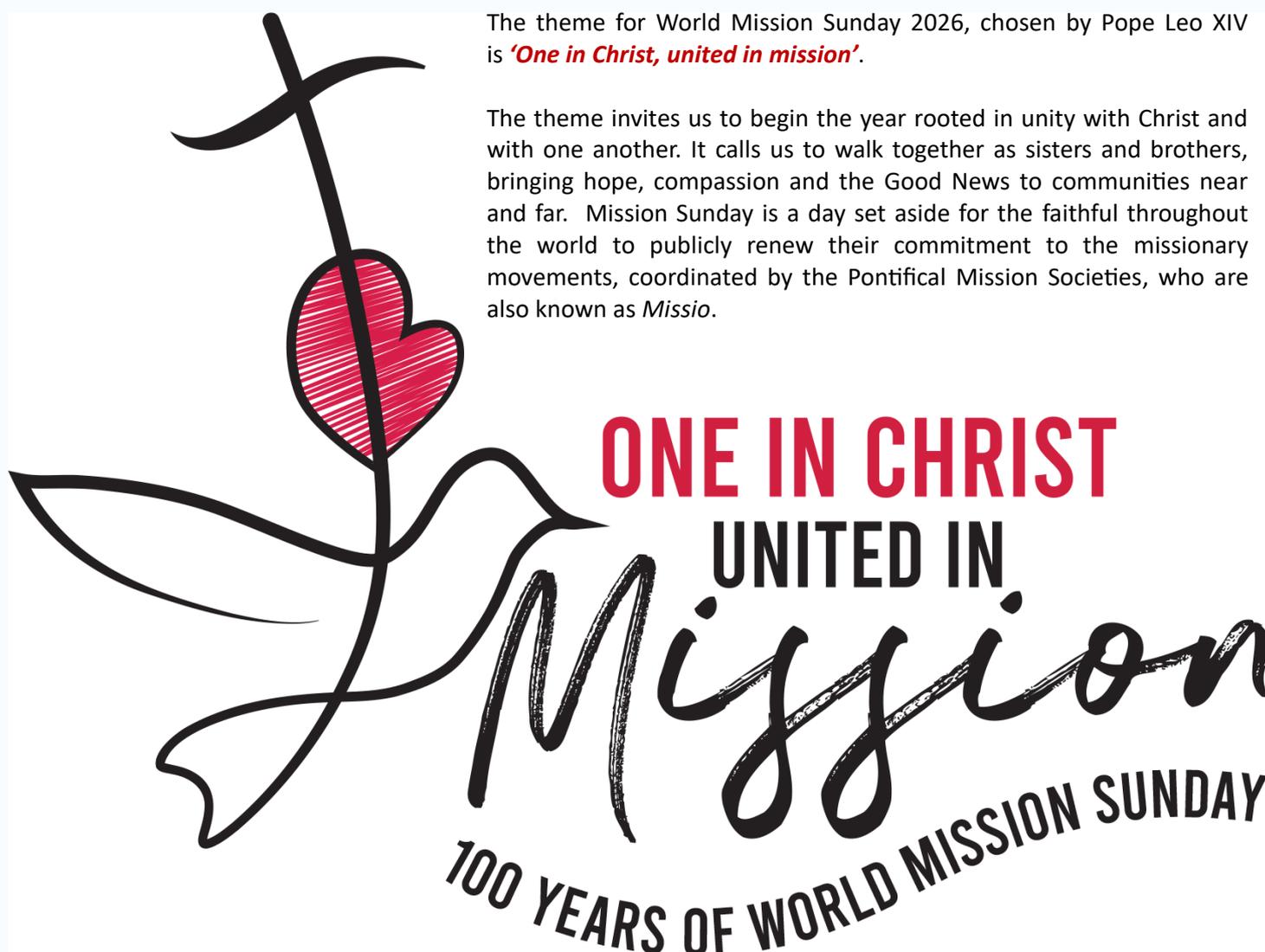
Blessed Pauline Jaricot

100 Years of Mission Sunday

2026 marks the beginning of a landmark year for the Universal Church. This special year we celebrate 100 years since World Mission Sunday was established by Pope Pius XI, honouring a century of prayer, generosity and shared mission.

The theme for World Mission Sunday 2026, chosen by Pope Leo XIV is *'One in Christ, united in mission'*.

The theme invites us to begin the year rooted in unity with Christ and with one another. It calls us to walk together as sisters and brothers, bringing hope, compassion and the Good News to communities near and far. Mission Sunday is a day set aside for the faithful throughout the world to publicly renew their commitment to the missionary movements, coordinated by the Pontifical Mission Societies, who are also known as *Missio*.



Missio is a Latin noun meaning "a sending," "dispatching," or "the act of sending". Derived from *mittere* ("to send"), it refers to being sent on a specific task, purpose, or journey, often with connotations of a calling or mission.

As this celebration begins, **MissioNZ & Missio Aotearoa** invite communities across New Zealand to join in with open hearts, united in faith and mission, as we journey together towards **World Mission Month** and

Mission Sunday on 18 October 2026.

OCTOBER IS MISSION MONTH

In 2019, when the late Pope Francis designated October 2019 as an "Extraordinary Missionary Month" to mark the 100th anniversary of Pope Benedict XV's apostolic letter *Maximum Illud*. The initiative "aimed to reawaken awareness of the Church's missionary dimension, urging all Christians to share the Gospel with renewed enthusiasm". We can continue to regard October as MISSION MONTH. It is especially poignant that the 1 October is the feast day of the Patroness Saint of the Mission, Saint Therese of Lisieux.

The other patron saint of the Mission is St Francis Xavier, Feast Day 3 December.





Children Helping Children

The Pontifical Mission Society (PMS) of the Holy Childhood/Infant, or the Holy Childhood Association, helps to encourage children to follow the footsteps of Jesus who became an infant, to reveal the love of God.

The motto of the Association says best what it is about;

**Children praying for Children,
Children evangelizing Children,
Children helping Children worldwide.**

On 3 May, 1922, mindful of the Society's great contribution to the missions for nearly eighty years, Pope Pius XI made it his own and recognized it as *Pontifical*. On 4 December 4, 1950, Pope Pius XII created the **World Day of the Holy Childhood**, or **World Mission Day for children**, and declared the day of the **Epiphany** as the date for its celebration, but he left it to each nation to freely adapt the date to local needs.

In NZ, the day has largely not caught on, for many reasons, including the Epiphany being the time of school holidays. MissionNZ & Missio Aotearoa have in the past used the time leading up to Christmas and the Epiphany as an occasion to do a mini appeal along the lines of 'Children Helping Children'.

Pope Leo XIV celebrated his first Epiphany as a Pope on 6 January this year. After reciting the Angelus prayer from the central loggia of St. Peter's Basilica he reminded everyone that it was also the liturgical feast on which "**Children's Missionary Day**" is celebrated. He said;

“ I greet and thank all the children and young people who, in many parts of the world, pray for missionaries and are committed to helping their less fortunate peers. Thank you, dear friends!



Elementary Education in the Diocese of Wabag, Papua New

New Zealand Schools Helping Children

Many Catholic Schools have not lost the Missionary Spirit, and their activities help to raise funds, awareness and reach out to other poorer brothers and sisters.

These are some of the events that happened around the country, throughout the year, and on Mission Month.



Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Epsom on the MISSION DAY



St Bernadette's Hornby, Fr Michael's visit and thanking Jess Jackman and her students



Fr Michael seeking support from the students at Pompallier School, Kaitia

St Joseph's Timaru, Toy and Book Fair for the Mission





ONE IN CHRIST
UNITED IN
Mission
100 YEARS OF WORLD MISSION SUNDAY

Reaching Out

Fr Michael Pui, National Director for NZ, and Msgr Estaban Lo have been working together on a project to help students in a school in the Philippines.

New Zealand's First venture into Direct Community outreach

Our poorer brothers and sisters in Mission Territories apply to the PMS for support. Often, because of the demands on the Solidarity Fund, some projects are not fully funded. One such need is the *Scholarship Programme* in the St Therese Learning School-Old Sagay (*Sagay City, Diocese of San Carlos*), in the Philippines. The programme provides financial support for underprivileged children of the two coastal-barangays of the Parish. These two communities have a total population of 20,951 (Census, 2020), and the age group with the highest population is 5-9 years old. Twenty percent of them (24%) belong to families with insufficient income to sustain their basic needs for food and education. The aim is to give poor and talented children, irrespective of their religious background, a chance to have an education at the public elementary schools within the parish community. The long term hope is that the children will grow up to make a positive change in their community.

In collaboration with the Parish of St James the Greater, Fr Michael Pui has made a pledge to run a Special Appeal* to raise funds towards the programme. Although the aim is to support 4 Elementary schools, Fr Michael had made a special commitment towards *one*, the St Therese Learning School, Old Sagay. In March 2026 he made a special visit to the school and parish, so that when he visits our NZ schools, he may provide a more tangible connection between them and our brothers and sisters who are struggling. The hope is the it will help New Zealand students re-discover the missionary outlook that were once in all our schools, that is, the spirit of "Children helping Children".



In the next few months, Fr Michael will be approaching schools and colleges. If you could support this initiative please: **Scan the QR code, or contact the Office directly with credit card details, or simply Direct Debit:**

Account Name: Missio Benevolent Society

06-0411-0021447-00 *(Note: This account is different from the ones advertised for Mission Sunday)*

For Reference, please provide your name/organization, and the word "Sagay", and communicate to us if you need a tax-receipt, or an acknowledgment only.

* Donations may go towards funding similar projects supported and approved by the PMS

Fr Michael's Visit to the St Therese Learning School

Old Sagay, Diocese of San Carlos, Island of Negros, Philippines.

Background

The school is located on Negros Island, a place also known as the "Sugar Bowl of the Philippines" as it produces over half of the country's sugar. The industry defines the island's economy, culture, and landscape, and also its recent history. In the mid-1980s, the "Negros famine" took place; caused by a sudden crash in international sugar prices at a time of the country's political upheaval. It led to over 190,000 sugar workers losing their livelihood in 1984. By 1985, a survey by the National Nutrition Council of the Philippines estimated that about 350,000 children – 40 percent of Negros Occidental residents under the age of 14 – were suffering from malnutrition. Alerted about the crisis by shocking media coverage, a multi-sectoral effort was launched to mitigate the worst effects of the famine. International relief agencies, local non-governmental organizations, and the Catholic Church conducted feeding programmes to help.

Today, sugar farmers and farm workers are among the poorest, often suffering from low wages, lack of benefits, and "tiempos muertos" (dead season), when there is no work between planting and milling



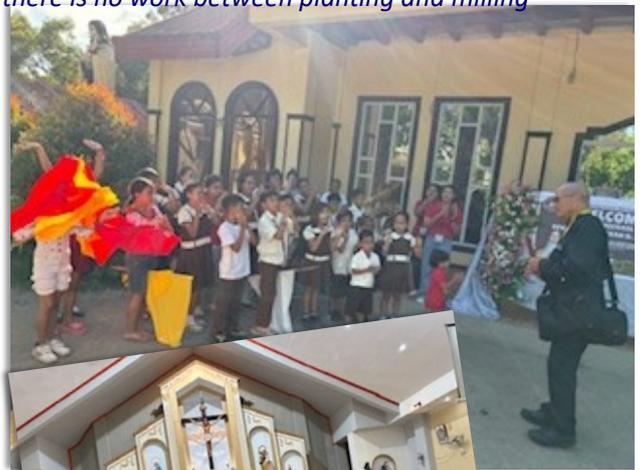
The Opportunity to Connect

In March 2026, Fr Michael was at a Intercontinental (Asia-Oceania) meeting of National Directors in Manila, representing both New Zealand and Oceania. He took the opportunity to visit *St Therese Learning School*. The journey included an hours flight from Manila, and an hours drive from Bacolod Airport.

It was later on a Friday afternoon when he arrived at the school, and even though most students had gone home, a group stayed back to welcome him together with the teachers and members of the Parish Pastoral Council. He was very touched by the warm welcome. After a brief exchange, he went to see with his own eyes, the condition in which the children lived and studied. He was moved by the fact that their classrooms were in the building of the old Parish Church that had been condemned due to earthquake damage. One end of the building has been totally obliterated while the rest had cracked walls. The school and parish have a plan to raise funds, and/or apply to the PMS for funds to build another school on the adjacent land. However, because of the immediate needs, their focus is getting the scholarships just to get the poor children to school.

Back in New Zealand, despite our nations' economic struggle, he could not help thinking of an old Chinese Proverb;

" I wept because I have no shoes, until I met a man who had no feet"
Chinese Proverb



Catholic Schools on a MISSION

In 2025, over 30 Catholic Colleges and Schools did something to raise funds to support the Pope's Missionary endeavours via the Pontifical Mission Societies

There was a time when **all** of our Catholic Schools and Colleges ran activities for Mission Month and raised generous financial support. Although this support has slipped in some schools and colleges, attempts have been made to re-ignite the missionary spirit and vision.



The participation of 30 out of over 230 schools/colleges may appear on the low side, but the positive note to take is that we are moving in the right direction from our lowest point!

As part of the attempts, the Mission Box was re-introduced in our Catholic Schools in 2024. The focus of the Box is not just 'Fund-Raising' but also "Faith-Raising" as it is meant to act as an invaluable tool, or as a focal point or prop, to remind the schools to get involved with the universal Church in reaching out to our brothers and sisters in need.

In the Mission Month of October, thanks to the assistance of the (Christchurch) Catholic Education Office, study and educational material focusing on mission are also sent to Schools and Colleges over the last 2 years, .

Design the MISSION BOX Contest

2024 marks the inaugural Contest.



Fr Michael visited St Bernadette's Hornby, and presented the Prize to Zanariah

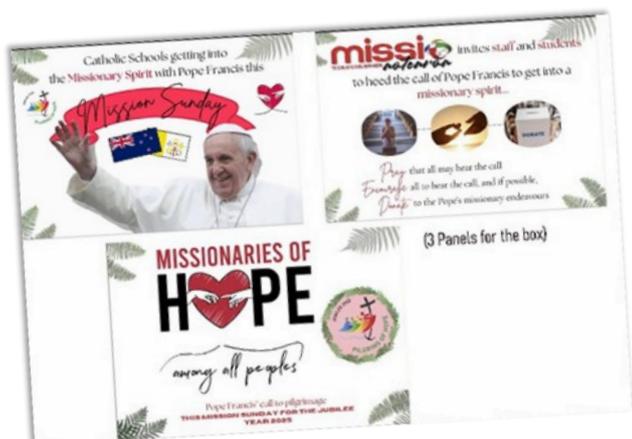


The winners were:

Primary School: Zanariah Comendador (Year 6), St Bernadette's, Hornby, Christchurch

Secondary School: Jamie Barillas from St Ignatius of Loyola Catholic College, Auckland

They won prizes of \$100 and \$150. Because of the effort of the students, Fr Michael Pui decided he would reward each primary school entry with \$10.



Be in to win!



Contest

Design the graphics for the 2026 Mission Box

WIN
CASH
PRIZES!



**Open to students in all Catholic
Schools and Colleges in NZ**
(& Home Schooled)

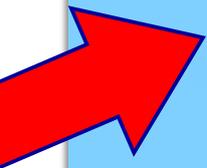
Best Entry from
Primary School
\$100 plus
certificate



Best Entry from
Secondary School
\$150 plus
certificate

Scan the QR code for
rules and guidelines
or visit www.missio.nz

Submit your entry before the closing date
of **1st May 2026**



The 2025 Annual Assembly of National Directors in Rome

Over 120 countries or National Directors took part in the Annual General Assembly of the Pontifical Mission Societies.



The General Assemblies

When it is possible to do so, the National Directors of all the represented countries usually assemble in Rome every year. This yearly ‘General Assembly’ is a phenomenon that no other organisation on the planet can rival. If each National Director is taken to be the equivalent of a CEO of a worldly organisation, then it would be the biggest and most diverse gathering of CEOs of any organisation!

The Assembly usually involves long days of deliberations, punctuated by Mass, and the Liturgy of the Hours. But there is a perk; a chance to meet the Pope personally, and also shake his hands! However, before the Directors arrived in Rome for the Assembly in May 2025, there was uncertainty in the air. After all, Pope Francis had just died. It took one of the fastest conclaves in the modern age, one that lasted approximately 33 hours, to elect Pope Leo XIV on 8 May. On the agenda, put together before the death of Pope Francis, the Directors were meant to meet “the Pope” on 22 May. There was uncertainty in the air, but to the delight of the Directors, Pope Leo XIV commenced his office without much delay, and met them in the Clementine Hall in Vatican City. Here are some of the Pope’s words:

“I want to begin by expressing my gratitude to you and your associates for your dedicated service, which is indispensable to the Church’s mission of evangelization, as I can personally attest from my own pastoral experience in the years of my ministry serving in Peru”.

“The Pontifical Mission Societies are effectively the “primary means” of awakening missionary responsibility among all the baptized and supporting ecclesial communities in areas where the Church is young (cf. Decree *Ad Gentes*, 38). We see this in the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, which provides aid for pastoral and catechetical programmes, the building of new churches, healthcare, and educational needs in mission territories. The Society of the Holy Childhood, too, provides support for Christian formation programmes for children, in addition to caring for their basic needs and protection. Likewise, the Society of Saint Peter the Apostle helps to cultivate missionary vocations, priestly and religious, while the Missionary Union is committed to forming priests, religious men and women, and all the people of God for the Church’s missionary activity.”

“The promotion of apostolic zeal among the People of God remains an essential aspect of the Church’s renewal as envisioned by the Second Vatican Council, and is all the more urgent in our own day. Our world, wounded by war, violence and injustice, needs to hear the Gospel message of God’s love and to experience the reconciling power of Christ’s grace. In this sense, the Church herself, in all her members, is increasingly called to be “a missionary Church that opens its arms to the world, proclaims the word and becomes a leaven of harmony for humanity” (*Homily, Mass for the Beginning of the Pontificate*, 18 May 2025). We are to bring to all peoples, indeed to all creatures, the Gospel promise of true and lasting peace, which is possible because, in the words of Pope Francis, “the Lord has overcome the world and its constant conflict ‘by making peace through the blood of his cross” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 229)

The Global Effort of the PMS - All for One, One for All

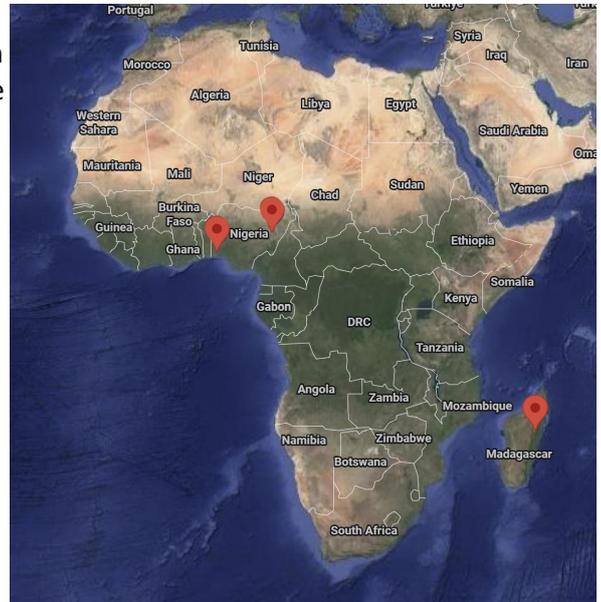
Donations collected globally for the Pontifical Mission Societies support the Pope’s Missionary endeavours especially in young and persecuted Dioceses around the world. The endeavours include:

- + the formation of future leaders, priests and religious
- + the education of children in the form of schools and scholarship
- + the provision of healthcare, from clinics to hospitals
- + the provision of general humanitarian needs and
- + the support of evangelization (**not proselytization**) of people in young or persecuted Dioceses.

No one can deny that the Catholic Church is the largest non-governmental provider of education and healthcare, operating a vast network of hospitals, schools and charitable institutions across the globe. The PMS are but some of many organisations of the Church which reach out to others in need. **MissionNZ** and **Missio Aotearoa** are the two charities that are like the arms that link New Zealand to the PMS, and thus link New Zealanders to Pope’s global missionary efforts (hence the word “Pontifical”).

The way things operate however, put PMS at a slight disadvantage. It is because PMS around the world usually raise donations first before the many approved projects are ‘assigned’ to various nations for funding. It means, it is difficult to inspire people to donate, until *after* the projects are supported. To try and reduce this disadvantage, Fr Michael Pui, the NZ National Director, has been dialoging with PMS-Rome, to explore some possibilities of being told in ‘advance’ where some of NZ funds are likely to be ‘assigned’ so that he could use them to seek support for the good works of PMS (see also page 9).

The good news is, he has just been informed that what is raised in 2026 is likely to include these (*but not confined to these*), and will be confirm after the Assembly of Directors in Rome in May/June:

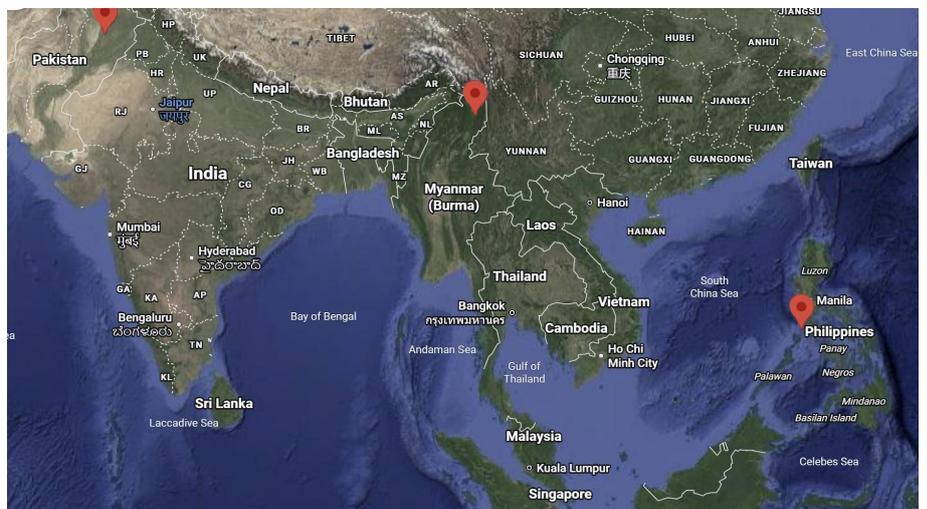


Continent of Africa

- + **Madagascar, Diocese of Ambatondrazaka:** to provide medical assistance, prevention and nutritional rehabilitation of homeless and orphaned poor children, and care for minors and children with mothers in prison
- + **Nigeria, Diocese of Ekiti:** to provide assistance to indigent children lacking in basic necessities and housing and clothing
- + **Nigeria, Diocese of Jalingo:** Renovation of Holy Family School and Nursery, fixing leaking roof, adding doors and furniture.

Continent of Asia

- + **Myanmar, Diocese of Lashio:** for the maintenance of Charity Boarding School House supporting the education and care of girls who live in conditions of insecurity and trauma because of armed conflicts
- + **Pakistan, Diocese of Islamabad-Rawalpindi;** Provision of education for a school, and for a CCTV for security at school
- + **Philippines: Diocese of Jan Jose in Mindoro.** To support 50 undernourish children in Mabini and the schooling of 550 others.



Continent of Oceania

- + **Papua New Guinea Diocese of Alotau:** for the construction of 3 classrooms at St Peter’s Primary School

Drawn by the light of Christ

Pope Leo XIV and the “missionary” hermeneutics of Vatican II

Sixty years after its conclusion, Vatican Council II still has much to say to the Church today. Pope Leo XIV’s decision to inaugurate a new cycle of catechesis dedicated specifically to the conciliar texts, represents a precious contribution to assist the entire ecclesial community in making this rich legacy bear fruit. But how should we approach the conciliar teachings today? What role can it play with respect to the most pressing issues that have emerged during the synodal process?

The Holy Father, concluding his first catechesis of the new cycle, expressed the hope that by returning to the documents of Vatican II, “we may question ourselves about the present and renew the joy of running to meet the world to bring it the Gospel of the kingdom of God, a kingdom of love, justice, and peace” (*General Audience*, January 7, 2026). On that same day, the Pope offered the cardinals gathered in the Consistory some brief hermeneutic considerations, recalling the four pontificates (excluding the brief pontificate of John Paul I) that marked the different phases of the reception of the Council. He thus identified qualifying traits that highlight certain aspects of the dynamic of evangelization, focusing especially on the paradigm of “attraction,” proposed by Benedict XVI and developed by Francis.

Leo XIV thus seems to suggest that the primary purpose of Vatican II is precisely to relaunch the proclamation of the Gospel, engaging in listening and dialogue with the contemporary world. This is what emerges from the first paragraph of *Lumen Gentium*, which the Bishop of Rome chose to read in full to his cardinals. A “missionary” note, therefore, that helps the debate on the reception of Vatican II avoid falling into facile interpretative short-circuits that could confine it to a discussion that is currently unproductive, because it becomes an end in itself. The projection of evangelization as a hermeneutical horizon can instead help foster a creative and faithful reception, avoiding the stalemate of facile oppositions with a predominantly ideological flavour.

Even the synodal journey, in the articulation between the two assemblies of October 2023 and 2024, had found in the missionary orientation a turning point and a decisive interpretative key to directing community discernment. This helped overcome the danger of synodality being understood as an *ad intra discussion*, causing the ecclesial community to withdraw into itself.

Re-centering oneself in Christ is the first response to every temptation to self-referentiality. In fact, what has been forcefully denounced in *Evangelii Gaudium* was already inherent in the proposal of the Second Vatican Council. Thanks to Pope Leo’s rereading of it, the “missionary” orientation of the entire conciliar magisterium emerges more clearly. As already emphasized by many, it would be extremely reductive to equate attention to evangelization with the Decree *Ad Gentes* alone. From the very first lines of *Lumen Gentium*, the missionary concern that guided the Council assembly in presenting the mystery of the Church in the light of the mystery of Christ, indeed in that light which is the mystery of Christ, emerges. Re-centering oneself in Christ and projecting oneself into the proclamation of the *kerygma* are not at all two opposing movements, nor even two polarities in tension. It is precisely the focus on Christ as the centre of the Church’s life that requires, as an internal requirement, a movement of continuous “exodus” for the proclamation of the Gospel to all.

The emphasis on the metaphor of “light” stands out as a recurring and characteristic theme in Pope Prevo’s teaching. It is enough to recall his very first words as Bishop of Rome, on the evening of 8 May, “We are disciples of Christ. Christ precedes us. The world needs his light.” This metaphor, deeply rooted in Scripture and in the dogmatic tradition of the Church, reinforces the Christocentric perspective of the evangelization movement, which must never be separated from the reference to the Holy Spirit, as the principal actor of the mission. It is no coincidence that the Council Fathers chose the expression *Lumen gentium* as *the incipit* of the Constitution on the Church, but we wanted to refer it explicitly to Christ. That same expression, in fact, had already been used during the pontificate of Pope Roncalli, but referred directly to the Church. As Leo XIV aptly highlighted, however, the Council’s intention is to underline that the Church is not the source of light, but rather that it reflects the light of Christ; “it is not the Church who attracts, but Christ” (*Address at the Opening of the Extraordinary Consistory*, 7 January 2026). Therefore, “if a Christian or an ecclesial community attracts, it is because through that ‘channel’ comes the lifeblood of Charity that flows from the Heart of the Savior” (*ibidem*).

The need to re-centre ourselves in Christ emerged with particular intensity in the Holy Father's latest catechesis, held last Wednesday, in which he drew attention to *Dei Verbum*, 2. "In Christ," Leo XIV affirmed, "God communicated himself to us and, at the same time, revealed to us our true identity as children, created in the image of the Word" (*General Audience*, 21 January 2026). In this way, Pope Prevost continued to develop his particular interpretative line of the teaching on Revelation, capable of highlighting the relational and existential dimensions. Indeed, "*Jesus reveals the Father to us by involving us in his own relationship with Him*" (*ibidem*). God makes himself known by entering into the network of human relationships, to orient them in a new way. Revelation from the Christian perspective cannot be presented as a simple acquisition of "information" on an intellectual level, but as an experience that involves the human person in all its dimensions. Indeed, "it is therefore a *relational knowledge*, which does not merely communicate ideas, but shares a history and calls to communion in reciprocity" (*ibid.*). It is the communication of the truth that leads to integral salvation, which reaches the person in the concreteness of his existence. This truth shines on the face of Christ, the Word made flesh. God's Revelation, which finds its fulfillment in Christ, thus makes visible that movement of compassion that characterizes divine life and which leads God to emerge from himself, to communicate himself to us in an act of self-giving filled with love. Every Christian, having become a missionary disciple in baptism, is called to feel inserted in the wake of this inexhaustible movement.

The particular sensitivity with which Leo XIV is guiding us in this rediscovery of the Council, its texts, and its legacy, yet to be developed and brought to fruition, makes us recognize in Vatican II a living source of inspiration and critical stimulus for the concrete existence of individuals and for the life of relationships that animates our ecclesial communities from within.

ARMANDO NUGNES
Rector of the Pontifical Urban College
"de Propaganda Fide" in Rome



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UNITED IN
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100 YEARS OF WORLD MISSION SUNDAY



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4. You can **donate** to MissioNZ & Missio Aotearoa. Read the story about Vietnam (*See front page, editorial for the importance of supporting the PMS via MissioNZ and Missio Aotearoa*).
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