



VATICAN - Holy Father Benedict XVI's Message to the General Assembly of the Pontifical Mission Societies: "The real missionary is the saint and the world needs saintly missionaries."

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) – The Holy Father Benedict XVI sent a Message to Cardinal Ivan Dias, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, which was read upon the opening of the General Assembly of the Pontifical Mission Societies (see Fides 12/5/2009), celebrated in Rome May 10-16. The following is a complete copy of the text:

To the Venerable Brother
Cardinal Ivan Dias
Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples

It is a great pleasure for me, dear Cardinal, to express my cordial salutations to you and to the National Directors of the Pontifical Mission Societies, gathered here in Rome for the annual General Assembly of the Superior Council, which in its wide representation hopes to correctly manifest "the universal and community aspect of the mission" (cf. PMS Statutes, Art. 36)/

I wish to first of all express my sincere gratitude for the invaluable work that is carried out in support of the Church's dioceses in their work of preaching Christ to all nations, so that they may walk in His Light. The entire Church, in fact, is aware that in order to carry out an efficacious missionary service, Pastors and those responsible for Christ's flock – along with all those who are directly called to missionary service – never cease to quench their thirst from the spring of living water which is Christ.

The secret to a true and efficacious evangelization is in the search for holiness. The Church and the world need credible witnesses of love for God and a life of holiness. It is in the contemplation of Christ's face that we are filled with an irrepressible passion to preach Him and give Him to others and recognize Him in the face of the poor and suffering. Only if one is led by the Spirit, can he truly experience the depth of Christ's love, the source of the fruitfulness of the mission and testimony that should fill the Church and the world with the aroma of Christ (cf. 2 Cor 2:14-15). Prayer, contemplation, and imitation of Christ are the soul of every apostolic activity, which lead the apostle – as I wrote in the Encyclical *Deus caritas est* – to drink "from the original source, which is Jesus Christ, from whose pierced heart flows the love of God" (no. 7). This is the timeless methodology of missionary activity. Every Christian is called to be a credible witness to this love of God, to reveal the attractiveness of the Gospel, to make the Church known and loved, and to contribute to the expansion of God's Kingdom. The real missionary is the saint and the world needs saintly missionaries."

The task of announcing Christ to all peoples is certainly an immense one, one that surpasses human strengths. However, we know that those who evangelize are Christ and His Spirit. We are only their collaborators, aware of the fact that we will only be effective preachers to the degree in which we learn to bend our knees in prayer and lift our hands towards heaven: in a word, if we allow ourselves to be permeated by God's love "poured out into our hearts through the holy Spirit that has been given to us" (Rm 5:5).

Thanks be to God, in all the Churches throughout the world this demand for holiness is present and alive. This is why the younger Churches, above all, request support for the formation of their priests, religious, and seminarians, with qualified staff and the necessary economic contributions. In this regard, the role of the Pontifical Mission Societies is of special importance, as they offer financial support to the Pontifical Colleges and are also involved in the formation of candidates for the priesthood and consecrated life in the missionary Churches, the construction and maintenance of formation houses, and the support of qualified personnel in the formation process.

I hope that this special Year of the Priest, which I myself will inaugurate on June 19, will contribute to a greater

awareness of the importance of the role and mission of the priest in the Church and in today's society. I am also certain that the Pontifical Mission Societies will continue to offer their invaluable contribution, so that priests and consecrated persons may become pastors and missionaries according to the Heart of God.

With these hopes and desires, and invoking the heavenly intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Star of Evangelization, I impart, Venerable Brother, my heartfelt Apostolic Blessing on you and on the National Directors and all those who collaborate in this important service of missionary animation, formation, and cooperation.

From the Vatican, May 6, 2009

BENEDICTUS PP. XVI

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