



VATICAN - In a Letter for the Lisieux Year of Mission Pope Benedict XVI mentions Fidei Donum encyclical and the proclamation of Saint Therese as patron saint of the missions: "the Popes have never failed to recall the connection between prayer, charity and the Church's missionary activity".

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - Made public on the October 1st, the feast day of Saint Therese of Lisieux patron saint of the Missions, a letter from Pope Benedict XVI addressed to Cardinal Ivan Dias the Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples on the occasion of the Lisieux Year of Mission 2007. In his Letter in French, which bears the date of 12 September, the Holy Father writes "at the wish of Lisieux Pilgrimages and the French Bishops' Missionary Cooperation Service 2007 was proclaimed the Lisieux Year of Mission. The purpose is to remind Christian communities and individual Catholics who come on pilgrimage to venerate Saint Therese of Lisieux, that like the early Christian communities they must be tireless in their missionary efforts to make Christ known and loved everywhere".

Benedict XVI recalls in this spirit, that fifty years ago, Pope Pius XII published the Encyclical Fidei donum, and 80 years ago on 14 December 1927, in response to requests from all over the world, Pope Pius XII proclaimed the 'humble Carmelite nun' Saint Therese of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face, Patron Saint of the Missions with Saint Francis Xavier. On 21 April 1957, in the Fidei donum encyclical, Pius XII urged Christians "to promote new awareness for missionary activity to the ends of the earth, underlining that the whole Church must be involved in the task of spreading the Gospel". In this same spirit, aware of the concerns of the Missionary Services of the Church in France, Pope Benedict XVI says he hopes "missionary vocations will continue to flourish among priests, consecrated persons and lay people willing to follow the example of those who worked on every continent in the last century. May the Lord fill the hearts of young Europeans with a desire to give themselves entirely to proclaiming salvation brought by Christ, especially in Africa, south America, Asia and Oceania".

Saint Therese Lisieux "who never left her Convent, through her contemplative prayer and correspondence with a number of priests, - the Pope's letter continues - lived in her own way an authentic missionary spirit offering the world a new spiritual 'way' which won her the title of Doctor of the Church, exactly ten years ago". Benedict XVI underlines that "the Popes have never failed to recall the connection between prayer, charity and the Church's missionary activity".

"I hope these celebrations in Lisieux during this Year of Mission - the Pontiff writes -, will consolidate in all the baptised missionary awareness through prayer, witness of life and Christian commitment in all its forms, so that each member of the Church may be a missionary where he or she lives and that there may be new vocations for the proclamation of the Gospel to all the men and women who have yet to hear it".

Concluding his Letter, Pope Benedict XVI prays that the Blessed Virgin Mary Mother of the Church and Saint Therese of the Child Jesus may intercede that this Year of Mission during which "every Catholic is called to cooperate more closely with the joyful work of announcing the Gospel", may produce abundant spiritual fruits and for this I gladly impart by Apostolic Blessing. (S.L.) (Agenzia Fides 2/10/2007; righe 38, parole 539)

> LINKS

See the Papal Letter in French: <http://www.evangelizatio.org/portale/adgentes/pontefici/pontefice.php?id=902>: