



## **VATICAN - Reaffirming, in the heart of all, the necessity and urgency of evangelization Ad Gentes: the exhortation of the Secretary General of the Pontifical Society for the Propagation of the Faith**

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - This year the celebration of World Mission Sunday has a very special meaning as it coincides with the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council, with its decree Ad Gentes, the opening of the Year of Faith and the Synod of Bishops on the theme of the New Evangelization both of which contribute to reaffirming the Church's continued desire to engage with more courage and zeal in order that the Gospel reaches the ends of the earth. The Ecumenical Council, was a Pentecostal experience with the participation of Bishops from all corners of the earth which was a truly luminous universal sign of the Church. Missionary Bishops together with Pastors from communities scattered among non-Christian populations brought to the Council the image of a Church ever present in all Continents. There were about 600 bishops from missionary territories who were animated with a passion for spreading the Kingdom of God. Today there are nearly 1,100 missionary Dioceses and this shows how much the Church has grown over the last 50 years. The Propagation of the Faith its Mission Sunday collection has contributed significantly to establishing these dioceses and to reaffirming in the heart of all, the necessity and urgency of evangelization Ad Gentes.

Mission is not an optional extra - Today this missionary vision is still valid, and indeed, presents itself with renewed urgency in this Year of Faith and the Holy Father has convened a special Synod on the priority to Evangelizing: In his Message this year the Holy Father says that the care of proclaiming the Gospel in every corner of the world belongs to the Bishops first of all. They are directly responsible for evangelization in the world, both as members of the College of Bishops and as Pastors of particular Churches. The mandate of preaching the Gospel does not finish for a Pastor in his attention towards the People of God entrusted to his pastoral care; it must involve all the activities of the particular Church, all her sectors, in short, her whole being. The Message this year is very specific and says that mission: "is not an optional contribution for the Church." Mission ad gentes must be the constant horizon and paradigm of every ecclesial endeavour – The concern to evangelize must not remain on the margins of ecclesial activity or of the personal life of any baptized person. We are mandated in the Gospel to an awareness of being receivers and, at the same time, missionaries of the Gospel. This requires regular adjustments of in our personal commitment, our lifestyles, pastoral planning, and diocesan organizations, especially in our continuously changing world because "Today too the mission ad gentes must be the constant horizon and paradigm of every ecclesiale endeavour, because the identity of the Church herself is constituted by faith in the Mystery of God who revealed himself in Christ to bring us salvation, and by the mission of witnessing and proclaiming him to the world until he comes"(Message 2012).

Year of Faith - "We need to recover the same apostolic zeal as that of the early Christian communities, which, though small and defenseless, were able, through their proclamation and witness, to spread the Gospel throughout the then known world" (Message 2012 ). The celebration of the Year of Faith and of the Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization aims to relaunch missionary cooperation and activity in the different contexts of today. Humanity needs Catholic missionaries and we cannot allow a crisis of faith to become an obstacle for evangelization. Faith in a loving God is at the very kernel of our missionary activity and this "is a gift that is given to us to be shared; it is a talent received that it may bear fruit; it is a light that must never be hidden, but must illuminate the whole house " (Message 2012).

Personal commitment and encounter with the Risen Christ - The Holy Father insists on the personal encounter and Mission Sunday gives us the possibility to discuss our own faith, discern the strength of our community's faith in order to proclaim the Good News to humanity because, "The encounter with Christ as a living Person, satisfies the thirst of the heart, (and) cannot but lead to the desire to share with others the joy of this presence and to make it known, so that all may experience this joy" (Message 2012). The Holy Father thanks personally those who

generously give, "I remember and thank the Pontifical Mission Societies, Instruments for cooperation in the universal mission of the Church across the world. Through their action, the proclamation of the Gospel also becomes an intervention on behalf of one's neighbour, justice for the poorest, the possibility of education in the most remote villages, medical aid in isolated places, emancipation from poverty, the rehabilitation of the marginalized, support for the development of peoples, overcoming ethnic divisions, and respect for life in all its stages "(Message 2012). The celebration of World Mission Sunday in this Year of Faith is a yet another sign of the Lord's favour.

Fr. Timothy Lehane Barrett, SVD, Secretary General of the Pontifical Society for the Propagation of the Faith.  
(Agenzia Fides 16/10/2012)

> *LINKS*

*The full text of the message in English: [http://www.fides.org/eng/documents/Commentary\\_p.Timothy\\_engl.doc](http://www.fides.org/eng/documents/Commentary_p.Timothy_engl.doc):*

*The full text of the message in French: [http://www.fides.org/fra/documents/Journ\\_e\\_M.P.Timote\\_fran..doc](http://www.fides.org/fra/documents/Journ_e_M.P.Timote_fran..doc):*

*The full text of the message in Spanish: [http://www.fides.org/spa/documents/Comentario\\_p.Timoteo\\_span..doc](http://www.fides.org/spa/documents/Comentario_p.Timoteo_span..doc):*