
Missionary month of October: humanity united as one big family

This is a year marked by significant anniversaries for the missionary world. First of all we will be celebrating the 400th anniversary of the founding of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples as it was termed by St Paul VI in 1967, historically known as *De Propaganda Fide*, and, since 5 June last, with the reform of the Roman Curia, as the Dicastery for Evangelisation. This year also marks the 200th anniversary of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, founded by the recently beatified young French laywoman Pauline Jaricot whose aim was to unite all believers in prayer and financial support for missionaries throughout the world. In the decades that followed, this precious association formed the basis for the establishment of the Pontifical Society of the Holy Childhood and the Society of Saint Peter the Apostle, providing support to seminarians in young churches. Thirdly, this year marks 100 years since these three missionary societies were recognized as "Pontifical" Societies, a denomination which highlights their special relevance for the life of the Church and of all churches. The *Festival of Missions* is a landmark event that took place in Milan, from September 29 to October 2. It brought together the entire missionary world in Italy (Missio Foundation, CIMI, religious missionaries, *fidei donum*, lay faithful, solidarity and cooperation associations and movements, etc.), which had as its theme "Living through Gift." The days of the Festival featured moments of celebration and reflection, live-streamed links with international guests, meetings, concerts, testimonies and events. The lives of the missionaries were shared with the general public and, through them, the life and culture of various countries and other continents were promoted, thereby raising awareness among participants of all ages about remote areas of the world and humanity at large. The highlight of the month of October, however, remains the celebration of World Missionary Day on Sunday October 23, now in its ninety-sixth year. I like to refer to it as the World Day of Catholic Fraternity. In fact, this Day was originally conceived as a means for the Churches of ancient tradition to help, through prayer and financial support, the poor young Churches in the so-called "lands of mission". Nowadays, the day is celebrated worldwide without distinction, and the young Churches join in prayer and offer their small contribution, which can be compared to the offering of the widow in the Gospel, as a strong sign of participation in the universal brotherhood of the Church and her evangelising mission. We hope that this Day and the entire missionary month may foster among all renewed confidence in a more fraternal world, a world without discrimination, closures, lack of understanding and injustice. Above all, may it make us firmly believe in a world without conflicts and wars. May learning about the lives of missionaries reawaken a deep yearning for God in each and every person: that humanity may become one big family. We renew Pope Francis' invitation to all in his message: "The disciples are urged to live their personal lives in a missionary key: they are sent by Jesus to the world not only to carry out, but also and above all to live the mission entrusted to them; not only to bear witness, but also and above all to be witnesses of Christ."

(*) General director Fondazione Missio

Giuseppe Pizzoli*